



Know-how for Horticulture™

**Seed potato
workshop, Portland,
Victoria, August 18 &
19, 2003**

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Seed Potatoes Victoria

Project Number: PT03058

PT03058

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PT 03058

**Seed Potato Workshop , Portland,
Victoria, August 18 & 19, 2003**

August 2003

FINAL REPORT

**Please register early.
We need to know numbers for catering.**

Prepared by
Seed Potatoes Victoria
May 2004

Final Report

1. Executive Summary

The 2003 Seed Potato Workshop at Portland in August 2003 attracted 185 registered participants and 17 trade exhibitors.

The participants were dominated by seed potato growers but included a broad cross section of people across the whole industry. Over 20% of the participants were from outside of Victoria.

The international keynote speakers were well received and among the most highly regarded speakers at the workshop. The use of international speakers is a drawcard for the workshop and provides new ideas and approaches to diseases, marketing and other problems associated with potato growing.

A number of potential improvements could have been made to the workshop. One of the main ideas was that there should be technical presentations one day and business (domestic issues) on separate day in order to cater better for one day registrations. By doing this, more people would be encouraged to attend the days that are relevant to them.

A field demonstration was held in the afternoon of the first day of the workshop. This was well received by both exhibitors and participants. A suitable venue for the trade fair would preferably have the option for under cover displays so that the field demonstration can still operate in wet weather. The district tour proved a successful addition to the program, with most participants citing an interest in the areas visited.

The two day workshop appeared to achieve its goal of contributing towards a successful and viable seed industry which underpins the Australian potato industry. Eighty three percent of the workshop participants who completed a survey at the close of the workshop said that the workshop was either useful or very useful in providing assistance to run a better business. The ViCSPA AGM was not regarded as being beneficial to many, the suggestion there was that more question time should be allocated and for floor speakers to be able to have their say.

A seed potato workshop should be held again in 2005, preferably in July or August. The majority of growers suggest that it be held in a regional area that is close to a potato growing, or industry site for tours. The workshop should be managed again by a steering committee that should use this final report for planning the delivery of the workshop.

2. Workshop Objectives

The theme of the 2003 Seed Industry Workshop was ‘best practice’. Improved potato crop management and increased technology transfer were primary foci of the workshop. By creating a larger scale event, farmers were able to make personal contact with a range of professionals in specific areas of potato production that would not normally be readily accessible.

Secondary objectives of the workshop were:

- To create a forum for people to meet, exchange ideas and create closer industry links and business relationships.
- To provide an opportunity for technical updates on research projects, new products and machinery.
- To involve a broad cross section of people from the Australian potato industry with our seed industry workshop.

3. Workshop Delivery

The Portland workshop (Appendix i) was held over two days (August 18-19) and was well received by all attendees. The presentations were all of a high quality. Some presentations appealed to some people more than others, however all sessions were well attended at the time. The three overseas speakers generated a lot of interest and were able to stimulate the participants into considering other approaches to issues such as Risk Management, Potato Cyst Nematode and Powdery Scab. The ViCSPA annual general meeting was criticised for its structure that did not encourage floor speakers and question time.

The Portland Civic Centre and Precinct was a satisfactory venue for the sessions. Some of the problems encountered with the venue were:

- Insufficient spatial separation between trade exhibitions and presentation areas, which caused some noise distraction.
- No tiered seating in the main venue
- Data projection screens were a little small for the venue size.
- Better organization of interactive group facilitators

The loose leaf binders provided this year were well received by the growers and industry representatives alike. Each speaker had copies of their presentation available for those that wished to take a copy home for further reading, or to go over something they might not have understood at the time. The interactive group sessions received a lot of interesting feedback from the growers (Appendix ii).

4. Participants and Participation

There were 185 registrants for the workshop and there were a small number of other people who helped with displays and organisation. The major group were Victorian certified seed growers, but there was a wide cross section of industry people as well.

The major target group for advertising and promotion of the workshop was seed potato growers. A three page promotional brochure (Appendix iv) was sent by direct mail with the Victorian seed grower's newsletter to 130 farm business and related personnel around Victoria. The brochure contained not only the program, but accommodation, transport and other information about Portland. The brochures were also sent to key contact growers in other states, as well as processing company field officers and a small number of other key contacts. An article was placed in *Eyes on Potatoes*. The promotional brochure was also sent to all McCain growers in Victoria with their newsletter - approximately 80 growers, and to any person who attended the Warragul workshop in 2001 and who wasn't picked up in one of the direct mail lists above. In total about 400 promotional brochures were sent by direct mail. The response of 185 participants was at the higher end of expectations. The main reason for hesitation at coming was cited as being busy in their businesses, not the distance they had to travel.

