

For immediate release

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Young scientists promoting research outcomes

Young scientists are making their mark in horticultural research and producing tangible outcomes for local industries. Riverlink.PRN (postgraduate research network) held a showcase event last Friday to highlight progress being made by postgraduate students in the horticulture field.

Community leaders, researchers, growers and school students gained an insight into local research that aims to produce meaningful results for the regional horticultural industries.

Pippa Kay, a PhD student at CSIRO Plant Industry, Merbein, is investigating the function of a gene known as HOUDINI, "I am looking into the involvement of the gene in the process of plant reproduction, specifically seed set and fruit growth."

"The aim is to explore potential manipulation of seed set and fruit size in horticultural plants. This is of great importance for industries such as citrus and table grapes where large seedless fruit are preferred by consumers," Pippa said.

Jointly run by Riverlink and La Trobe University, Riverlink.PRN assists with seeking project funding and encourages students to study horticultural research in the Sunraysia-Riverland region.

Allison Hogg grew up in the Sunraysia region; she completed her Honours with La Trobe University at the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, Mildura. Allison's Honours project focussed on tannin accumulation in the skins of Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay grape berries.

"Tannin accumulation for Shiraz has previously been studied, however, my project sought to examine whether those results were typical of other wine grape varieties," Allison explained.

"Everyone can recognise tannin in red wine, from the dry mouth feeling after drinking. Tannin is an important component of wine quality. If we can identify when tannin formation occurs in grapes we can begin to develop strategies to manage tannins in the vineyard."

Speaking at the event Australian Chief Scientist and past Riverlink Council member, Dr Jim Peacock encouraged industry and the community to support further postgraduate research in the region, "There's a pressing need to attract young scientists and researchers to the Sunraysia-Riverland region, and to be committed to working with Riverlink industries to help solve problems and generate new opportunities."

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