Freshcare Annual Review 2025

Aligned. Assured. Future-ready

Acknowledgement of Country

Freshcare acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First people and Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where we meet, live, learn and work. We acknowledge and celebrate the rich and thriving diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, the oldest continuing living cultures in the world.

Freshcare pays respect to the Elders, knowledge holders and stewards of this land – past, present and emerging.



Alison Buxton, Chairperson
November 2024 – Present

Chairperson's Message

What an amazing year 2025 was for Freshcare as we celebrated our 25th anniversary, reinforcing Freshcare's position as the First Choice Standards for food safety, sustainability and industry best practice. We heard from stakeholders, including growers, member organisations and industry partners as they shared their Freshcare journeys and engagement experiences.

As Chair of the Freshcare Board, it was heartening to hear the level of respect for our team, with one of those interviewed noting their "passion to see the industry succeed". Resoundingly, they spoke to a sense of trust in the Standards, an appreciation of teamwork and the value of Freshcare. One noted that even when budgets are stretched, "you can't afford to cut Freshcare".

It is the expertise, collaboration and commitment of these many and varied stakeholders that have shaped Freshcare into Australia's leading provider of certification standards for horticulture and viticulture over this first 25 years. Indeed, the significant body of work undertaken as part of the Freshcare Standards Review could not have been achieved without the passionate engagement we have had from the industry and our committed Technical Steering Committee. For that we are extremely grateful.

The Freshcare Team, particularly our CEO Jane Siebum, was constantly on the road through the course of the year, ensuring we are connected to our 4600+ participants as well as regulators, through industry forums, roundtables and on the ground visits. The objective was to listen, learn and effectively frame the next phase of the Freshcare journey.

I feel extremely privileged to be Chairperson of Freshcare and we race into 2026. I am confident the Freshcare Team, through the CEO's leadership, will continue to be seen as trusted and dedicated partners supporting market access locally and internationally, as The First Choice Standards.

As I stepped into the role of Chairperson in November 2024, I was relieved to have the outgoing Chair Allan Dall by my side as Deputy. For more than a decade he has been a driving force behind Freshcare's growth, evolution and strategy. Allan stepped down from the Board in November 2025, and I would like to take this opportunity to again recognise his exceptional service. His balanced perspective, grounded equally in operational experience, governance and innovation has helped steer Freshcare to the strong position it holds today.

With Allan's departure we welcome new Director, Kara-Glenn Worth, who brings a strong grower perspective along with Agri-Tech knowledge. The latter will be crucial as we forge forward. We also welcome the continued service of Dominique Doyle and Liz Riley who were re-elected. The Board has a crucial role to play in supporting and guiding the Freshcare organisation into the future. Our Directors bring a wealth of experience across fresh produce, supply chain and the sustainable wine industry that will inform Freshcare's future direction.

As we enter the next exciting phase of the organisation's journey, I am confident the Freshcare Team will work closely with industry, continuing to provide trusted assurance through our globally recognised programs, with the Standards Review as a blueprint.

A huge thank you to our valued industry stakeholders for your continued trust and collaboration. I look forward to working with you as we turn the page in the next phase of the Freshcare journey.

Meet the Freshcare Board. Visit our website.



Chief Executive Officer
Jane Siebum

CEO Message

This past year has been especially significant for Freshcare, as we proudly marked 25 years of delivering trusted assurance programs to thousands of Australian businesses.

This milestone has provided an opportunity to reflect and connect with the people, partnerships and industry collaborations which have shaped Freshcare's journey and continued success.

Throughout the year the team and I invested considerable time and resources in engaging directly with Freshcare stakeholders. Connecting with member organisations, participants, business owners, government and industry representatives through events, town hall discussions and farm tours – reaffirms the importance of Freshcare's relationships throughout industry. Through these discussions, Freshcare has gained a deeper understanding of the needs of industry. This has enabled Freshcare to further develop standards, initiatives and resources which are aligned to industry, grounded in real-world application and future-ready for all producers.

