



Freshcare

Annual Review 2024

Assuring Our Industry, Securing Your Future.

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.

Chairperson's Message

Over the course of 2024, long-serving Freshcare Director Allan Dall stepped down as Chairperson in November. Alison Buxton was nominated as the incoming Chairperson to lead the Freshcare Board. Due to the timeline of the leadership handover, we are featuring a message from both serving 2024 Chairpersons.



*Allan Dall, Chairperson
February 2023 – November 2024*



*Alison Buxton, Chairperson
November 2024 – Present*

As I reflect on my time as Chairperson of Freshcare, I am immensely proud of what the organisation has achieved. Freshcare has long been a leader of assurance for the fresh produce, wine grape, and supply chain industries, evolving to meet industry and market access requirements through certification and training. It has been a privilege to contribute to this journey, ensuring that Freshcare remains an organisation built by industry, for industry.

I want to extend my gratitude to the Freshcare Board, our dedicated team, and the wider industry for their unwavering commitment to advancing food safety, sustainability, and best practice throughout 2024. Your passion and expertise have been instrumental in driving Freshcare's strategic vision forward.

Over this past year the Board farewelled long-serving Directors Gail Woods and Graham McAlpine, following eight years contributing their invaluable industry knowledge and expertise whilst supporting the organisational vision for Freshcare. We are extremely grateful for the time they've contributed to the betterment of Freshcare and industry.

As part of our ongoing board renewal and succession, this year we welcomed two new Directors – Carrie Starkings and Belinda Wilson-Chartres, who bring to the Board extensive experience in complex supply chains, farmgate businesses, auditing and training.

As I step down as Chairperson, I am pleased to welcome Alison Buxton into this role. This follows Alison's appointment to the Freshcare Board last year. Her extensive experience and dedication to industry innovation ensures Freshcare is well-placed as it continues into its next chapter. I have every confidence that under Alison's leadership, Freshcare will continue to grow, evolve, and support our industry in new and impactful ways.

I continue to serve as a Director for a further 12 months, in my final term sitting on the Freshcare Board. It has been an honour to serve as Chairperson, and I look forward to seeing Freshcare's continued success.

As Freshcare moves into its 25th year as Australia's leading provider of trusted assurance programs, I am excited to step into the role of Chairperson of the Board. As we celebrate this milestone, we also look ahead to the future, cementing Freshcare's position as The First Choice Standards in food safety, sustainability, and industry best practice.

Key to maintaining our position as the First Choice Standards is ensuring that our programs remain relevant, practical, and aligned with market needs. The ongoing Standards Review has been an essential part of this process, and we sincerely thank all those who have contributed their insights and expertise. Industry input plays a vital role in shaping Freshcare's standards, enabling the organisation to continue supporting and driving best practice across Australian horticulture, supply chain and wine sectors.

One of Freshcare's greatest strengths is the depth and diversity of its Board. Our Directors bring a wealth of experience across fresh produce, supply chain, and the sustainable wine industry, providing invaluable insights that guide our strategic direction.

As we continue to build on our strong foundation, Freshcare's strategic focus remains clear: to support industry participants in meeting market and regulatory requirements while championing bestpractice and innovation.

It is a privilege to lead the Freshcare Board into this new chapter, working alongside dedicated Directors, the Freshcare Team, and industry partners to strengthen our role as a trusted, industry-led organisation.

Thank you for the continued trust and commitment from industry and valued stakeholders in Freshcare. I look forward to collaborating with you all as we shape the future of assurance in Australian agriculture.

[Meet the Freshcare Board. Visit our website.](#)

CEO Message



Chief Executive Officer
Jane Siebum

As I reflect on 2024, our board and team recognise the ongoing challenges and adversity faced by our participants.

Growers, business owners, and industry stakeholders continue to provide consumers with safe, high-quality produce and wine despite climate disruptions, biosecurity threats, labour shortages, rising operational costs, and increasing regulatory expectations. The Freshcare Community continues to demonstrate endurance and resilience, year after year.

This year, we remained committed to our strategic focus on excellence in governance and excellence in operations. In governance, our board continued to uphold high standards of oversight, transparency, and accountability, reinforcing Freshcare's position as the First-Choice standard for industry. In operations, we strengthened our customer service capability and organisational efficiency through a carefully implemented restructure. We welcomed a new leadership team, introduced systems to better support our community, and focused on delivering programs and services of the highest quality.