5. Evaluation

A copy of the evaluation form is attached in Appendix iii, together with a summary of the responses obtained. Not all registrants filled in or returned the survey form, but of those that did, there was an 83% response that the workshop was either useful or very useful in providing assistance to run a better business. The most popular sessions from the surveyed respondents concerned technical demonstrations, presentations and information sessions. Because the conference was centred on improved crop management, the topics covered in the formal presentations were generally well received. There was less support from respondents for the concept of running concurrent sessions than there were people who thought it a good idea. Some of the specific suggestions from the survey that could be incorporated into future workshops are:

- Longer time period over which the conference can be held
- More technical presentations, eg. 'Marketing your product'
- ViCSPA annual general meeting to have more questions and floor discussion.
- More interactive time in sessions.
- More opportunity for networking.
- Passing on the 'Farm Business'
- Having technological issues one day and business (domestic) issues on another day to cater for 1 day registrations.

Most respondents considered the \$175 registration fee good value, or at the very least, fair.

5.1 Speakers

The overseas speakers may have been a bit too technical and a bit too long, but organisers should continue to bring in an overseas speaker. Could do with more of a mixture of speakers - lifestyle and business speakers as well as technical presenters. Possibly should have made more use of overseas speakers in smaller interactive sessions. The AGM may need to alter its format to incorporate a better grower response.

5.2 Program

The main problem with the program was the concurrent sessions, where people wanted to attend both sessions at once. The concurrent session format is always likely to be criticised in this way, and the alternative is for a much longer programme of formal presentations.

5.3 Publicity

The publicity assisted on bringing the numbers up from the previous conference. Flyers containing accommodation, transport and information about Portland were distributed well before the workshop. There was a good spread of participants across the industry and good numbers of interstate people. The promotion of 'Potatoes by the Sea' drew in a lot of people that might not have otherwise attended; being that is was a long distance to travel for eastern growers.

5.4 Group Sessions

Selection and briefing of the facilitators could have been organised better. The formal facilitators and the one grower who took on a facilitation position received the best feedback from their groups. The other facilitators gave the impression they did not know what they were doing and did not get through the programs they were given.

6. Financial Report

INCOME	ACTUALS	BUDGETTED
	(\$)	(\$)
Full registrations 126 @ \$175	22,050	21,000
Single Day Registrations 22 @ \$90	1,980	1,800
Dinner only Registrations 12 @ \$35	420	-
Trade Exhibitors 14	8,185	9,300
Horticulture Australia	16,800	16,800
	\$49,435	\$48,900
EXPENDITURE		
Venue hire	970	1,760
Bus hire	1,850	1,400
Catering, Main venue	5,913	5,200
Catering, Portland Coolstores	704	1,120
Speaker fees	3,000	5,000
Speaker accommodation	2,630.45	2,650
Speaker travel	7,355.51	6,100
Conference dinner	5,045.45	4,800
Soil preparation	-	300
Additional speaker meals	40.40	1,170
Visual aid equipment hire	-	1,500
Printing of speaker notes	1,243.11	1,120
Loose leaf binders	972.80	800
Printing of brochure	420	1,000
Local tourist guide	27.50	200
Administrative support	4,984	4,650
Executive officer	10,700	3,420
Travel and accommodation for Admin support & EO	1,717.52	2,000
Steering group dinner	277.30	-
Incidentals and insurance (contingency)	1,108.27	1,500
	\$48,959.31	\$45,690

7. Conclusions & Future Activity

The 2003 Seed Potato Workshop '*Potatoes by the Sea*' at Portland has met the objectives of creating an opportunity for people to meet and exchange ideas, providing technical updates on research and new products, and creating closer business relationships in the industry. It involved a broad cross section of people from across Australia. The survey response indicated that participants felt it had helped them to run a better business. The workshop appears to have contributed in a substantial way to the overall goal of ensuring that we have a successful and viable seed industry which underpins the Australian potato industry.

A further seed potato industry workshop should be held sometime in July or August 2005. A different venue should be used, possibly in Ballarat. The venue should be selected with concurrent sessions in mind, and with a suitable site for a trade fair within a reasonable distance. The trade fair needs to be able to be held indoors if the weather is unsuitable for outside activities.

The next workshop needs to be again managed by a steering committee and this evaluation document should be a reference from which steering committee members design and develop a program and delivery system for the 2005 workshop. The ideas and *lessons learnt* from the 2001 Warragul workshop should also help to make the 2005 workshop an even better event.

