TOMATO TOPICS

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR THE PROCESSING TOMATO INDUSTRY

Hort Innovation PROCESSING TOMATO FUND

ISSN 1038-3522 Spring 2026 VOL. 36 NO. 3

A strong start to 26/27 Trial Program

Getting field trials established takes planning, precision and, generally, some executive decisions and adaptive thinking on planting day.

With the last of this season's APTRC trials now successfully planted, it's a fitting time to recognise the excellent contribution of Mark and Sarah Sargeant and the OptiAg team.

Since taking on APTRC's cultivar evaluation trials in the 2024/25 season, Mark and Sarah have provided valuable field research services and data analysis to support the program.



This season, **two early-season trials, three mid-season trials and two grafting trials** are in place. The sites span the industry's growing regions: Kagome's Eastwood site west of Deniliquin, Doherty's east of Deniliquin and Parncutt's west of Echuca; GoFarm at Yalca and Sawers at Boort. *(Details of the trials follow on the next pages).*

Alongside this program, **two GLP residue trials** have been established with GLP-accredited business Living Farm and OptiAg. These trials aim to generate the residue data needed to support a longer-term extension of the Syngenta Reflex® permit for processing tomatoes.

Above image shows Kate Maclean from Fairbanks Seeds—Heinz's new processing tomato seed representative in Australia—lending the Sargeants a hand; photograph below has Liam at GoFarm watering our trial plants. On the following page Megan Williams, Syngenta is inspecting Doherty's trials.



www.aptrc.asn.au aptrc.idm@outlook.com PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564

Early Season Trials	
Kagome Doherty · Blighty 24 September 2026	
Sawers · Leaghur, Vic 26 September 2026	
H1015	Heinz
H1014	Heinz
H1879	Heinz
HM0371	HM Clause
N6438/254	Nunhems
N6416/210	Nunhems
SVTM9018	Bayer/Seminis
SVTM9027	Bayer/Seminis
SVTM9033	Bayer/Seminis
Micemo	Syngenta
Redix	Syngenta



Mid/Full Season Trials	
Kagome Eastwood · NSW 10 October 2026	
GoFarm Yalca · Vic 16 October 2026	
Sawers · Leaghur, Vic 20 October 2026	
H3402	Heinz
H1311	Heinz
H1657	Heinz
H2249	Heinz
H1996	Heinz
HM8237	HMClause
HM0221	HMClause
HMC621546	HMClause
N6434/261	Nunhems
SVTM9037	Bayer/Seminis
SVTM9038	Bayer/Seminis
SVTM9040	Bayer/Seminis
UG29814	United Genetics
UG16112	United Genetics

www.aptrc.asn.au aptrc.idm@outlook.com PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564

GoFarm Yalca - Vic - 16 October 2026			
Kagome Echuca West - Vic - 19 October 2026			
Rootstock Company	**Rootstock Cultivar**	**Scion Cultivar**	**Density (plants/ha)**
Bayer/Seminis	**Multifort**	H3402	10,200
Bayer/Seminis	**Multifort**	UG16112	10,200
Bayer/Seminis	**Multifort**	SVTM9023	10,200
IYRIS	**X Stock**	H3402	10,200
IYRIS	**X Stock**	UG16112	10,200
IYRIS	**X Stock**	SVTM9023	10,200
Syngenta	**Fervour**	H3402	10,200
Syngenta	**Fervour**	UG16112	10,200
Syngenta	**Fervour**	SVTM9023	10,200
	Ungrafted	H3402	20,400
	Ungrafted	UG16112	20,400
	Ungrafted	SVTM9023	20,400
Bayer/Seminis	**Multifort**	H3402	20,400
Bayer/Seminis	**Multifort**	UG16112	20,400
Bayer/Seminis	**Multifort**	SVTM9023	20,400

www.aptrc.asn.au aptrc.idm@outlook.com PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564

