

## PAULA BEAUCHAMP

FORGET the competitiveness, backstabbing and hidden trade secrets you might see in some industries.

Australian olive growers and olive oil producers are a supportive bunch who actually share their research findings and facilities with local competitors.

Australian Olive Association chief Lisa Rowntree calls them a cohesive group.

"There is a lot of goodwill there," she said.

"We have a lot of growers who have been here since the beginning (of the olive growing resurgence in 1995) and when everyone is learning together, camaraderie builds."

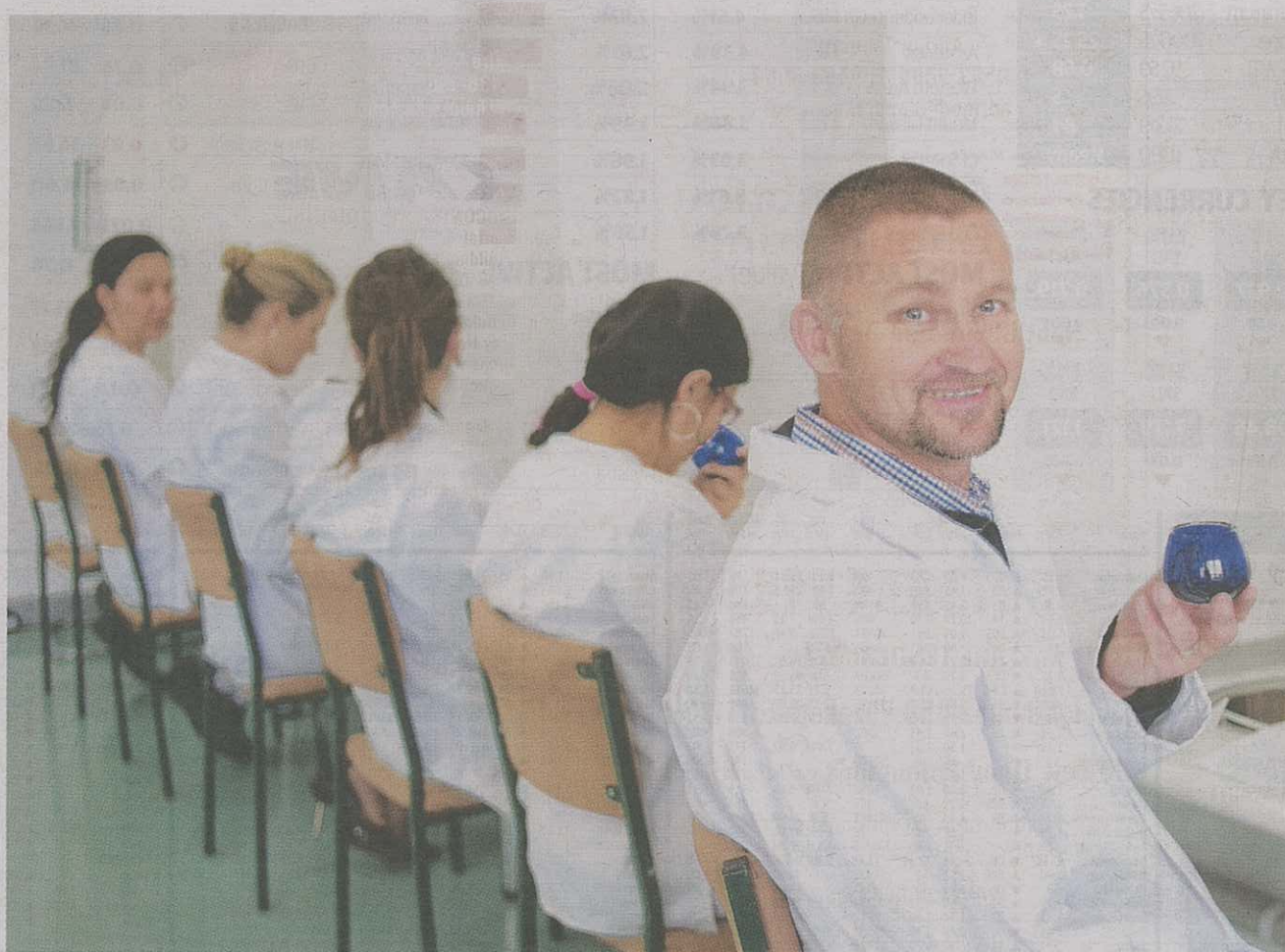
Olives weren't intensively farmed in Australia between the early 1970s — when low labour costs in the Mediterranean made the Australian industry unsustainable — and about 1995.

Since then, Australia's olive oil has become renowned as the highest quality product in the world.

"Growers support growers," Ms Rowntree says.

"Our industry stands apart on quality and it won't matter how good any of them are if another grower produces bad oil.

There's a fear the negative publicity could bring the whole industry down."



Blind tastings of olive oil at Boundary Bend, producers of Cobram Estate oil. Picture: Boundary Bend

Ms Rowntree says it is fortunate that Australia's largest grower and producer Boundary Bend is so quality focused.

"That sets the benchmark," she said.

Five of Boundary Bend's Cobram Estate oils won awards at the 2014 New York International Olive Oil competition.

Part of this success is due to Modern Olives — the nursery, oil lab and technical services company set up by Boundary Bend, which also serves growers

and producers across the industry.

Modern Olives sells trees to growers, landscapers and retailers and applies more than 26 tests to oils sent in for sampling from around the country.

Boundary Bend alone needs 100,000 new trees each year and repeated tests.

Company co-founder and executive chairman Rob McGavin says Boundary Bend is happy to be inclusive.

It promotes efficiencies and reduces costs, while helping

others, he says. "We might as well help out people who are trying to establish themselves, for example, with the right selection of trees," he said. "And we pick up things from other growers and learn from them along the way."

He says Boundary Bend would go broke without the NATA-accredited Modern Olives lab and qualified tasters.

"We need to know the oil is first class before it hits the customer," he said. Ms Rowntree says the industry needed

someone like Boundary Bend to invest money in a private lab. "Quality is our number one priority," she said.

Mr McGavin says the challenges faced by growers in the olive industry in Australia helped bring growers together in the formative years.

Drought, floods and a high Aussie dollar have all but sapped profits from the industry until recently.

"When everyone is struggling and losing money, you get on better with your com-

petitors," Mr McGavin said, laughing. "You swap ideas."

While most growers and producers have a good relationship, it would be wishful thinking to believe everyone in the industry was happy or satisfied, Mr McGavin said.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is seeking a contractor to develop training to deliver management skills in the manufacturing sector.

The tender closes on September 25.

## TENDERS DIARY

## TRACK WORK:

Harness Racing Victoria is calling for tenders from civil contractors for the recambering of the harness racing track at Warragul.

**Tender closes:**  
Today

## INTERNAL AUDIT:

Goulburn-Murray Water requires internal audit services.

**Tender closes:**  
September 24

## SATISFACTION SURVEY:

The Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure is seeking a contractor to provide the community satisfaction survey for local government.

**Tender closes:**  
September 30

## SEWER MAINS:

Coliban Region Water Corporation requires the repair of two sections of sewer mains at Epsom.

**Tender closes:**  
October 14

## COURT CLEANING:

The Magistrates' Court of Victoria is seeking a contractor to provide cleaning services.

**Tender closes:**  
October 23