Sustainability continues to be a core focus. Freshcare has been recognised globally for its robust programs and effective management of the Australian Wine Industry Sustainability Standard – Viticulture and Winery (AWISSP). The Sustainable Wine Roundtable's Benchmarking Pilot Report praised Freshcare for its excellence in governance and highlighted our strong partnership with Sustainable Winegrowing Australia. A study conducted by Intertek and Systembolaget awarded AWISSP the highest possible rating across all Environmental Growing, Farming, and Production criteria. These accomplishments reinforce Freshcare's role as a leading Australian standard owner in sustainable certification and management.

One of our standout achievements in 2024 was the launch of the Regulatory Technology Project, in partnership with Hort Innovation. Through the creation of a Community of Practice and collaboration with our dedicated Volunteer Technologist Working Group (VTWG), we have explored innovative ways to streamline certification standards and reduce duplication—making assurance programs more accessible and effective for our participants.

We also commenced a comprehensive review of Freshcare Standards to align with evolving industry needs and global expectations. A key focus is integrating our Environment and Sustainability Standards more effectively across sectors. This work is guided by our Technical Steering Committee (TSC), made up of passionate industry experts committed to the long-term relevance and rigour of our Standards.

Freshcare's commitment to global benchmarks was further demonstrated through our successful GFSI Benchmark audit, a third-party validation of our globally recognised assurance programs. This achievement was followed by an exciting development—Costco approved Freshcare-certified mango growers for export to the USA and Canada, expanding international market access for our community.

We also continued to advocate strongly for growers in regulatory spaces. In 2024, Freshcare secured formal recognition for its berry, leafy vegetable, and melon programs under the Primary Production and Processing (PPP) regulations. These efforts reflected our commitment to ensuring that regulatory outcomes are practical, fair, and grounded in industry needs. As we moved into 2025, we continued working closely with Freshcare Member Organisations to support the rollout of these regulations, advocating for practical, industry-aligned implementation across all state jurisdictions.

Throughout the year, we've shared Freshcare Community member stories via Case Studies, highlighting the passion and dedication behind our certified businesses. These stories reflect the heart of Freshcare—people committed to food safety, sustainability, and integrity.

Our team's presence at events across the horticulture, wine, and supply chain sectors allowed us to connect directly with the Freshcare Community, industry leaders, and innovators. These moments provide important opportunities to engage with our stakeholders and share our ongoing commitment to delivering safe, high-quality, and sustainable Australian produce and wine.

I would like to acknowledge the Freshcare team for their exceptional work and unwavering focus on delivering meaningful outcomes for our stakeholders. Their professionalism, drive, and care make all of this possible.

As we celebrate Freshcare's 25th anniversary in 2025—Freshcare at 25: Trusted Assurance for Australian Industries—we reflect on a quarter-century of industry collaboration, leadership, and evolution. Freshcare's journey has been built not only by our board and staff but also through the contributions of Certification Bodies, Trainers, Participants, Peak Industry Bodies, Retailers, and Hort Innovation. Many of these stakeholders have been with us since the very beginning. I look forward to celebrating this milestone with our community and continuing our shared journey of growth, impact, and trust.

Message from the FRACC



Dominique Doyle
FRACC Chairperson & Director

The Freshcare Finance, Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee (FRACC) plays a vital advisory role in ensuring strong financial governance, risk management, and transparency.

By safeguarding revenue generated through Freshcare programs and services, the FRACC helps sustain Australian producers' and businesses' access to global markets.

As a registered entity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC), Freshcare invests its proceeds into strengthening standards, training, and resources—supporting the safety, sustainability, and quality of Australian produce.

Throughout the past year, the FRACC has continued to provide critical guidance to the Board, reinforcing Freshcare's commitment to responsible financial management and industry support.

