



24 August 2023

Dear Members

I hope this letter finds you in excellent health and high spirits. I am writing to inform you that I have been appointed as the incoming Chairman of Organic Industries of Australia (OIA). It is an honour and privilege to lead the OIA as we continue striving towards making a positive impact on the organic industry in Australia, the food industry and organic consumers alike.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our out-going Chair, Dalene Wray AM for her exceptional leadership and dedication over the years. Dalene has led OIA with integrity and developed a strong culture of respect and focus among directors that has enabled the organisation to navigate well in difficult times. I am humbled to be entrusted with this responsibility and will work diligently to build upon the foundation that has been laid.

The OIA Directors are incredibly committed and effective individuals, giving their time freely for the benefit of the industry. To have earned their trust for my appointment I am grateful. I firmly believe that an organisation's strength lies in its people. Hence, one of my primary goals as Chairman will be to foster an environment that encourages collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity. By harnessing the diverse talents, skills, and perspectives of our members, we can create impactful programs and initiatives that address the most pressing challenges faced by organic operators and their communities today.

Furthermore, I am committed to strengthening our relationship with government and other stakeholders who have consistently supported our organisation. To ensure continued growth and sustainability in our efforts, I will endeavour to cultivate these relationships while also seeking new strategic partnerships in alignment with our constitution.

As the incoming Chairman, I am aware of the challenges that lie ahead. However, I firmly believe that our organisation possesses the resilience, compassion, and determination required to overcome any obstacle we may encounter. Together, we will expand our reach, refine our strategies, and positively impact organic, sustainable agriculture.

The challenges ahead for the organic industry are numerous.

1. Organic & biodynamic certified operators have been uniquely exposed to supply chain cost increases of recent years due to the comparatively, lower economy of scale compared to non-organic agriculture.
2. Labour cost increases are more harshly felt due to an increased dependence on labour rather than chemical farm management.
3. The organic industry has been unsuccessful in its attempts to collaborate with the Federal Government's Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to establish regulatory oversight for the organic standard, and legal infrastructure, leaving organic and biodynamic operators exposed to misleading claims by non-certified actors.
4. There is a rapidly changing global sustainability and climate regulatory landscape. Alignment to the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals has been rightly claimed by non-certified organic and biodynamic operators, and the importance of sustainability, and climate change has grown for consumers, perhaps more so than the importance of clean and safe food.
5. Publication of false and misleading information about the organic industry could disrupt investment in the organic and biodynamic industries potentially causing investment to divert to alternate methodologies.

Moving forward, I believe we must be bold. We have no choice but be brave. Organic and sustainable agriculture is the solution to climate change, and feeding a growing global population, period. Failure to engage farmers, Government and communities is nothing but a reflection of our own inability to communicate the truth.

The Directors of OIA and myself will spend the next weeks building a deliverable set of policies, objectives, and actions that will cause greater transparency, clear and accurate industry information, deeper and defensible integration of sustainability regulation, which stabilises current and future investment in the industry.

We will soon be inviting you to the OIA Annual General Meeting to vote on our proposed plans. Our plans will be shared with financial members prior to the AGM, and we ask that you please read and consider our proposal in the interest of the industry and in the interest of your organic organisation.

I am eager to collaborate with each and every member of our organisation, as well as the communities we serve, to create a brighter and more equitable future. The journey ahead may be demanding, but I have unwavering faith in our collective ability to bring about substantive change.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any suggestions, concerns, or ideas. Your voice is invaluable, and I encourage open and transparent communication to foster an environment of trust and shared vision.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to OIA. Together, we can do great things.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PHS', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Peter Hislop Speers
Chair, Organic Industries of Australia Ltd