

## **POPPY GROWERS TASMANIA INC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022**

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

*Presented by*

**Philip Loane**

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### Annual General Meeting – Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022

I am pleased to present my Presidents Report for season 2021/2022.

Well, another year of uncertainty, with global lockdowns and elective surgery practically non-existent as the global Covid pandemic continues.

It is pleasing to see that Covid vaccinations appear to be easing the effects of the pandemic with most international borders now open.

As this is my last report as President, I would like to focus on what I believe to be fundamental to the future of this unique industry, that being:

#### **Global Social License**

Since 2015 the opiate pain management industry has endured unprecedented scrutiny to a stage where the use of opiates to manage pain has been almost demonised in some quarters, particularly in the United States.

In my view this perception could not be further from the truth.

In support of my view I would like to share with you comments from a Special Event of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs Meeting in March 2019.

This Special Event was the largest and best attended of the meeting and very influential with the International Narcotic Control Board Chairman and the United Nations Office of Drug Control, Executive Director in attendance.

#### **MARKET POSITIVES**

There are however, some real positives on the horizon! Eminent medical and health professionals and global health organisations were united in calling on world governments for more access to controlled substances to manage pain.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Executive Director, said – A united approach is required to address this global issue.

- 1 in 10 of world population suffer from pain;
- Opiate Pain Management:
  - Is essential for palliative care
  - Is mainstay of cancer treatment
  - The use of narcotic drugs in medicine and trauma is indispensable.
- **International Narcotics Control Board – President**
  - The world must improve access to controlled substances for pain management;
  - Controlled substances are indispensable;
  - Globally we must have access to narcotic controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes.
- **World Health Organisation**
  - Controlled narcotic substances central to universal health coverage;
  - Contradiction – people are dying from abuse. Many more people are dying in pain because of no or little access to controlled opiate pain management medicines.
- **Union for International Cancer Control**
  - Tens of millions of cancer patients globally that are known, many more tens of millions unknown;
  - Globally 1 in 6 dies from cancer – pain is part of cancer;

- Access to opiate pain management medicine is essential for the global population, Opiate Analgesics.
- Lithuania – PHD – Dr Robertas Badaras, Head of Toxicology Centre, Vilnius University, Faculty of Medicine – The world cannot escape the fact opiates are essential for the management of strong pain. – Patients are now quite cautious about use of opiates – do not want to become addicted;
  - Opiates are the most effective for the management of severe pain;
  - Risk/Benefit; – Opiates are a benefit.
- International Association of Palliative Care – 80% globally – patients are not treated for pain;
  - Should be providing more opiate pain relief for palliative care and pain relief;
  - Globally many health professionals not permitted to prescribe opiate medicine for pain relief;
  - Morphine: Palliative Care – comfortable death – pain relief – quality of life;
  - Morphine should not be considered a luxury;
  - Globally almost all medical interventions commence with pain; the speakers mentioned above provided their full support for the powerful sentiments of the INCB and UNODC.

Just a few weeks ago the Australian Pain Management Association commented on the new standards of care released in April by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality of Health Care.

They said encouraging doctors to de-prescribe opiates may leave those without viable treatment alternatives in serious trouble.

They went on to say for some patients, taking opiates is the only way they can live a normal life for those living with persistent pain.

**Also of equal importance to the above is the regulation of the Tasmanian poppy industry.**

The Australian Government is a signatory to the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961, and is therefore bound to the regulatory regime of the Convention which is administered by the International Narcotics Control board (INCB).

The Tasmanian poppy industry is recognised globally by the INCB as the gold standard for security and production. All poppy growers and poppy companies operate within Tasmanian laws and are overseen by the Poppy Advisory and Control Board.

There has never been an instance of illegal diversion of poppies grown in Tasmania into heroin or morphine.

Throughout the decades of poppy growing in Tasmania the United Nations through the INCB has never questioned or criticised the Tasmanian industry. It still looks to Tasmania as the safest and most reliable supplier to the world of much needed opiate based pain management material.

Negative and sensational journalism will always be printed before the facts.

Had it not been for the severe impact of Covid on many fronts, I believe our industry would by now be demonstrating positive signs of recovery.

I acknowledge the difficult market conditions but firmly believe our industry is well placed to participate in the recovery as it occurs over the next few years.

Time does not permit the usual seasonal overview which have in fact been comprehensively addressed in recent issues of In A Capsule.

Having said that, one important matter is:

## Systemic Downy Mildew

Systemic Downy Mildew hit with vengeance in December 2014.

The industry together with TIA and the State Government commenced a research project in 2015/2016 and found the problem was far greater than initially envisaged.

Emanating from this initial project the industry, TIA and State Government were successful with their application for an ARC Linkage Research Project.

This \$1.2 million 5 year research project commenced in 2017 with completion earlier this year.

I am very proud that industry, government and TIA/UTAS all worked collaboratively on this major research project.

We have already seen new crop management systems and crop protection programs implemented as a direct result of this important research.

Tonight our guest speaker is Dr Jason Scott, Senior Research Fellow, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, University of Tasmania.

Jason will provide an overview of findings of this important research project.

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In closing, I have some people to thank:

- I would particularly like to thank all the company field officers and contractors for their valuable advice, assistance and professionalism in the manner in which they go about their respective business and delivery of their services.
- Also the PACB and staff for their diligence and cooperation when administering our world renowned security procedures.
- All form essential elements of this vanguard global industry.

- My gratitude and appreciation to the Committee of Management for their commitment and support over the past 6 years, it has been truly appreciated.
- And last but not least to you, our growers, thank you for your ongoing support, because without you we have nothing and would not have the warrant to represent you and speak on your behalf.

My very best wishes for a successful 2022/23 season and beyond for more positive times ahead.

I know we as an industry still face some challenges in the global market place, however I have total confidence that more positive times lay ahead and that the Tasmanian poppy industry will continue to be the gold standard by which our global competitors seek to be measured.

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen.

**I would now Move that my report be received.**

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