The Regulatory Technology project, in partnership with Hort Innovation, wrapped in 2025, culminating two years of consultation and research presented at Hort Connections. The national project, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) under the National Agriculture Traceability Grants Program, set out to understand the complexity of compliance requirements and explore digital solutions to reduce duplication and certification challenges faced by growers. The project set the foundation for a simpler, fairer approach to compliance requirements in Australian horticulture, sustaining Freshcare's commitment to industry by providing the best assurance outcomes for producers.

I am proud of the dedication and professionalism demonstrated by the Freshcare team across both day-to-day operations and strategic initiatives. In particular, the significant work undertaken in collaboration with the Technical Steering Committee during the Freshcare Standards Review. This substantial commitment signals the beginning of a new phase for Freshcare's standards, with strong focus on clarity, usability and practical support for more than 4,600 businesses nationwide.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the strong leadership and effective governance provided by the Freshcare Board throughout 2025. Their governance has ensured that Freshcare remains trusted, credible and future-focused. With a solid foundation and a clear strategic vision, Freshcare is well positioned to continue supporting Australian businesses for the next 25 years and beyond.



Dominique Doyle
FRACC Chairperson & Director

FRACC Message

The Finance, Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee (FRACC) of Freshcare serves a critical advisory function in promoting rigorous financial governance, comprehensive risk oversight, and operational transparency.

By safeguarding revenue derived from Freshcare's programs and services, the Committee plays a pivotal role in preserving Australian fresh produce and viticulture industries' continued access to markets, both domestically and internationally. Strong financial results have enabled Freshcare to build reserves and strengthen its long-term sustainability, ensuring ongoing support for these sectors.

As a registered entity under the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC), Freshcare is committed to reinvesting its financial proceeds into the enhancement of standards, training initiatives, and resource development – thereby supporting the safety, sustainability, and quality of Australian produce. This commitment is reflected in the continued evolution and maintenance of industry Standards to meet changing needs.

FRACC Message (continued)

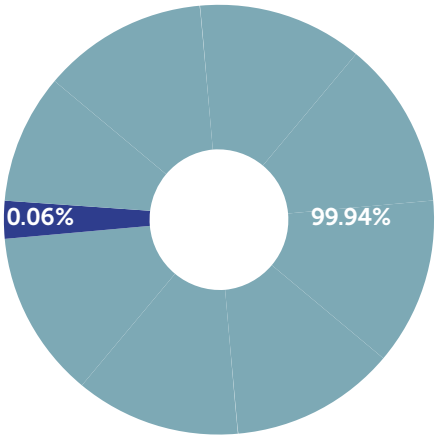
Throughout the reporting period, FRACC has consistently provided strategic counsel to the Board, reinforcing Freshcare's dedication to prudent financial management and sectoral support. In addition to its advisory responsibilities, the Committee has refined its reporting mechanisms to the Board and membership, ensured full statutory compliance, and maintained sustainable capital reserves. Planned investments in digital technologies are set to enhance efficiency and streamline audit processes, further strengthening operational transparency and effectiveness.

Looking ahead to FY2025-26, FRACC will continue to strengthen its reporting frameworks and undertake detailed financial analysis to support Freshcare's long-term viability and strategic objectives. Notwithstanding it's history, Freshcare's earnings are limited, receiving minimal government funding or industries levies – with participant fees reinvested back into operations, research and development of the standards. This highlights the importance of prudent and ongoing financial and risk management of the FRACC.

