



## Lincoln Director

### Torrie Warner

I was part of a 4 person Rotary Club VTT (Vocational Training Team), after applying, being interviewed and then selected in Dec.2016, we arrived in Australia February 27, 2017 with the VTT officially ending March 20th, I opted to stay until March 28th, on my own.

We were hosted by Rotary club members, generally 3 to 4 days with each family. This made experiencing Australian culture very real. These experiences included Vegemite for Breakfast, to Kangaroos in the backyard, to left side of the road driving, 33°C to 39°C temperatures, but 'not hot enough to turn on the AC', if AC even existed, to the Collingwoods (Aussie Rules football team). Lots of beer and red wine, sunny every day, except for a few hours, when the hail cannons sounded, I thought it was thunder ... apparently not.

The tour began with APAL (Apple Pear Australia Limited). They have a checkoff per box, to fund the organization. APAL represents the apple and pear growers, similar to our fruit and vegetable growers associations and marketing boards. Quarantine and plant health issues are very important to keep disease out of Australia, and to prevent spread within Australia. We also toured the Quarantine/Inspection Service at Mickelham, as well as Latrobe University.

We toured the Cole's fruit and vegetable distribution centre, very similar to Loblaws, they have even stronger food and worker safety regulations than we have here. Hence they have lost many of their independents ... great for Coles and Woolworths. We also toured LaManna supermarket, a surviving family owned and operated (virtually no non family employees), they are a third, almost fourth generation operation, formerly into wholesale banana production and distribution, now a full service supermarket.

We toured many orchards, generally 800 to 1500 acres, so very large. Small orchards don't seem to exist, unless a hobby, and then 10 acres or less, with minimal hired labour. Labour laws are very strict in Australia. Orchards tend to specialize, and grow only one type of fruit, often apples and pears will be grown on the same farm. Peaches, white flesh, flat/peentos (not common) and nectarines (fuzzless peaches) grow on the same farm. From a climate standpoint, it was interesting that avocados and citrus would be grown across from pome and stone fruit. There are not many climates that have enough chilling for these temperate fruits, that don't get the freezing temperatures that would harm the frost sensitive avocados and citrus. We saw date palms in home gardens.

All commercial orchards we toured have their own packing lines, and storage facilities. Pome fruit farms had their own CA storages. The trend is similar to here, to store fresh fruit and sell it year around, rather than sell it fresh in season, and process it for off season consumption. Shepparton Preserving Company (SPC) is their only fruit canning factory remaining, Ardmona closed a few years ago. SPC works very closely with their growers, as both sides know margins are very small and inefficiencies/waste can't be experienced. Every Australian consumer recognizes the SPC brand. Aussies, as they call themselves, tend to be very patriotic and purchase Aussie produced products. They understand that if they want to keep jobs in Australia, they must buy goods made by Aussies. They also trust themselves to produce safe good quality products.

Water is a big issue in Australia, basements don't exist, due to flooding, rain comes occasionally, but when the rain comes, it comes in quantity. Many rivers/streams have manmade weirs that hold back the water for later use; many of these were originally constructed in the 1800's. Naturally many of the rivers/streams dry up between floods and their native fish populations, bury themselves in the mud (similar to ours in the winter). Native fish can survive for several years, until the rains come again. Their fish breed based on when the rain comes, not based on the season, like ours do here. Having said this, water reserved for irrigation purposes is crucial for agriculture, and water authorities exist to distribute water. Water is a publicly traded commodity, much like wheat and porkbellies are here. Originally water was distributed through channels/canals, by gravity, to each participating landowner, much of it is still done that way. Avocados and citrus are often grown on hills and the water must be pumped to them. Most land is laser levelled now, and flood irrigation is still common, especially for field crops. Orchards often use microsprinklers during the growing season and flood the orchard just before the final fruit swell.

The month in Australia was very educational and packed with agricultural and socially cultural experiences, many thanks to Rotary District 7090 for allowing me to experience this, the tours and hospitality was great.



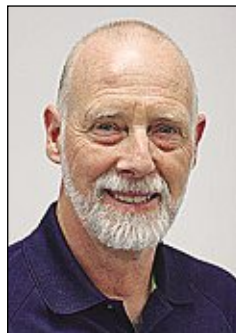
Irrigation canal in Australia



Tatura Trellis invented in Australia



Cherry orchard in Australia



## Member Service Report

### Henry Swierenga

Now that the April "showers" (and I use that term very loosely) have moved on, it sure is a relief to see the drills and cultivators going to work across the Niagara Region. Won't be long before the 1st cut of forage comes off and the wheat starts to turn. Remember to Please keep farm safety at the top of your "to do" list this summer.

While our farm families are busy planting and harvesting the OFA will be busy putting together the election kit for the 2018 provincial election. Some of the many issues to be addressed include expansion of Natural Gas to rural Ontario, infrastructure funding for rural Ontario and that includes fast and reliable internet service. Locally we will continue to work with the Region of Niagara on transportation (movement of farm machinery on our roadways), raw water irrigation projects, protection of agricultural lands through local planning and ensuring our right to carry on normal farm practices.

Take the opportunity to attend local summer events where you may find our elected representatives from all levels of government and take a moment of their time to remind them of the importance of the agricultural economy here in Niagara.

This year Canada is celebrating 150 years of nationhood and in the farming community we also want to celebrate. The Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance is working with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to recognize the contribution of long-term farm families to the local community. Agriculture and family farms have played a key role in the building and growth of our province. This program recognizes farm families who have farmed consecutively for the last 150 years. Some of these families will be on their original farms and many families have moved to other locations as cities grew and development occurred on farmland. This is especially true in the Golden Horseshoe.

To determine if your farm is eligible, check the following criteria.

- At the time of application your family have been actively farming for a minimum of 150 years within Canada.
- You can provide evidence clearly demonstrating the ties between you and the original farm family.
- You can provide the date of the establishment of the original farm and a brief history of the evolution of the farm.
- You can provide proof that you are currently considered a farmer in the Golden Horseshoe which includes Niagara, Hamilton, Halton, Peel, York, Toronto and Durham. (ie. FBR number)

Successful applicants will be awarded a certificate and a metal 150 Farm Family sign that may be installed at the farm gate. For more information and/or application form please contact me at [henry.swierenga@ofa.on.ca](mailto:henry.swierenga@ofa.on.ca)

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