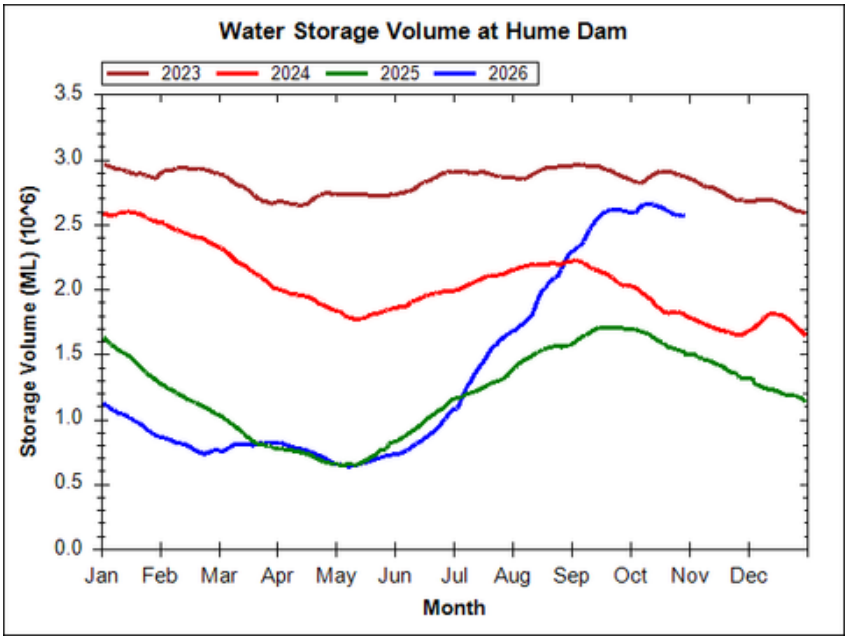
Climate Outlook

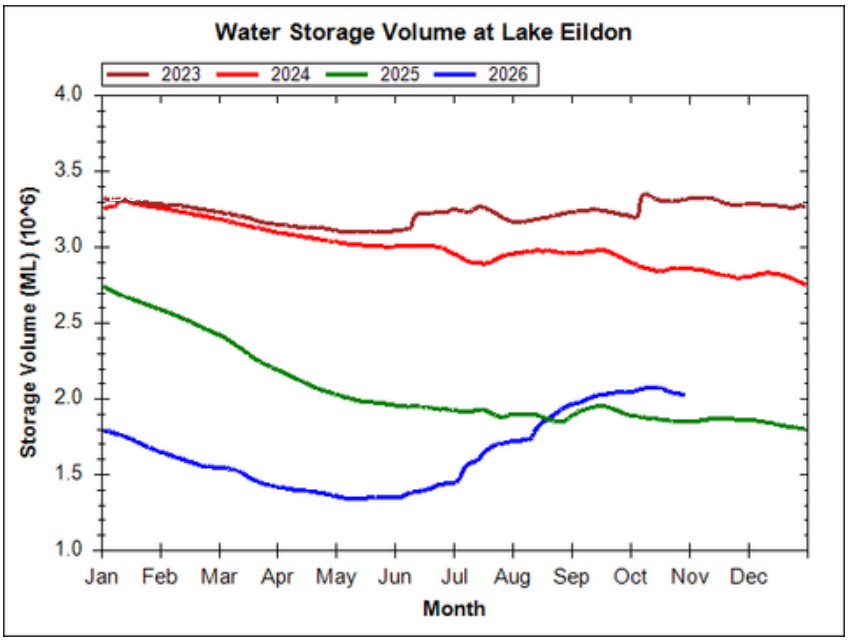
For northern Victoria and southern New South Wales, the **Bureau of Meteorology's** November to January outlook does not show a strong rainfall signal across much of the region. The strongest wet signal is further north in NSW, while below-average rainfall is favoured in small parts of Southern Victoria.

The temperature signal is much clearer. BOM forecasts more than an 80% chance of above-average daytime and overnight temperatures across almost all of Australia, with an increased chance of unusually hot days across parts of NSW and Victoria. Unusually warm nights are also considered very likely across much of the country.

A strong El Niño is underway and continuing to strengthen, while a positive Indian Ocean Dipole is also active and expected to return to neutral in early summer. For growers, the practical takeaway is that heat is the stronger planning signal for November to January, while rainfall remains less certain across northern Victoria and southern NSW.