Financial information from the latest Annual Information Statement

Revenue

Total revenue: $$2,826,896.00

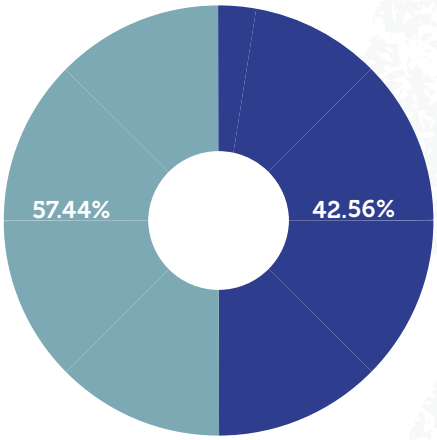


- Revenue Other
- Revenue from Goods or Services

Freshcare is a registered charity with the Australian Charities & Not-For-Profit Commission. View a full financial overview.

Expenses

Total expenses: $2,370,612.00

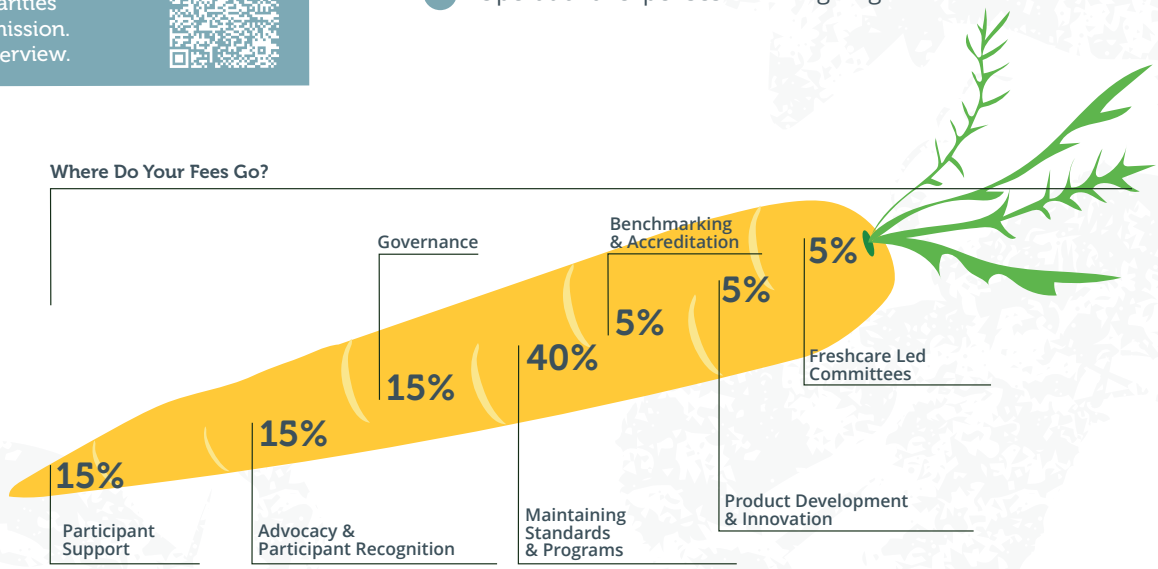


- Other expenses including Participant Support, Advocacy & Participant Recognition, Maintaining Standards & Programs, Benchmarking & Accreditation, Governance, Freshcare Led Committees, Product Development & Innovation
- Operational expenses including wages

Participation per Standard



Where Do Your Fees Go?



View how participant fees are used throughout Freshcare operations

Certification Snapshot 2025

The numbers presented in this snapshot reflect data collected over the 2025 calendar year, representing businesses that held certification during that period.

Recognised Freshcare Standards

5



Environmental

117



Supply Chain Standard

230



Food Safety and Quality

2906



Sustainability – Viticulture

1204



Sustainability – Winery

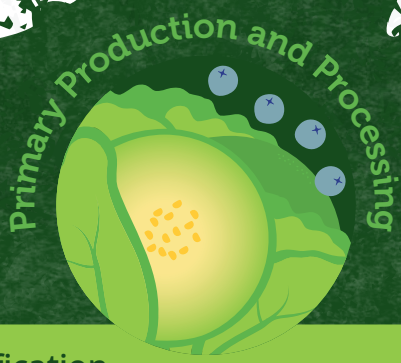
221

National Total of Certified Participants

4678

Peak Industry Member Organisations

30



Recognition of Freshcare Certification

- Primary Production and Processing (PPP) standards for: Berry, Leafy Vegetable and Melon growers were introduced to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code in August 2022, commencing in 2025.
- Formal recognition of Freshcare certification with streamlined compliance pathways has been achieved with regulators in Western Australia, Victoria & New South Wales.
- Freshcare continues to work closely with state and territory regulators to support practical and efficient implementation of the PPP Regulations.



