

Newcastle gets first flower market

The city of Newcastle will be spoilt for choice once the Newcastle Flower Markets open at the end of March this year. A market of their own has been in high demand for both local Newcastle florists as well as those in the surrounding coastal and rural communities.

The markets will service florists, growers and wholesalers in a trade-only arrangement where florists can shop for their blooms in a relaxed atmosphere. They are being driven and run by a couple who have been in the cut flower industry for 15 years and whose passion is to build a community-based and supportive network of flower industry professionals.

Every business will need to register as a member of Newcastle Flower Markets and will be supported through social media and website marketing. Florists will be issued with an identification card that they will need to enter the market. There will be a small window that will be open to the public on Fridays only from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., coinciding with the nearby fruit and vegetable market.

One half of the team driving the markets, Jessica Aguilera said, "We have listened to so many florists talk about their current issues with business and one of the main problems

was the travel, not getting the correct flowers and most importantly, not receiving the quality they expected. Florists love to be able to touch and feel when choosing beautiful blooms. Having the markets open here will take the stress off them with travel, and in not fighting against the public.

"Our aim is to have the markets open at the end of March. We are currently locking in our growers and wholesalers because we will not start the markets until we have the quality and variety for the florists. I believe Newcastle Flower Markets will be one of the biggest markets in Australia. We have a big passion for supporting our Australian flower growers so ensuring we have blooms from all over Australia is highly important. We will also have a freight service for our florists that cannot make our markets which allows us to deliver direct to their businesses. Starting a project from scratch as big as this will always take time, but we have been overwhelmed with florists anticipating the opening".

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Imported Flowers and Foliage Regulation Working Group update

The third meeting of the Imported Flowers and Foliage Regulation Working Group was held on 16 December 2016 and noted updates on activities relating to the cut flower and foliage import conditions review. These included:

1. There is a high rate of inspection failures due to high incidence of pests, mainly thrips and mites. Some of the exporting countries use predatory mites and thrips during the cut flower crop production. The department is investigating details of predators used off-shore to enable further assessment and amend import conditions if required.
2. The review of the Automated Fumigation Exemption System (AFES) showed the high pest load on arrival has not reduced. It was agreed that more focus should be on establishing managed pathways or high health systems and to limit use of AFES to only high health pathways. In the interim, amendments to the AFES rules are being developed.
3. Current managed pathways (Malaysia and Singapore) demonstrated relatively cleaner pathways with low pest load. The department will circulate an example of a managed pathway/best practice model to the industry to assist in establishment of future pathways.
4. The department is conducting a trial to validate the effectiveness of on-shore fumigation. Results thus far show most

fumigations were effective with exception of around 8 per cent of failures mainly due to detection of two-spotted spider mites. At the conclusion of the trial the working group will be updated on the outcome and improvements.

5. Fresh cut flower and foliage BICON case is being re-structured and will be live by the end of January 2017. This re-structure aims to improve useability of the case and make it easier for stakeholders to find the correct conditions. Import conditions for cut flowers have not changed as a part of this re-structure.
6. The department has commenced the development of a rapid *in vitro* test for checking compliance with off-shore devitalisation treatment. The test kit should be ready by the end of 2017.
7. Data on compliance/non-compliance with the integral packaging requirement showed that the majority of the



imports did not meet packaging requirements. Given the high pest loads on cut flowers, product integrity is required to address pest risk. Amendment to the integral packaging requirement is being developed in consultation with the working group members.

The group will meet again by tele-conference in the first quarter of 2017. www.flowersqueensland.asn.au