



## History of Olives SA (OSA) Committee

Olives SA (OSA) commenced in the mid north (Clare Region) with a few people talking about the potential olives have and exploring the possibility of a future in growing them here. A local meeting at Seven Hills gathered about 50 people with Margaret Sedgley as a guest speaker. There was strong interest and nominations for committee were requested. The speaker was Don Hiller with Kent Hallett assisting in the procedures. A collection of enthusiastic people formulated regional committees (small numbers) and the drivers initiated Olives S.A and its Board.

OSA meetings were originally held at the Stag hotel and then in 1998 moved to the Police Club in Carrington St. From there we moved to the Waite Institute and in 2000 after appointing our Executive Officer for the Strategic Plan we had access to his facility on Greenhill Road Wayville. Today we are settled back at the Waite Institute.

In the early days there was a competition held for someone to create an Olives S.A logo and the winners logo still remains as everyone knows it today. A constitution was formed with assistance from the newly formed Australian Olive Association (AOA).

We had strong support from Waite as it had already the labs and skilled personnel to assist us with chemical and organoleptic skills. A tasting panel were inaugurated at the stag hotel in 1998 with a member of the International Olive Oil Council (IOOC) taking them through the required tasting workshops so that once they completed the course they can be IOOC accredited. This was successfully done and Richard Gawel who had experience in the wine industry was to take charge and go overseas for more IOOC training. He became qualified as a chief judge and obtained the skills and accreditation to train others.

By 1998 the membership of OSA had grown to approximately 240 and were keen for more information in olive growing. The industry at this stage showed a strong interest in olive growing not only from its members but also by the older Europeans who brought their methods of growing olives here. OSA used their knowledge as a starting point for sourcing information.

The nurseries were experiencing a boom as the promise was for farmers/hobbyists to grow olives and the returns would be magnificent. OSA looked at field days with speakers such as Susan Sweeney, Margaret Sedgley talking about varietal selections and soil requirements. We had Peter Maroudas speaking on growing techniques and potential processing details. Membership was strong but delivering information was limited as we were all learning together. The regions were strong and a sense of rivalry on who was the better performer was becoming evident.

By 1999 the finances for OSA started looking grim as it was totally reliant on membership and the declining numbers, for many reasons, added more pain. Luckily by this stage Government had recognised that the olive industry had the potential to become a serious industry. Workshops were conducted through OSA and support from government came at the crucial stage. OSA had to reach its remaining members and give them support and confidence to stick with us. It worked. The marketing workshops were delivered to the different regions and proved to be just what the growers wanted. We expanded our presence to larger field days such as Cleve And Paskerville and became involved with The Royal Show, which exhibited member's products, exposed OSA, and introduced the day-to-day people to the wonderful flavours and aromas of EVOO produced in SA. OSA was now becoming a strong name not only in SA, but the AOA and other regions throughout Australia. Even today OSA is considered a leader in this industry.

By 2000 OSA had accepted that there had been an enormous amount of plantings and as the peak body we had to have a strategic plan in place prior to the huge wave of production that was going to confront us in the very near future. Through the talents of Julian Sowik from FRDC, OSA was successful in obtaining a grant totalling \$140,000 from the Dept of Regional transport for a strategic plan. OSA selected a Board of various industry people that could contribute towards a decisive strategic plan for not only South Australia but for the national body as well.

Today OSA is still recognised at the Peak Industry body representing olive growers in South Australia. Our membership continues to steadily increase and sits around 230 at present. The OSA committee dedicates a huge amount of time and effort into effectively representing their regions. It needs to be understood that no-one on the OSA committee is paid for their services.