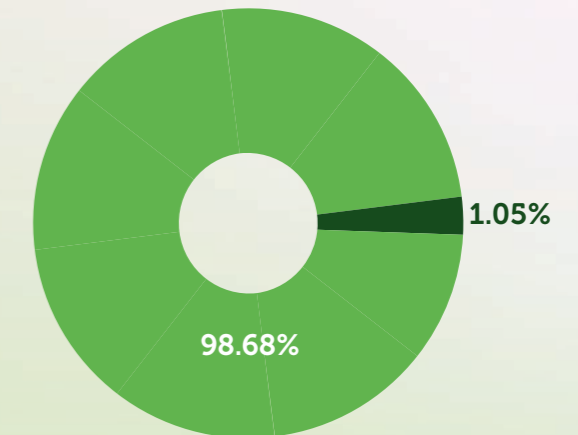
Alongside its advisory responsibilities, the committee has refined its reporting to Board and members, ensured statutory compliance of Freshcare and maintained sustainable capital reserves.

Into 2025-26 the FRACC will continue to enhance reporting and analyse results to ensure long term sustainability of Freshcare.

Financial information from the latest Annual Information Statement

Revenue

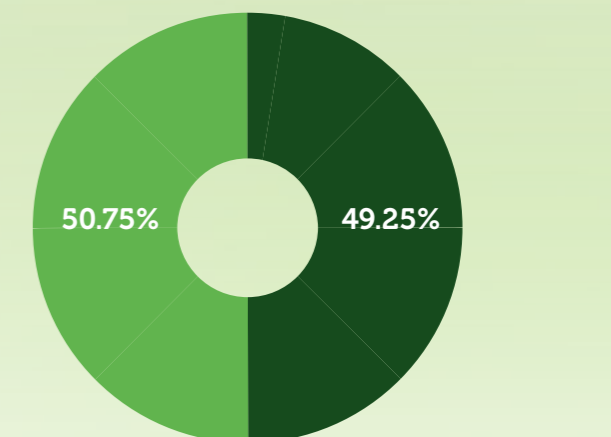
Total revenue: \$2,156,558.00



- Revenue Other
- Revenue from Goods or Services

Expenses

Total expenses: \$2,158,869.00



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

Freshcare Fee Structure

25%	Participant Support
20%	Advocacy & Participant Recognition
20%	Governance
20%	Maintaining Standards & Programs
10%	Benchmarking & Accreditation
10%	Product Development & Innovation
5%	Freshcare Led Committees

[View how participant fees are used throughout Freshcare operations](#)



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

Certification Snapshot 2024



Benchmarking & Endorsements

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



National Certified Participants (%)

NT	1
TAS	2
WA	12
VIC	18
NSW	19
QLD	23
SA	25

*Figures shown reflect data collected over the 2024 calendar year.

Freshcare First Hand

Freshcare had the opportunity to join certified participants during 2024 to showcase the incredible work they do implementing our programs throughout their complex businesses. Freshcare's Media and Marketing Manager, Sallie Don met with the hard-working teams who bring safe and high-quality produce and wine to consumers every day - to find out what goes on behind the scenes!

Brokenwood Estate
- Hunter Valley NSW

Watch our
Brokenwood Estate
Case Study >>



Brokenwood Estate made a significant commitment to sustainability practice by becoming a member of the Sustainable Winegrowing Australia Program in 2019. In 2021 Brokenwood became Certified to the Freshcare Australian Wine Industry Standard of Sustainable Practice-Winery & Viticulture.



Sustainability is a journey of continuous improvement and by looking more closely at the way we perform daily operations – we have found it can also result in more efficient business practices.

- Lorrae Vincent, Sustainability Lead.
Increasing Market Demands

Increasing domestic and export market demands for sustainable Australian wine was initially the significant driver for Brokenwood to become Freshcare Sustainably Certified.



For Brokenwood Sustainability Lead Lorrae Vincent, implementing sustainability practices at the vineyard and winery has made measurable environmental impact and benefited their economic business.

"There is a demand now from overseas markets to have third party accreditation of your practices.

"This has certainly opened doors for us and has become now, a necessary requirement to do business, a basic licence to operate," said Lorrae.

Challenges of Climate Change

One the main challenges facing the global wine industry is the effects of climate change. Lorrae says adapting sustainable practices to Brokenwood's vineyards will ensure the quality and longevity of the wine and business.

"More extreme heat events and high rainfall patterns have a huge impact on our Industry which is ultimately based on agriculture.

"In terms of ensuring our vineyards are here in the long term for future generations & that our business is also still viable into the future, we really have to adopt more sustainable practices," said Lorrae.



