

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
 Supplementary Budget Estimates 2008-09
 22-23 October 2008

Tabled Document No **4**

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Time/Date: **12:25 PM, 23/10/2008**

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Media Release

CSIRO committed to plan for Merbein site

Reference: 08/196

Working with the Sunraysia Area Consultative Committee and the Sunraysia Mallee Economic Development Board, CSIRO is committed to assist planning of an alternative model for horticultural research in the Sunraysia district.

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CSIRO will continue with its plan to consolidate its wine research in Adelaide and to wrap-up its other horticultural research at Merbein over the coming 30 months.

At the same time, CSIRO will work closely with affected industries as they develop a business plan for an alternative mechanism for delivering research outcomes.

The original announcement to close the site was made in May this year following the federal budget and CSIRO's research priority setting process. Horticultural industries affected by the decision have been looking at alternative ways to maintain research support for their industries.

"We are very grateful for the industry support for our horticultural research and their interest in identifying ways to continue it," says Dr Jeremy Burdon, Chief of CSIRO Plant Industry.

"Our discussions with the various industries have been very useful and we have appreciated their input, but at this stage we need to provide our staff with clarity about their future."

"We will therefore continue with our plans to move our wine research to Adelaide to create a hub of excellence and resources and complete all our other horticultural research projects in Merbein."

"Providing clarity to our staff on this matter is critical given the significant research outcomes they have produced for the horticultural and viticultural industries. We want to maintain as many of them as we can and we don't want to keep them in limbo."

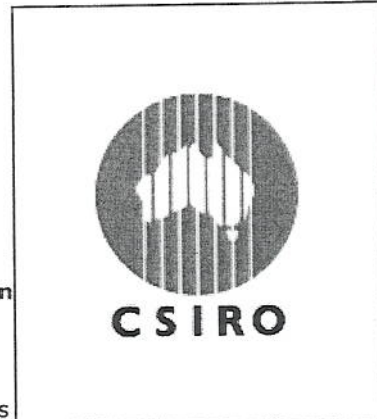
Industry is enthusiastic about the prospect of developing an alternative model for research delivery based around the concept of a Centre for Inland Irrigated Horticulture. CSIRO has agreed to assist in this process of identifying a new model.

"We are keen to provide growers and the agricultural industry with ongoing support and will work with CSIRO to identify any plan to do this and we are keen to explore any models for any research in Sunraysia," says Mr Don Carrazza, Chairman of the Sunraysia Area Consultative Committee.

As CSIRO progresses its 30 month exit plan it will remain in close consultation with the horticultural industries and open to other alternatives they propose to continue horticultural research.

"We are sorry to have to leave Merbein, but in light of the budget realities and the need to reassess research priorities, there were no other alternatives," says Dr Burdon.

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