Benchmarking & Endorsements

- Global Food Safety Initiative
- Reef Assured - Bananas Program
- Sustainable Wine Roundtable
- Government recognition
- Intertek

Freshcare: 25 Years of Industry-Led Assurance (2000–2025)











Late 1990s

Approved Supplier Program Developed supported by Hort Innovation

"What we developed was called an Approved Supplier Program – something that the growers could put into place that would be acceptable to the supermarkets.

"... But then it became obvious that we needed a certified food safety program."

– Scott Ledger



2000

National Launch of the Freshcare Program

Freshcare Limited was incorporated as a not-for-profit, industry-owned organisation.

The Freshcare On-Farm Food Safety Program formally launched.

"The people who've worked on developing Freshcare for all these years, we've all got an industry background – which gives a fair bit of credibility to the process."

- Richard Bennett



2000 - 2004

Grower Adoption & Industry Recognition

1,766 grower participants across Australian certified to Freshcare.

Freshcare formally endorsed by peak industry bodies, regional associations and major retailer Woolworths.

"When I joined Freshcare in 2001, I was literally handed a cardboard box which had a floppy disk, which was The Standard, and a dot matrix print out... and a list of growers, that was it."

- Clare Hamilton-Bate, former Freshcare General Manager



Mid-2000s

Program Expands Beyond Food Safety

Freshcare expands to include Environmental Code of Practice, Winery & Viticulture Environmental Code of Practices and Food Safety & Quality updated.

"It was actually started with a program called EnviroVeg through the vegetable industry, which was the catalyst for Freshcare Environmental."

- Jonathan Eccles





2010s

Supply Chain Standard Launched | HARPS Recognition |GFSI Alignment & Elearning Capabilities

Supply Chain Standard is Launched.

Freshcare Standards recognised by all major retailers via HARPS.

Standards align with Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) principles.

E-Learning training is launched.

"The last decade has seen a very rapid increase in the way we do business, and the Supply Chain Standard has been fundamental for food safety in central markets."

- Gail Woods, former Freshcare Director & Fresh Markets Australia



Early 2020s

Standards Strengthened and Benchmarked

Food Safety & Quality full Standard launched – achieving GFSI benchmarking

AWISSP Viticulture and Winery is released-meeting Sustainable Winegrowing Australia certification requirements.

Freshcare Environmental – Reef Assured is recognised by the QLD Government under the Environmental Protection Act 1994 for banana growers.



2024

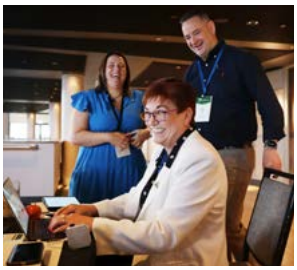
Exporter Retail Agreement & Comprehensive Standards Review Commenced

A major, industry-wide standards review was initiated to ensure Freshcare remains practical, credible, GFSI-aligned and internationally relevant, while reducing duplication and audit burden.

Freshcare producers approved to supply to Costco Wholesale in the USA and Canada.

"I think what most of us have appreciated is, this has actually allowed our industry to prove itself to supply chain, consumers and to the regulators that we do actually know what we're doing."

- Graham McAlpine, Former Director



2025

Freshcare 25 YEARS OF TRUSTED ASSURANCE

Freshcare marks 25 years of industry-led assurance, evolving from a national on-farm food safety program into a trusted, globally benchmarked standards owner supporting Australian agriculture.