BiteRiot Cherries & Apples
- Mount Canobolas, Central West NSW

Watch our BiteRiot
Cherries & Apples
Case Study >>



The Freshcare Certified family owned and operated business started in the early 1970s by Bernard Hall's father, growing a wide variety of fruit.

These days BiteRiot owners Bernard and Fiona Hall are joined by their son Charlie and a skilled and hard-working operations team, who run the farm and packing shed.



Both Bernard and Fiona say Freshcare Certification has benefited not only their business but industry, by maintaining their reputation in producing safe, high-quality food.

Cherries and apples are consumed by most Australians, so it's important that not just us as a grower, but the industry as a whole is compliant.

- Fiona Hall, Owner.

Supporting Global Market Access

As BiteRiot's General Manager, Fiona says it's awesome that Freshcare Food Safety & Quality 4.2 & Supply Chain 2 Standards are globally recognised by the Global Food Safety Initiative - as 40 per cent of their cherry crop is exported.

"Being globally recognised means that growers aren't burdened with extra compliance," she says.

"It's also really important for our market access and ensuring the safety of our product, not only domestically but in our overseas markets," says Fiona.

Passion For Horticulture

Having grown up on the BiteRiot property and taking over the business from his father, Bernard has passion for growing and producing high-quality fruit

"We put a lot of care, time and effort, a lot of love into growing our fruit because it is a passion. It's not just all about the dollar signs. It's all about a livelihood," says Bernard.

Barden Farms
- QLD, NSW, VIC & TAS

Watch our
Barden Farms
Case Study >>



Barden Farms National Sales Manager, Steve Mounsey discusses the importance of Freshcare certification in ensuring food safety, industry sustainability, and meeting global standards.

Commitment to Freshcare Certification

Barden Farms operates across Queensland, NSW and Tasmania with the Peats Ridge (NSW) facility focused on growing herbs and Asian vegetables under plastic and shade cloth, ensuring high-quality production. Supplying major retailers such as Woolworths, Coles, and Aldi daily, Barden Farms prioritises Freshcare certification as a key component of its operations.



"Freshcare certification is important to Barden Farms because we care about the consumer, we care about food safety," says Steve.

"It has enabled us to implement the right food safety standards every day in the fields and our packing sheds—essentially in everything we do."

Meeting Globally Recognised Standards

Leafy greens and bunch lines are often considered high-risk food products, but through implementing Freshcare's program it maintains their high bar set for food safety.

Through Freshcare, we're able to achieve the right food safety standards that exist globally.

- Steve Mounsey, National Sales Manager.

"If we have good, sound practices in place that provide safe food for families every night, why do we need to introduce more regulation?" says Steve.

The Future of the Industry

The horticulture industry is evolving, and Freshcare certification plays a significant role in supporting businesses to remain competitive while ensuring food safety and sustainability.

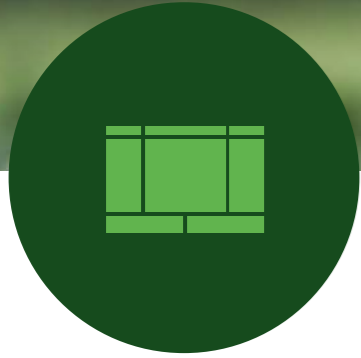
"The industry, as it stands, is well-supported and that helps us evolve and grow," says Steve.

By maintaining Freshcare certification, Barden Farms ensures that Australian consumers have access to safe, fresh and sustainably grown produce every day.

Shaping the Future with Freshcare

Innovation | Initiatives | Advocacy

Freshcare has developed projects, initiatives and opportunities for industry collaboration - which further support domestic and international market access for Australian producers and businesses. We are pleased to share with you some of this year's highlights!



Standards Review

The Freshcare Standards Review received 180 responses, from across the broad range of businesses and organisations participating in our standards.

As part of the review Freshcare has engaged our Technical Steering Committee (TSC), comprised of passionate industry experts committed to developing and future-proofing our Standards for industry and participants.

Freshcare introduced a Framework for Innovation, utilising the principles of the Design Council UK's Innovation Framework to undertake our Standard review process. The Framework will guide the review process which outlines four core problem-solving principles and assist with effective and timely delivery of the Standards Review project.