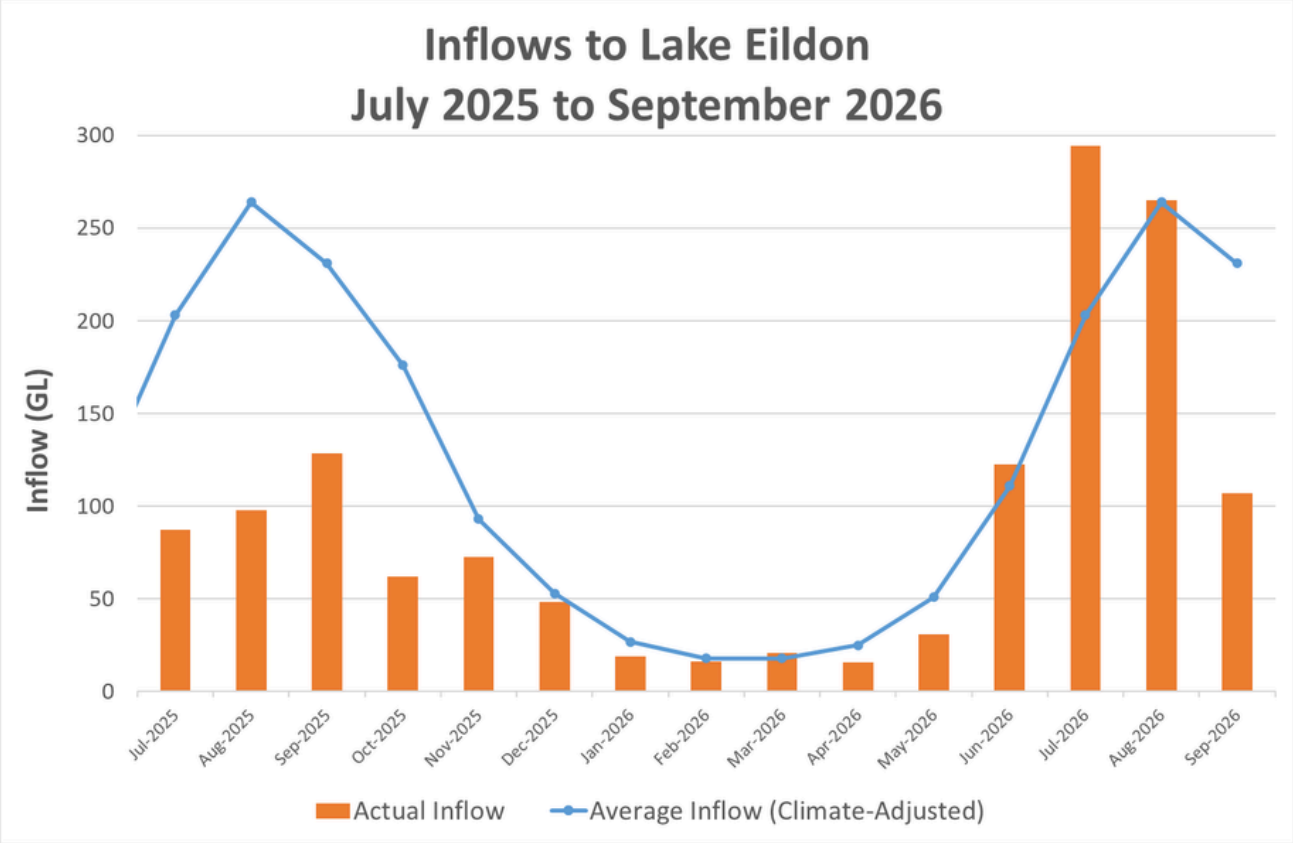
Water Storage Levels Goulburn-Murray Water