"I think the culture of the business is fantastic. Led by Jane, we've got an organisation that really is passionate about what they do."

- Allison Buxton, Freshcare Chairperson

"Freshcare's biggest strength is its people; it's a privilege to be the leader of a team who are passionate about what they do."

- Jane Siebum, Freshcare CEO

In The Beginning...

Freshcare spoke with Scott Ledger, an original team member who helped to build Australian fresh produce, food safety standards.

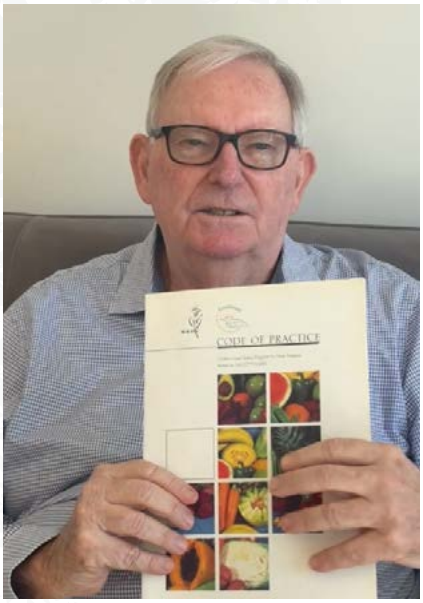
Freshcare's 25th year Anniversary is a milestone reflecting not only the longevity of the programs, but the strength of the people, partnerships and principles which have shaped the organisation from the beginning. One of the first people involved in Freshcare's inception in 1995, was Scott Ledger.

Scott played a critical role alongside a group of industry focused individuals, committed to creating an on-farm food safety program that was a practical, workable system Australian growers could adopt and implement with confidence.

> ***"The supermarkets started requiring growers to put in place food safety programs and at that initial stage, they were expecting the growers to do the HACCP process.***
>
> ***"A group of us that were working in the industry around Australia, got together and we decided that the HACCP process was just too rigorous, too detailed for growers," says Scott.***

The result was an industry-driven approved supplier program, a foundation which would evolve into the Freshcare Code of Practice and certified food safety program. Freshcare was created by industry, for industry - a factor which has been critical to its uptake.

> ***"Industry recognised the need and initiated and developed Freshcare, so they didn't need to rely on government, and that's why Freshcare has been so successful," says Scott.***



As a not-for-profit organisation, supported by industry ownership and strong governance, Freshcare was able to respond to real-world farming requirements, regional variability and the diverse production systems across Australia.

Like any significant change, the early years were not without resistance. Many growers were already following good practices, but documentation and record-keeping were unfamiliar and, at times, frustrating. Over time, however, education, training and peer leadership helped shift perspectives – particularly as food safety incidents globally reinforced the need to demonstrate, not just assume, safe production.

Training became central to Freshcare's success, with thousands of growers participating in early programs, supported by state departments, industry bodies and committed individuals across Australia.

> ***"When people understand why they need to do it, you've got a much better chance they'll actually do what's required," says Scott.***
>
> ***"But probably the people that saw that why it was really important - were actually the ladies. The actual farmers' wives, they played an important part, they were our stars," says Scott.***

Freshcare has grown beyond its initial food safety focus, extending to standards covering environmental management, supply chain and sustainable wine production. The evolution of the Freshcare standards has moved in step with changing customer expectations, industry needs and global market access requirements.

For Scott, Freshcare as an organisation and leader of Australian assurance, is a testament to the collective effort of passionate and committed people.

> ***"What I've enjoyed the most is working with people – growers, retailers, colleagues. It's been a real team effort," says Scott.***

Freshcare would also like to acknowledge the contributions of those individuals who were part of the organisation's inception and development:

Margie Milgate, Wally Collins, John Tyas, Ian King, Joe Ekman, John Bagshaw, Jane Lovell, Graham McAlpine, Richard Bennett, Clare Hamilton-Bate and Jonathan Eccles, Robert Premier, Martin Clarke, Adrienne Galloway, Paul Moosburger

Freshcare Excellence in Governance

For 25 years, Freshcare has continued to evolve its programs alongside its governance. Freshcare In Excellence highlights the leadership and vision of the Board's commitment to integrity, transparency and continuous improvement.

