

Guest editorial**Say it with flowers!**

In the 1930's a group of enterprising New Zealand florists decided to get together and set up a mutual order exchange organisation for the delivery of floral orders in areas outside their own localities. By 1947 a central Clearing House had been opened in Christchurch and links established with similar organisations internationally. First trading as a mutual society, a company limited by guarantee was formed in 1952 to provide the vehicle for the order exchange network.

As the company grew, it became obvious that some restructuring would be required. This was hastened by the company law reform which saw the demise of the old limited by guarantee companies and the introduction of the Co-operative Companies Act in 1996. Interflora members wholeheartedly decided to go the co-operative way, and at a special meeting held in Wellington in 1997, members voted unanimously to re register as a co-operative company under the new Act.



Our co-operative comprises some 350 florist members with over 100 of these are outside New Zealand, trading in South East Asia and mainland China. These areas were allocated to the New Zealand clearing house as part of a geographical and territorial licensing arrangement and with the formation of our co-operative we found that our members in these areas were able to benefit along with the New Zealand members in reaping the rewards of their mutual trading.

There has been massive technological innovation in our industry, particularly in the area of order transmission and order gathering through internet sites and other electronic means. The company pioneered electronic shopping, setting up one of the first Internet shops in New Zealand in 1996. This site has become a flagship for the company gathering orders from throughout New Zealand and around the world to redistribute to its members. Instead of acting merely as a clearing house for the exchange of orders, the organisation now actively gathers orders on behalf of its members to redistribute them from its central office in Christchurch.

Our co-operative also runs national advertising on behalf of its members to promote flower sending and the Interflora

order service. Campaigns are mounted for all the major flower giving holidays and peak trading days for the benefit of all our members. As a co-operative we also provide an education and training programme for our members through District seminars and workshops, not only in New Zealand but also this service is provided for members in Hong Kong, Singapore and China. We are fortunate to be assisted by some of our international partners in providing this service to our members.

The company is run by a Board of elected florist directors in a true co-operative manner and our working directors do provide services to our members, particularly in education, training and membership services. Entry to our organisation is controlled by a Membership Committee and applicants must be able to demonstrate a suitable standard of work and operate from suitable and approved premises before they can be issued their co-operative share. A team of Approved Examiners carry out on site inspections both to assess standards of floristry and also the condition of business premises. These standards are not only required for entry to the organization but also required to be maintained in order to continue to qualify for membership of our co-operative. Membership can be terminated if standards are not maintained and our Constitution allows us to control the exit and entry of members in this way.

Our company has found that the co-operative structure suits our membership very well in providing mutual benefits and rewards through rebate distributions for the benefit of our members. We look forward to continued growth both in our business and also with our overseas and international partners. Internationally we have a strong and recognisable brand, some 55-60,000 florist members throughout the world partner us in the business of selling flowers and bringing comfort, happiness, greetings and goodwill to our customers world-wide.



**Donna Macpherson,
President, Interflora
Pacific Unit Ltd**

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