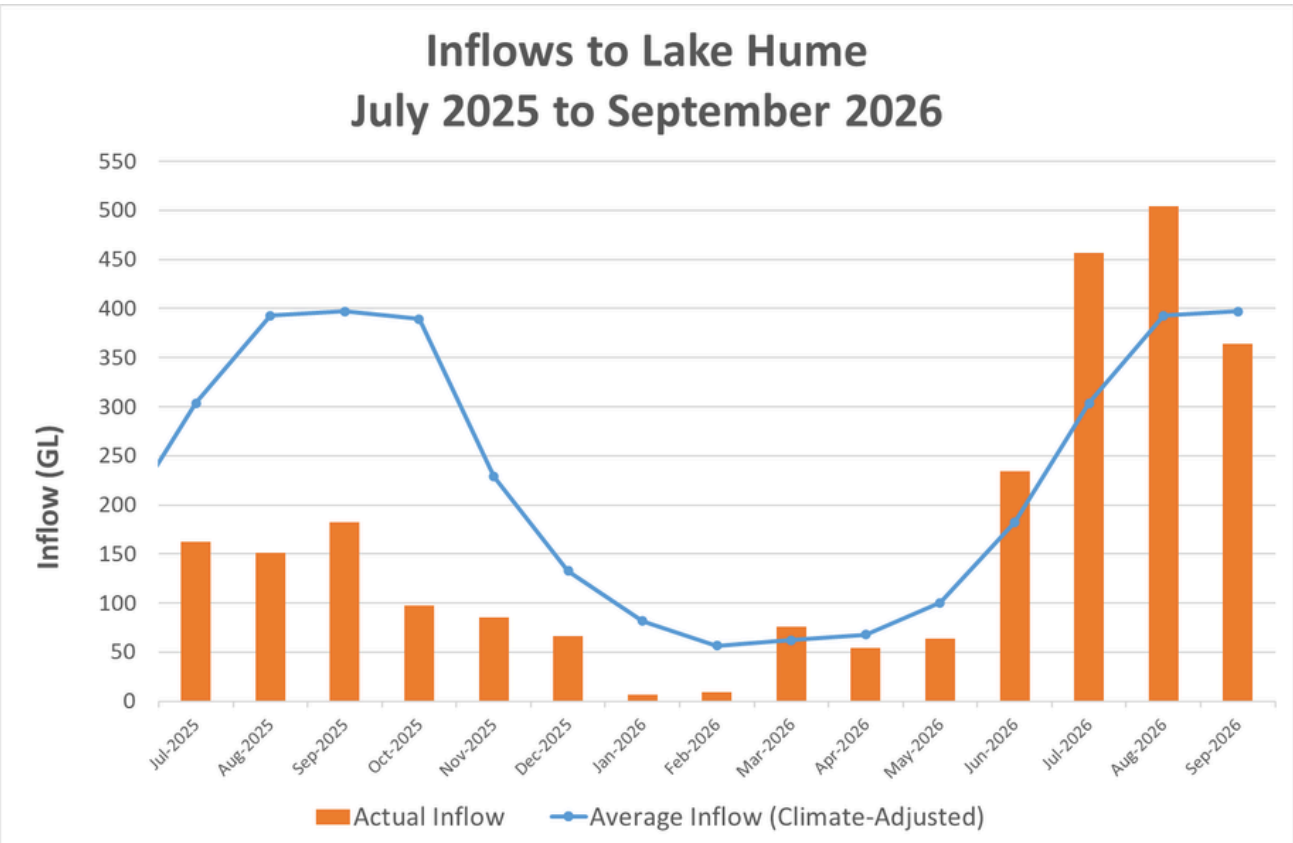




www.aptrc.asn.au
aptrc.idm@outlook.com
PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564

Water Inflows (Supplied by Goulburn-Murray Water)





www.aptrc.asn.au aptrc.idm@outlook.com PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564

Australian tomatoes on the menu at Festival of Stories



The power of **Australian branding**—and audience Q&A on how to turn it into stronger support for locally grown tomatoes—featured in a lively business breakfast discussion at Echuca's Festival of Stories.

Kagome's Brad Free joined business leaders at The Echuca Hotel for Friday's Brand Stories panel, exploring how businesses build their identity and connect with customers. Brad singled out Leggo's as a brand he admired, highlighting its strong Australian branding. He added that Kagome's exceptional processing quality standards had helped them build a sterling reputation both here and in Japan.

The panel was asked by an audience member (being yours truly) if it was better to encourage consumers to **Support Australian** or was it more effective to warn consumers about the risk of losing Australian processed tomatoes in the future if they **fail to support Australian**;

Travla's Jonathan Ward offered a point of view, that the carrot and stick both have a role so long as they're used for the right audiences.

For me, this discussion offered food for thought on a potential direction for industry marketing: give shoppers compelling reasons to choose Australian tomatoes, alongside firm advocacy with those who influence the Australian market.