The Freshcare Board and executive team drive Freshcare's strategic focus towards initiatives which support participants, as the future of our industry becomes increasingly shaped by customer and consumer expectations, while ensuring the organisation remains accountable and future ready.

Freshcare Chairperson, Alison Buxton joined the Freshcare Board two years ago and is a highly experienced, commercially astute and well-rounded business leader who has built a successful career in blue-chip, multinational organisations across several industries.

> ***"One of the things I've been really pleased to see is the level of engagement Freshcare has throughout the industry, with all of our stakeholders. ...we're willing to work with them to find solutions to ensure that our Standards continued to be benchmarked, but also easy for our users."***





Freshcare CEO, Jane Siebum joined Freshcare in 2021 and has worked to deliver the board's strategic vision for the organisation. Through her active presence across all industry stakeholder groups and communication-first attitude, Jane has continued to support Freshcare's evolution as the leading provider of Australian horticulture assurance.

> ***"At the core of what we do are the people who use the programs, and the people who are impacted by them."***

Freshcare Director (2012- 2025), Dall played a key role in guiding the organisation's direction, growth, and long-term vision over his 13-year tenure on the Freshcare Board, serving as Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and providing significant contribution to the Finance, Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee.

> ***"We're now in a situation where we've got a fantastic organisation with professional staff, a great strategy, and we're really able to articulate values and outcomes for our participating businesses."***



Growers on The Ground

Freshcare spoke with participants from across Australia, to see first-hand how they implement the standards every day.

Freshcare has supported Australian growers and businesses to thrive through practical, industry driven assurance for 25 years. In 1995, it became clear that growers needed a food safety system they could implement in their businesses, to certify their existing best practice methods and gain access to market.

These stories showcase the hardworking people behind the produce on our supermarket shelves, the growers across the country providing consumers with fresh produce every day. Freshcare helps them to grow safe, sustainable high-quality food from paddock to pallet to plate.

SSS Strawberries, - Bundabery, QLD

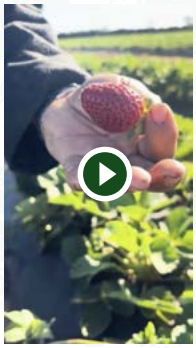
Victor Dang's family arrived in Perth as refugees from Vietnam in 1994 with nothing. They found work picking and packing strawberries, working hard to build a business and pioneering strawberry growing in the region.

Today, Victor runs SSS Strawberries in Bundaberg with his six siblings and 19 years in, they've been Freshcare certified from the start.

> ***"We're committed to quality and doing the right thing. There's no other way really," says Victor.***

Victor attributes the reputation of Australian produce and quality to the implementation of Freshcare.

> ***"Freshcare is 100 per cent beneficial... compared to produce from all around the world Australia's famous for the best quality," says Victor.***





Paisley Produce, Ginger Farm – Eumundi, QLD

Simon and Amanda Henderson with their son Harry, reflect on the knowledge they've gained through becoming Freshcare certified, the risks they're now more aware of and how Freshcare's Standards have helped to educate their employees on food safety and best on-farm practices.

> ***"We wanted to get our practices better and then use Freshcare as a checklist to see how we went. We're not just ticking off 'Freshcare', we're trying to do the best job we can," says Simon.***



Yanalla Farms, Dragonfruit | Lychees | Custard Apples – Glasshouse Mountains, QLD

Yanalla Farms has been Freshcare certified for 13 years. Karen champions the importance of certification to ensure integrity as a grower and give consumers confidence in the quality of what they're buying.