As a result of consultations with the TSC, Freshcare has compiled a series of recommendations for updates and improvements. Prioritising the Food Safety and Quality (FSQ) Standard for immediate review, updates will achieve broader alignment with Environmental and Sustainability Standards.

This will ensure consistency across all Freshcare Standards, including research into state-based legislation requirements and updates to protocols on chemicals and water licensing.



Corrective Actions Report Card

Over the past year, more than 3,500 businesses have been audited to the Freshcare Food Safety & Quality 4.2 and Supply Chain 2 Standards. Every day, growers and business owners on farms and in packing houses implement the Freshcare programs to ensure consumers receive safe, high-quality produce.

The Freshcare Corrective Actions Report Card gives a clear and practical look at the most common corrective action records (CARs) found during recent audits. It's designed to help everyone involved with Freshcare Standards—businesses, industry groups, auditors, trainers, and participants.

The report highlights common challenges, key reasons behind them, and provides focused action plans to improve outcomes and boost food safety standards across the industry. By identifying areas with the most corrective actions, Freshcare and its partners can work together to improve practices, enhance training, and create consistency. This hands-on approach supports the horticulture industry's dedication to quality and food safety.



Regulatory Technology Partnership Project

Freshcare in partnership with Hort Innovation continues to invest in understanding compliance implementation for horticulture growers and businesses across Australia.

The Regulatory Technology multi-organisation project, running through 2023-2025, had the broader goal of exploring emerging solutions and technology systems, making it easier for growers to demonstrate they are meeting compliance requirements through the supply chain.

As part of the project a Volunteer Technologist Working Group (VTWG) was created to develop a framework to identify potential solutions that could address growers' compliance challenges. Comprised of a diverse range of horticulture, agritech, data and agronomy experts, the VTWG have examined compliance programs and the high-level technical approaches to improve efficiency.

We look forward to reporting on the project's findings at Hort Connections 2025.



Recognition of Freshcare Berry, Leafy Vegetable and Melon Participants

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

Freshcare participants were recognised as meeting the new regulation requirements by FSANZ, which when implemented by each state and territory jurisdiction, should require no additional compliance to be undertaken by growers and businesses.

Throughout 2024, Freshcare has continued to advocate for berries, leafy vegetables and melons growers and businesses with each state and jurisdiction to ensure a fair and reasonable implementation of the regulations - avoiding additional costs and requirements placed on producers and processors.



Wine Industry Sustainability Standard Benchmarking

Freshcare's Australian Wine Industry Standard of Sustainability Practice (AWISSP) has been internationally recognised for its strong governance and credibility in sustainable winegrowing.

As the certification framework behind Sustainable Winegrowing Australia, Freshcare continues to play a key role in promoting best practice in the industry.

In 2024, two major international benchmarking studies highlighted Freshcare's leadership in sustainability certification. The Sustainable Wine Roundtable Benchmarking Report 2024 praised the governance of Sustainable Winegrowing Australia, reinforcing its global credibility.

Additionally, The Intertek & Systembolaget's 2024 benchmark study assessed global certification schemes and awarded Freshcare's AWISSP standards the highest rating ('3-comprehensive') in 6 out of 7 Governance and Quality criteria. The Standards also received top ratings for environmental sustainability in winegrowing and viticulture.

Freshcare's internationally benchmarked standards reinforce its role as the First-Choice certification for sustainable winegrowing, ensuring Australian producers meet global market expectations. By maintaining robust governance and certification excellence, Freshcare continues to support the future of sustainable winegrowing industry.



Freshcare Growers Access to Costco Overseas Markets

Freshcare producers certified to the Food Safety & Quality v4.2 standard (FSQ4.2) became approved to supply to Costco Wholesale in the USA and Canada, reducing the need to implement multiple certification programs on farm.

The approval to supply one of the largest international retailers gives further recognition of the fantastic work participants already do to achieve certification.

By having Freshcare participants' Food Safety & Quality certification recognised by Costco, it shows that Australian producers are already operating at the highest global standards.

The process for gaining acceptance for FSQ4.2 by Costco began in September 2023. The Freshcare team have continued to work with the retailer to gain recognition for certified participants, looking to access its export markets.

The approval for FSQ4.2 participants who supply to Costco covers all Freshcare certified crop types.

Office Hours

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