It's exactly these kinds of ideas that we need to work collectively on, to get our industry heard.

Brad also participated in Sunday's Storytelling through the Seasons panel, sharing Kagome's regional connections and the importance of local growers and food manufacturing.

Together, the sessions gave Australian processing tomatoes a worthy local platform and helped celebrate the people and businesses behind the local products on our shelves.

New thrips pest detected in Queensland

Intonsa flower thrips (*Frankliniella intonsa*) has been detected on multiple berry properties in southeast Queensland—the first reported detections in Australia.

The pest has a broad host range, including vegetables, berries, field crops and weeds. Feeding and egg-laying can cause scarring, fruit distortion and reduced yield. Of relevance to tomato growers, it is also a known vector of Tomato spotted wilt orthotospovirus.

The national Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests has concluded eradication is not technically feasible and is unlikely to be cost-beneficial.

Government and industry will continue investigating its distribution, impacts and management. Growers should monitor for unusual thrips activity or crop damage and report concerns to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.



Intonsa flower thrips: female (above), male (below). Image: Okajima & Masumoto

www.aptrc.asn.au aptrc.idm@outlook.com PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564

Winning back the shopping basket requires a united voice



AUSVEG's new 'Check & Choose' campaign offers a practical message to build on for our own processing tomato industry: check the country of origin when buying frozen and canned vegetables, and choose Australian-grown.

Launched in October, the campaign responds to growing import competition and pressure on grower viability. It complements AUSVEG's 'Plus One Serve' initiative by encouraging consumers to consider where their vegetables were grown, alongside how much veggies they are eating.

For processing tomatoes, building domestic market share remains a central challenge and consumer goodwill towards Australian processing tomato farmers needs to translate into purchases of Australian-grown and processed products.

Individual industries can still tell their own stories while strengthening a common message about Australian-grown ingredients.

Campaigns must also make the choice straightforward. Helping shoppers easily identify ingredient origin, understand labels and find Australian-grown alternatives would turn a broad appeal into a practical purchasing decision.

Promotion alone cannot resolve every competitiveness challenge. But rebuilding market share requires visibility, repetition and products consumers can readily identify and buy. 'Check & Choose' provides a useful starting point.

Armenia puts local tomatoes first as trade disruption bites

Armenia has temporarily banned tomato concentrate imports following trade disruptions that left growers struggling to find a market for their crop.
Tomato News reports the six-month ban took effect on 3 August 2026 and applies to all trading partners, including fellow Eurasian Economic Union members.



The move follows tighter Russian phytosanitary restrictions. Armenian greenhouse tomato exports fell to around 800 tonnes between late May and late July, compared with nearly 7,000 tonnes during the same period in 2025.
With export outlets squeezed, greenhouse tomatoes flooded the domestic market, pushing down prices and reducing demand for field-grown processing tomatoes. The import ban aims to encourage processors to absorb local production, supporting grower returns and reducing financial hardship.

Source: Tomato News, 3 August 2026. tomatonews.com

For Australia, the circumstances differ, but the response raises a useful question: what measures could our government consider to help our processing tomato industry withstand global market pressures and maintain local production into the future?

www.aptrc.asn.au aptrc.idm@outlook.com PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564

Spanish growers weigh planting boycott as margins tighten

A threatened planting boycott in Spain's Extremadura region offers a telling example of the pressures facing processing tomato growers.

Tomato News reports that regional cooperative federation Cooperativas Agro-alimentarias Extremadura will advise growers against planting in 2027 unless contracts cover production costs and provide reasonable margins. The federation blames a combination of heat-related yield losses, quality penalties and rising input costs for a second consecutive loss-making season.

Average yields reportedly reached about 83.5 tonnes per hectare, against an expected 92.3 tonnes. Lower soluble solids also reduced payments from a base contract price of €107/t to around €100/t. The federation has raised concerns about access to effective pest controls and insurance that fails to cover persistent extreme heat.

Source: Tomato News, 1 October 2026.



Photo: 2025 Tour Group in Spain

"A little ray of Sunshine… In the Shape of a" ……. Tomato!