> ***"It's very important that consumers understand what systems growers are part of, and helps give them confidence that the fruit growers are producing are of high quality and high standard," says Karen.***



Freshcare Certification

Freshcare is supported by the passion and expertise of individuals who train, consult and audit to the standards. Their insights, collaboration, and commitment have helped shape Freshcare's internationally recognised programs.

Sonia Tarca: A Passionate Advocate for Growers & Continuous Learning

Mase Cheng: Journey from Taiwan to Rural Queensland

Hear more from Certification Bodies who work with Freshcare to support our Standards developments and support growers to achieve certification.

For over a decade, South Australian-based AUS-QUAL auditor Sonia Tarca has worked across farms and fresh produce businesses auditing participants to the Freshcare Standards.

Having started her horticulture journey in a potato packing shed, Sonia brings to the auditor role a deep understanding and respect for growers.

> ***"To me, they're the biggest gamblers in the world, they don't need Lotto tickets. They put a seed in the ground and hope like hell it's going to work," she said.***

Sonia believes an important part of her role as an auditor, is to empower growers to have belief in their own systems and implementing best-business practice.

> ***"The strengths that all growers have is that they know their craft," she said.***
>
> ***"Whether they have a degree, or whether they speak English as a second language and have just learnt everything you know from a hands-on perspective, I think that they are a wealth of knowledge."***
>
> ***"I hope that when I audit, people are able to see that I do have empathy and a lot of admiration for what they do."***

Based in Brisbane, for the past 15 years Mase, working in Quality Assurance, was looking for a change in career direction.

> ***"I'd been through 15 years of audits in QA, I wanted to sit on the other side of the table," said Mase.***

Before Mase moved into agriculture, he was a young electrician from Taiwan, destined for the United States but a chance meeting with "an Aussie guy named Chris", soon changed his mind.

> ***"He told me how great the country was, so I thought why not try?" said Mase.***

After graduation Mase moved almost 300km west, to the rural Queensland town of Emerald, working on a table grape farm.

More recently, Mase has completed his Cert III in Horticulture and says while it was challenging, he knew it was essential to meet the educational requirements for auditing.

> ***"At first, I thought that plants are just like trees... you water them, and they grow. But there's fertilising, chemicals and much more. You've got to treat the plants like a baby," joked Mase.***



Niall Cameron

– Program Manager for Freshcare, AUSQUAL



Jasmina Ginovska

– General Manager, Sci Qual International



Shaun Hudson

– Food Safety & Sustainability Manager, ACO Certification

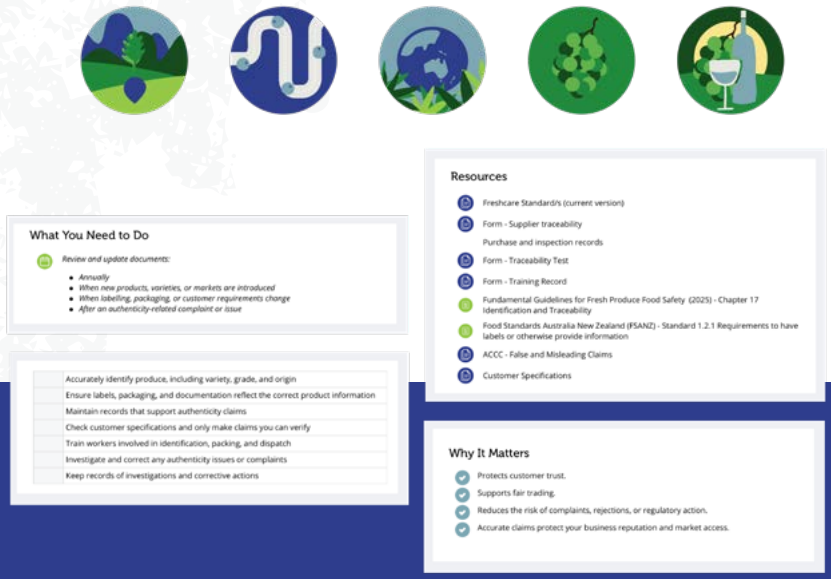
Key Initiatives & Projects

Freshcare Standards Review

In 2025, Freshcare continued a comprehensive review of its certification standards, informed by consultation with growers, supply-chain partners, government and industry representatives and technical experts. The review focused on strengthening and future-proofing Freshcare's Food Safety & Quality, Environmental and Supply Chain Standards to ensure they remain practical, risk-based and aligned with evolving regulatory and market expectations.

