



# International Protea Association

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## Chair's Report – International Protea Association 2015

Welcome to the Perth IPA conference; the first time we have come together as an industry since meeting in Santiago, Chile, in 2012. I consider it quite delightful that Proteaflora is one of our conference sponsors on our return to Australia, because the International Protea Association was initiated by the founder of Proteaflora, Peter Mathews, in 1981.

Like many other industry associations, the IPA finds itself in a position where its relevance needs to be assessed and vigorously articulated. We have found difficulty in retaining financial members between conferences, and, with the three-year gap since our last conference, this difficulty has been even more pronounced. At conferences, the value of IPA to the industry is obvious, and it does, hopefully, become clear how much work has gone into organising the conference. The close connection and collaboration between the IPA and IPWG enables us to bring the industry's value chain together, and at this conference we have enhanced these connections through combining the event with the New Ornamentals symposium.

What isn't so easy to see is the work that goes on between conferences. The IPA Council is tasked with working together to set IPA direction, and to meet at conferences to discuss and decide what is in the best interests of the industry. The IPA Board has the responsibility to make things happen. At the last conference, held in Chile, the IPA Council indicated that communication and exchange of information were important activities that the IPA could contribute. To achieve this the board has maintained, updated and added to the IPA website. We have still work to do to achieve all of our goals, yet we feel that a platform for effective industry communication has been established.

Increasing exposure of our products and our industry in the longer term may serve to generate increased market share. While the IPA does not, at this stage, engage in specific marketing and promotion activities, our decision to proactively submit informative IPA articles to FloraCulture International magazine was intended to increase the profile of Proteaceae in the global floricultural industry. Some of these were obvious as IPA-generated communications, some perhaps not. The aid of IPA members in preparing and reviewing articles made it possible to maintain a profile in many FCI magazine issues, including a front cover spread about *Leucospermum* in the Azores. The IPA has focussed on FCI magazine in the short term, and recognises that there is potential to expand to a wider range of publications, including style, design and floristry publications.

I have outlined the activities of the IPA in the three years since our last conference. With regard to concerns about remaining relevant and providing our members with value for their membership fee, my concern is not whether or not we are doing enough for our industry, it is that we are not making our activities and achievements visible enough. It is this message that I offer to the new IPA board.

Audrey Gerber, Chair IPA Board 2012 - 2015