Researchers at the UK's John Innes Centre have recently developed the gene-edited 'Sunshine' tomato, which has received precision-bred organism marketing approval in England. It accumulates pro-vitamin D3, which converts to vitamin D3 when exposed to sunlight or UVB light. Further food approval is required before it reaches consumers.



With potential applications in fresh and processed foods, as well as supplements, the Sunshine tomato offers an interesting glimpse of what future cultivars might deliver.

Perhaps yield, Brix and disease resistance will eventually have another companion on the cultivar breeding wish list.

You can read the full marketing notice here on the GOV.UK website.

www.aptrc.asn.au aptrc.idm@outlook.com PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564



US bill targets tomato origin fraud

A bipartisan US proposal aims to strengthen verification of where processing tomatoes are grown, highlighting the growing international focus on food provenance.

The proposed **Rooting Out Mislabeled Agriculture (ROMA)** Act would direct the US Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service to establish a database of processing tomato isotopic signatures—geographical "fingerprints" that could help verify origin. It would also support research to improve testing methods and coordination with customs authorities on import inspections.

Backed by lawmakers from California and other agricultural states, the proposal seeks to address concerns that imported tomato products can be blended or mislabelled to obscure their origins and evade trade restrictions. It remains proposed legislation.

Plan ahead for a safer season

Before the season gets too much busier, reviewing machinery, higher-risk jobs and worker inductions can help prevent problems and keep your business running smoothly.

Two free, confidential services funded by WorkSafe can help Victorian growers:



Photo: Courtesy OHS Essentials



OHS Essentials: An independent safety consultant provides personalised advice, identifies hazards and helps develop a tailored safety action plan.

Making Our Farms Safer: Delivered by the Victorian Farmers Federation, this service offers on-farm visits, practical tools and help to manage risks.

Getting advice early can help you prioritise improvements and put clear procedures in place before workloads increase.

Visit ohsessentials.com.au/agriculture, or contact Making Our Farms Safer on 1300 882 833 or at makingourfarmssafer.org.au/farm-service/.

www.aptrc.asn.au aptrc.idm@outlook.com PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564

Laser soil sensing offers potential for more precise management

Hort Innovation has invested in TerraBlaster, a start-up developing laser-based soil sensing technology that could help growers better target fertiliser applications.

The system measures soil properties directly in the paddock while machinery is operating, converting measurements into maps showing where fertiliser may—or may not—be required.

According to Hort Innovation, it delivers results within seconds and provides up to 16 times greater spatial detail than typical grid sampling. This describes the detail of soil mapping, rather than a demonstrated improvement in measurement accuracy.

For processing tomatoes, the potential application would be more targeted nutrient management across variable paddocks.

Finer-scale soil information could potentially help agronomists identify management zones and develop fertiliser programs that better reflect local conditions.

These are potential applications; the announcement does not report processing tomato trial results.

The investment, through Hort Innovation Frontiers, supports validation, adaptation and commercial development.



Photo: Courtesy of TerraBlaster

UPCOMING EVENTS

Hort Business Summit 2026
When: Friday, 20 November 2026 - 8:30am - 4:30pm
Where: Storey Hall, RMIT University, Melbourne
Register Now

APTRC Boort Region Field Day - 2026 - Invite to be sent out shortly.
When: Wednesday 9th December 2026
Where: Afternoon Farm Visits to Sawers and Lawrence's farm, followed by dinner at Boort Hotel.

APTRC January Oriba/Netafim Sponsored Field Day and Family Dinner - 2027
When: Friday 15th January 2027
Where: Field Visits, followed by dinner and drinks at Echuca Pavilion (Racecourse).

APTRC Annual Processing Tomato Forum - 2027
When: Friday 14th May 2027 11:00am start
Where: Rich River Golf Club, Moama NSW
Included: Delegates dinner to follow at RRGC

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:
This project [Australian Processing Tomato Industry Development and Extension Project The Next Steep (TM25001)] is funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited with co-investment from Australian Processing Tomato Research Council Inc. and funds from the Australian Government.
"Tomato Topics" is a quarterly newsletter compiled and edited by the Industry Development Manager, APTRC Inc. Opinions expressed in "Tomato Topics" are not necessarily those of the APTRC unless otherwise stated.

www.aptrc.asn.au aptrc.idm@outlook.com PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564