Following extensive public consultation, the review marks a critical step in furthering the development of Freshcare's Standards and accompanying resources to streamline requirements and implementation for participating businesses.

The review has been supported by Freshcare's Technical Steering Committee (TSC), comprised of passionate industry experts committed to developing and future-proofing our Standards for industry and participants.



Freshcare would like to acknowledge the extraordinary commitment of the highly qualified individuals who have dedicated their time and expertise to this process, meeting regularly to review every element of the standards and the more than 350 technical items raised during the call for submissions

- Graham McAlpine
- Belinda Hazell
- Donella Van der Est
- Dr Mardi Longbottom
- Dr Mark Bradbury
- Joel Dinsdale
- Liz Riley
- Richard Bennett
- Sally McKay
- Tundra Howe
- David Williams
- Mark Dawson
- Jonathan Eccles
- Shannon Kirstein
- (Chair/s: Andrew Redman, Jane Lovell)





Regulatory Technology Project: Creating a Digital Framework

The Regulatory Technology (RegTech) Project, in partnership with Hort Innovation, wrapped in 2025. The project identified the complexities and challenges of compliance requirements faced by growers.

Funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) under the National Agriculture Traceability Grants Program, the two-year project was supported through experts with experience in agtech, horticulture, science and research and development – contributing to the Community of Practice and Volunteer Technologist Working Group.

Key recommendations from the project report included standardising language across all compliance programs, cross-recognition across compliance programs and the creation of a central digital framework, guiding growers on program elements required specific to their business.

Following the RegTech project, Freshcare has worked to incorporate the recommendations into current and ongoing initiatives such as the Standards Review and the development of digital tools and resources.

Freshcare first-hand

Access Freshcare's YouTube Shorts >



Freshcare First-Hand: Connecting with Stakeholders

The Freshcare First-Hand content series, reflects Freshcare's commitment to staying closely connected to the realities of on-farm production and supply-chain operations. Throughout 2025, this approach underpinned key projects and initiatives by prioritising direct engagement with growers, industry bodies, regulators and technical experts. Through sharing the first-hand experiences of businesses and individuals engaging with the Freshcare Standards across our communication channels, we're able to connect to why certification matters to industry.

Gathering and sharing the experiences and stories told through the Freshcare First-Hand content series, plays a critical role in maintaining strong ties and collaborative relationships with the people who implement the standards and programs every day.

By listening first and working alongside stakeholders, Freshcare ensures our standards, digital frameworks and regulatory support has remained practical, risk-based and responsive to real-world challenges.

Primary Production and Processing (PPP) Alignment and Activation

Freshcare played an active role in supporting industry alignment with Primary Production and Processing (PPP) regulatory requirements for berry, leafy vegetable and melon producers and processors.

The rollout and implementation of the regulations commenced on 12 February 2025, following their introduction to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code in August 2022.

Over the past four years, Freshcare has worked with peak industry bodies Berries Australia, AUSVEG, Melons Australia and Fresh Markets Australia, to collaborate with each relevant state jurisdiction, to create a solution for producers to meet the new regulations introduced by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ).

Freshcare has engaged with state and territory authorities, continuing to advocate strongly on behalf of growers for recognition of existing certifications, exemption or reduction of fees for certified growers, and targeted support for non-certified operators to enhance sector-wide food safety.

Freshcare has successfully achieved recognition for certified producers and processors in WA, VIC and NSW, and is continuing to collaborate with other state jurisdictions.





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