



FRANCESCA AND ANGELO



ROBYN CLUBB WITH KEITH GOODFELLOW.

Pick that peach

Robyn Clubb, owner of Wisbey's Orchards at Araluen explains to BWD where they're at ...

yellow peaches. Then we also had a cold winter — and that's been experienced all the way down the valley. But the positive is that the fruit that is left is bigger, and the thinning job has been a lot easier this year because the fruit set being low.

This season we will have about 15,000 trees producing a normal crop, then we've probably lost 2,000 and then there are probably another 2,000 trees that have a low fruit set.

You'll notice there is a bit of construction going on out the front. We are building a commercial kitchen, a café, and a little shop. That's because we

WE ARE PLAYING CATCH UP this year in terms of getting our fruit production back up again after the drought. We had to cancel a lot of tree orders, put off replacing trees during the drought and we have pushed out about 6,000 trees so we are actually going to downsize.

We have progressively culled about 25 per cent of our trees. Our production this year is down because of that and it is also down because we have had significant frost in early September where we lost a couple of varieties. We probably lost fruit from about 2,000 trees, mostly white nectarines and



I'm Dean Smithers, farm manager. We have about 14 varieties of peaches, yellow flesh and white flesh. In nectarines we have about 8 varieties, I think there's about 5 varieties of white flesh, the rest are yellows. We start picking beginning of November right through till the end of January, so there are three months when you are quite busy. We stop for Christmas Day.

All the fruit gets shipped off most nights, that's a semi-load, of pallets. Every day that's 22 pallets, about 108 trays on a pallet, so you are looking at probably 12 tonnes of fruit. It goes straight to the Sydney markets.



are a commodity product. We are price takers [not price setters]. The two big supermarkets chains dominate and it's becoming even more so. Even though there is growth in the independents like the IGAs and Harris Farms and whatever, with the size of our operation we do sell quite a bit of fruit to the big two supermarkets and they can be difficult to deal with. It is not a balanced relationship. So we want to diversify and we have been experimenting with drying fruit over the last two or three years.

What we're currently building is predominantly going to be a commercial kitchen, drying fruits, and then doing things in a little café like smoothies and muffins and selling jams, peach juice and those sorts of things.

I haven't been here before. Some friends told me about this place, yah — a good place to get some money and meet some nice people here.

Angelo

I come from Italy and I heard about the job because I was travelling along the coast and then we stopped in Moruya and some guys told us they were looking for people here. I love it. The job is good, is a bit hard sometimes. The people are very nice and we have a very nice group.

Francesca

We get a lot of buses that come here — though we have never really actively promoted it — but we probably get about seven big buses and then we get a lot of people. It's a pilgrimage for them each year to come here from Canberra or the coast to buy fruit. So if we promote it more, I think it will become a nice way to diversify our income stream.

We also want to grow things other than stone fruit and we are experimenting with growing pomegranates and mulberries. Jackie French has given me some avocados to grow and so we will try to diversify and sell more locally. People want to know the provenance, the story behind the fruit — where does it come from — and we participate in a quality assurance program which is very, very strict. Chemical usage, and all the things associated with what we do with the orchard, is very strictly controlled.

Quite often our visitors will have lunch in Braidwood or at the Araluen Hotel, and they'll either come here in the morning and buy fruit, or they'll

come here after lunch to buy fruit. Often it's a day out, usually for retirees; they'll come out for the day, stop in Braidwood, tour round Braidwood, then come down here. Some like to go into the orchard, others don't because they have been coming here for quite a few years; so they know the drill. They usually just come here to have a bit of look around the shed, see what we do, buy some fruit and hear a bit about what we do. At this time of the year we probably have somewhere between 30 to 40 casual workers. We start at 6 am, trying to beat the heat, and go really hard during the first two or three hours before it gets really hot, and when it gets hot people can ease off. When we get really busy we usually don't finish till 2 or 3 o'clock with picking, and then the packing goes on for another hour or two after that. When it gets

really busy with the packing of the fruit some of the people who are out picking will come in and help us finish packing. [over to p.6]

I come from Estonia and I'm here to just earn money and afterwards travel. It's a nice place to meet different people, from all over but mostly from Europe. There are only three Australians. It is not very common for the Australians to be here. I think people find out about this place from word of mouth, someone tells someone that they worked here last year. It is a good place to work.

Anu

I'm from Moruya. I need to save money for travel next year.

Bethany

ANU AND BETHANY

