

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aussie horticulture growers look to the future

Over the next two weeks, growers from throughout Australia will discuss opportunities to bolster their horticulture output through investment in innovations such as robotics, and further shape their research and development corporation, Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation).

The workshops are expected to attract a broad cross-section of horticulture growers who pay levies to the Federal Government, which are in turn invested into research and marketing by Hort Innovation.

Hort Innovation Chief Executive Officer John Lloyd said now more than ever the spotlight is on Australia's fruit, nuts, vegetables, turf and nursery industries.

"The nation's horticulture industry is in a healthy state with \$9 billion in produce being delivered each year, including more than \$2.1 billion in annual exports," he said.

Mr Lloyd said Hort Innovation is tasked with dedicating more than \$80 million in research and development funding, and more than \$20 million each year in marketing funds to promote Australian horticultural products – and the organisation invites growers to have input.

"We are very interested in hearing what Australians producers have to say about how Hort Innovation could best invest their funds," he said. "In particular, we are keen to hear about any technological efficiencies, leadership development, trade and promotional opportunities funding could bring."

Mr Lloyd said growers will also have the opportunity to provide input on the organisation's company strategy and operations.

Since it was formally established in November 2014, Hort Innovation has contracted more than 241 projects across research and development, and marketing – at a value of \$104 million. Those projects include advancements such as **The Lady Bird** – a robot which has the capability to conduct autonomous farm surveillance, mapping, classification, and detection – and **a state-of-the-art facility in South Australia** to develop and breed sterile male only fruit fly.

"We want to ensure Australia remains a force to be reckoned with on the world stage in the areas of horticulture innovation and supply – and our growers can certainly help us do that," Mr Lloyd said.

The free workshops will be held at:

- Richmond NSW on Thursday, January 21
- Shepparton Vic on Wednesday, January 27
- Werribee Vic on Thursday, January 28
- Adelaide Hills SA on Friday, January 29
- Launceston Tas on Friday, January 29
- Darwin NT on Monday, February 1
- Batlow NSW on Monday, February 1
- Swan Valley WA on Tuesday, February 2
- Perth WA on Wednesday, February 3
- Robinvale Vic on Wednesday, February 3
- Mildura Vic on Thursday, February 4
- Brisbane Qld on Thursday, February 4
- Bowen Qld on Thursday, February 4
- Glass House Mtns Qld on Friday, February 5

Horticulture Innovation Australia delivers more than \$100 million in research, development and marketing activities across the horticulture industry each year with funding from the Australian Government, grower levies and other sources.

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