

20 year chapter closed

OGA founder steps down as Chair

MR. HOWARD RUBIN, one of Australia's first organic pioneers, has stepped down as the Chair of OGA Certified Pty Ltd (OGA) after 20 years since his foundation of the group in 1989.

OGA is now well-known as an organic certification program which sits under the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA) umbrella and offers organic certification to small farming operations selling at markets, direct to retailers and to consumers.

Mr. Rubin originally founded the organisation to help encourage the Australian organic herb growing industry.

"In the 1980's I was living in England and I created one of the first privately owned, new age health community clinics, where people had access to all things natural and organic. As a trained herbalist and homeopath, I was always on the path towards finding ingredients grown without chemicals," says Mr. Rubin.

"When I arrived in Australia from England, there were no commercially grown organic herbs here and I wanted to change this, whilst also helping out others who were

interested in the organic process." Thus, a group was formed.

OGA started as the Northern Rivers Herb Growers Association – "this was back when our first meeting consisted of 15 people standing around my kitchen!" recalls Mr Rubin.

OGA really launched ahead when it gained AQIS accreditation, back in early 1990, which meant it was then able to operate as a certification body.

"When OGA gained accreditation we were noticing an influx of small operators who weren't just herb growers – our 'backyard group' had now moved into being a national organic certification company. It was actually OGA that wrote the first set of Organic Standards – it was a 20 page document and outlined all the basic philosophies of organic practices," he says.

In July 2007, OGA merged with the BFA Group – a decision which received close to unanimous support from its members.

"I am a big believer of strength in numbers, and through joining BFA, the OGA program has been allowed the opportunity



Howard Rubin and wife Elle.

of greater growth and resources," says Mr Rubin.

The BFA's OGA program, which now has a national client base of close to 400 certified organic operations, is also a fully ISO IOAS 65 accredited program.

"It has been a thoroughly enjoyable experience to have watched the rising growth of OGA over the last twenty years and I am sure that it will only continue to move forward," says Mr. Rubin.

BFA Chairman Doug Haas has, in addition to his current role, accepted the role of OGA Chair.

"It is humbling to be entrusted with the role of OGA Chair by the very founder and driver of this highly successful and respected company over 20 years," says Mr Haas.

Mr. Rubin's decision to step down as Chair of OGA is not his final exit from the organic industry. He looks forward to continuing in his role as Chief Financial Officer of the overall BFA Group.



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