

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed

2.00pm Wednesday 16 February 2005

Contributions to regional horticultural research recognised

Four Riverlink awards were presented today, recognising research staff and industry representatives who have made outstanding contributions to horticultural science and extension in Sunraysia-Riverland.

Graham Robertson, Chairman of the Riverlink Council, said that each year staff within the tri-state Riverlink network work on more than 100 horticultural research projects. Regional industries provide high levels of support for this research and development; providing land, plantings, and infrastructure for research trials, as well as commitment of time for research planning and consultation.

“These awards recognise the contribution made by industry to regional horticultural research, and celebrate the achievements of the excellent science and extension staff working within Riverlink,” Mr Robertson said. “This year’s winners are again outstanding examples of the proactive and visionary scientists and dedicated horticulturists in our region. We thank them for the contributions they make to Australia’s horticultural industries.”

This year, the Riverlink Council has presented two awards to regional staff. The first recipient, **Belinda McCarthy** from CSIRO Plant Industry Merbein, has worked with tablegrape growers and researchers across Australia as part of CSIRO’s national table grape breeding project. Belinda has worked with growers in Sunraysia-Riverland to evaluate new varieties and has provided technical and administrative support to the national tablegrape industry. The second recipient of the Riverlink Staff Award in 2005 is **Denis Sparrow**. Denis has been a major contributor to improving irrigation practices at state and national levels over the past twenty years. He is a foundation member of the South Australian Irrigated Crop Management Service, and pioneered innovative strategies for adoption of modern irrigation methods and technology.

Dried fruits industry stalwart **Henry Tankard** was awarded this year’s Riverlink Industry Award. A major supporter of dried grape research, Henry has contributed to Riverlink research for many years. Henry is currently a member of the CSIRO Merbein Institutional Biosafety Committee and as well as the Unique Dried Grapes Steering Committee, which oversees dried grape genetic improvement research.

The Riverlink **team working on improving sustainability and wine grape quality in warm region irrigated vineyards**, has won this year’s Riverlink Collaborative Team Award. This team, including PhD student Rachel Ashley, and has achieved significant improvements in water use efficiency, disease management, yield and quality through irrigation and pruning technologies. These outcomes will have widespread implications for the Australian wine grape industry.

ENDS

Photograph and Interview Opportunities

These awards will be presented at a ceremony to be held on **Wednesday 16 February in the CSIRO Conference Room, Cnr Sturt Highway & River Avenue Merbein.**

Awards will be presented at approximately 12.30pm, with the best time for photographs and interviews being approximately 1.00pm (at the conclusion of the ceremony).

Attached program will provide further information.

Please contact Merryl Whyte to arrange photographs or interviews.

Further Information:

Merryl Whyte

Riverlink Communications & Development Officer

Phone: 03 50514569 Fax: 03 50514523 Email: merryl.whyte@dpi.vic.gov.au

Riverlink Awards Presentation

Wednesday 16 February 2005

12.30pm

**CSIRO Conference Room
Cnr Sturt Highway & River Avenue
MERBEIN VIC 3505**

Programme

- 12.30pm Awards ceremony**
- 12.30pm Welcome and apologies**
Graham Robertson, Chairman Riverlink Council
- 12.35pm Awards presentation and launch of Riverlink strategic plan**
Graham Robertson, Chairman Riverlink Council
- 1.00pm Photographs and lunch**

