

## **ISAA President's Annual Report 2000**

The ISAA's third year presented the association with many challenges, non-more so than the delivery on members expectations of a new, growing association.

Services have been improved and expanded following the awarding of the administrative services to the office of TLC Tree Solutions in Sydney. The TLC office has worked tirelessly over the past three months with the willing support and assistance of head office to resolve a number of membership concerns that had dogged the association since early in the year. It is intended that the change will ensure continuity in service commensurate with the expectations of members and in line with the requirements of our administrative service specification.

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the Chapter's first office of the Tree Doctor and Sherryl Midgley in Queensland for their efforts over the past two years since our inauguration. Their volunteer labour has been instrumental in ensuring the organization got off the ground in this country.

Our newsletter, 'The Bark' has developed into a first class publication under the nurturing guidance of Jenny Boyer, Clive Sorrell and David Galwey who stood in and performed admirably on behalf of Clive, whilst he was overseas. The publication will continue to be the association's flagship of communication and I encourage members who have undertaken research, pursued technical advancement, have a point of view or even an amusing anecdote that they submit for publication and promote fellowship through the sharing of ideas.

Like our parent organization in the States, the Chapter's finances have been under considerable pressure from declining sponsorships, fluctuating exchange rates and increased costs in services and compliance charges. Our position will have been corrected somewhat following returns from this year's conference and our involvement in the Ed Gilman series of seminars. Our budget forecast suggests a considerable improvement on the previous year but it relies on the strong and continued participation of members in all the events programmed for 2001. Members can also assist by encouraging staff, employers, friends and competitors to get involved and join the ISAA. The Chapter has a range of membership classifications to suit all types of budgets and the proposed ISAA Chapter Member Only category will provide a relatively cheap, tax-deductible option for tentative new members.

The ISAA has demonstrated a visible commitment to the promotion of safe work practice within the amenity tree industry in the past 12 months. The Chapter has been instrumental in the development and promotion of an Industry Standard for amenity tree workers in Victoria due for release latter this year. The Tree Felling Safety Group (TFSG) responsible for the development of the Industry Standard and the review of the forest industry workers Code is comprised of representatives from ISAA, WorkCover Victoria, forest industry representatives including Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI) and Forest and Forest Product Employment Skills Company

(FAFPESC), the Construction Forestry Mining & Energy Union (CFMEU), Victorian Institute of Occupational Safety & Health (VIOOSH) and the State Coroners Office of Victoria. The combined resource of the group has permitted wide consultation and the willingness of the group to work together has demonstrated that a diverse range of views and interests can be focused to achieve a common goal.

We must not underestimate the influence that events involving tree-climbing activities have upon the perceptions of participants and spectators alike. Tree-climbing championships including regional competitions held in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia, culminating in the national titles to be held in Brisbane this year, Arbor Camp held for the first time this year in Victoria and skills workshops serve to promote what is perceived as best practice. These events have been conducted with the highest regard for existing safety standards whilst remaining open to innovation. Whether it be sport, exhibition, recreational or work place tree access, we must protect one of our most valuable resources, the people who work in our industry.

Education and training in this country have recently undergone significant changes that will effect the way we employ and train staff in the future. Business is now able to tailor training to suit its specific needs with the knowledge that their programs comply with relevant Competency Standards and will articulate with the National Training Package. Approved training is now available from a wide selection of providers ranging from the traditional education institutions to private enterprise. New Apprenticeships and post-secondary education have been re-jigged to include National Competency assessment. It is a large and ambitious task set by our governments in this country that relies upon well considered industry direction if it is to succeed.

The ISAA has been actively involved in this process both at a State and National level as a representative industry leader. We now have representation on the Amenity Horticulture Sub-Committee of the Rural Training Council of Australia (RTCA). This committee reports to the RTCA on industry recommended changes to the National Training Package and Competency Standards. Many industry participants believe further development is required and the ISAA has proposed a working group comprised of the eight representative organizations around the country to funnel sentiment through the ISAA's seat on the committee. The National Arborist Association of Australia (NAAA) and the South Australian Society of Arboriculture (SASA) have already expressed their commitment to the idea as we await response from the other associations. The ISAA has also provided feedback to the Horticultural Training Package Review authored by David Rumsay and associates. The ISAA is also heavily promoting and supporting vocational education and training to VCE students in Victoria. Industry in that state is suffering a dearth of young entrance level trainees and it is the hope of the association that this program will encourage school leavers and their parents to consider arboriculture as a suitable and rewarding career. Many other opportunities exist to participate and influence the development of education and training in this country and the association is committed to ensuring on-going involvement.

Research and development in Australia is experiencing one of its lowest ebbs and the country was recently rated the 17<sup>th</sup> lowest investor in research and development in the world. This situation has not been helped by recent changes to federal tax laws that have reduced incentives for business investment. The ISAA hopes to go some way to correcting this imbalance through active participation in the new statutory corporation, Horticulture Australia as a levied A-Class member representing the interests of amenity horticulture. Horticulture Australia is a recent amalgam of the Horticultural Research and Development Corporation (HRDC) and the Australian Horticultural Corporation. The new entity is responsible for marketing and the allocation of funds, collected through government grants and industry contributions to worthwhile research project in agriculture and amenity horticulture. The process of application has commenced and a number of hurdles must be successfully negotiated before membership is confirmed.

I am pleased to announce that negotiations have commenced between the ISAA and Fleming's Nurseries in Victoria for the formation of a National Urban Tree Project to develop native tree species for urban landscape markets both here and overseas. It is proposed that the project be based on Dr David Beardsell's founding work in the 'Elite Tree Project' commenced in 1990's. Fleming's have already demonstrated their commitment to industry development through the ISAA endorsed 'Don Fleming Student Award' for the national student ideas and design competition 2001. Finalists will be selected to construct their designs at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show in April 2001 with this next year's competition promising to top the success of this year's inaugural award. The support of commercial enterprise in these and like projects is integral in ensuring their success.

The ISAA will continue to support local and international research efforts through the publication of results in our various publications, conferences and seminars in the coming year.

I would like to thank the Executive for their excellent company and continued support through the ups and downs of this formative year. Through their efforts, the association's networks with government, industry and like minded representative groups have grown. This has created a framework on which we can build meaningful and lasting relationships that will serve to advance industry and our most precious urban tree resource.

Our future is here.

**David Balsamo**  
President ISAA