Appendix I

Workshop Program

“Potatoes by the Sea, 2003”

The Third Biennial Seed Potato Industry Workshop August 18-19, 2003

PROGRAM

Portland Civic Centre and Precinct

Workshop Theme: *Farm Best Practice*

Pre workshop: Registration and Refreshment in the Civic Hall
Foyer from 5.00 pm on Sunday August 17, 2003

Monday 18th August

8.00 am - 8.30 am Registration in the Civic Hall Foyer

Session 1. What Makes a Top Potato Farmer

Venue A: Civic Centre

8:30 am – 8:45 am	Welcome and Conference Opening	Hon. Dr Dennis Napthine (Local MP)
8:45 am – 9:30 am	Profit is a Decision	Pita Alexander (New Zealand)
9:30 am – 9:50 am	Seed Potato Victoria – Chairperson Address	Connie Powell (Ballarat)
9:50 am – 10:20 am	Market Order for the Victorian Potato Industry	Stuart Holland (Policy, DPI, Victoria)

10:20 am – 10:50 am Morning Tea in the Supper Room

Session 2. Potato Crop Management

CONCURRENT SESSIONS 10:50 am – 12:20 pm

Venue A: Civic Centre

10.50 am - 11.20 am	Organic & inorganic soil treatments for soil borne disease control	Nigel Crump (DPI Victoria)
11.20 am - 11.50 am	Towards integrated management of powdery scab: New Zealand perspective	Richard Falloon (NZ, Ministry for Agriculture & Fisheries)
11.50 am - 12.20 pm	Best Practice Disinfestation and Farm Hygiene	Dolf de Boer (DPI, Victoria)

Venue B: Cema Centre

10.50 am - 11.20 am	Managing Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus	Calum Wilson (Tas Institute of Ag Res)
11.20 am - 11.50 am	Best Practice Pink rot Control	Trevor Wicks (SARDI)
11.50 am - 12.20 pm	Selecting for Resistance to Common Scab in commercial cultivars	Calum Wilson (Tas Institute of Ag Res)

12:20 pm – 1:20 pm

Lunch in the Supper Room

Session 3. Industry Sessions

CONCURRENT SESSION 1:20 pm – 2:20 pm

Venue A: Cema Arts Centre VICSPA Annual General Meeting

Venue C: Precinct Reserve. Supper Room Machinery Exhibits and Trade Displays

Session 4. District tour

2.20pm - 6.00 pm	Tour groups will be taken to a number of venues around the district to inspect potato planters and best practice cool-store management (Doris Blaesing, Serve-Ag, Tasmania).
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To include afternoon tea at one of the venues. Tour groups will operate in rotation between three venues.

7:00 pm Dinner at Sandilands Restaurant

Guest Speaker: Mike Stephens

Tuesday 19th August

8.00 am - 8.30 am Registration (for single day attendees) in the Civic Hall Foyer

Session 5. What Makes a Top Potato Farmer (continued)

Venue B: Cema Arts Centre

8.30 am - 9.00 am	Creating Spare Time	Mike Stephens
9.00 am - 9.30 am	Risk Management for Occupational Health	Andrew Sullivan (Vic Farm Safety Training Centre)
9.30 am - 10.00 am	Risk Management	Pita Alexander (New Zealand)

10:00 am – 10:30 am Morning Tea in the Supper Room

Session 6. Industry Issues & Opportunities

Cema Arts Centre and Civic Hall

SMALL GROUP SESSIONS 10:30 am - 11.40 am

The conference attendees will break into small discussion groups with the aim of generating an open forum within each group to identify areas of individual and communal concern within the industry. A reporting back and resolution session will follow.

11.40 am - 12.10 pm	Cost Benefit Review of Potato Research	Leigh Walters (SA Farmers Federation)
12.10 pm - 12.40 pm	Creating More Seed	Milton Rodda (McCain Foods)

12:40 pm – 1:50 pm Barbecue Lunch combined with trade displays

Session 7. Potato Crop Management (continued)

CONCURRENT SESSION 1:50 pm – 2:50 pm

Venue A: Civic Hall

1.50 pm - 2.20 pm	Virus Diagnostics and Crop Monitoring	Brendan Rodoni (DPI Victoria)
2.20 pm - 2.50 pm	Managing Rhizoctonia	Dolf de Boer (DPI, Victoria)

Venue B: Cema Arts Centre

1.50 pm - 2.20 pm	PCN in NZ – 30 year of experience	John Marshall
2.20 pm - 2.50 pm	Enhancing Round Seed Production	John Maynard (Maynard Consulting)

Session 8. Conference Close

Venue A: Civic Hall

2:50 pm – 3.10 pm	Summary of Outcomes	D Marshall
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Appendix II

Outcome of Group Sessions

Industry Issues

- Group One**
- Seed potato production not sufficiently profitable. Cost increases not being matched.
 - Split system in research and development.
 - Inadequate terms of trade through the whole industry.
 - No marketing and promotion of potatoes in fresh industry - declining fresh trade.
 - PCN tests are costly and unnecessary on virgin ground. Should establish the history and act accordingly.
 - Closed loop marketing and access to varieties protected under PBR.
 - Access to water for irrigation.
 - Occupational health and safety. Need more assistance with information specific to potato industry.

- Group Two**
- Restrictions due to Plant Breeders Rights.
 - *Closed-loop* marketing arrangements for new cultivars.
 - GM potato cultivars. How to *deal with it*.
 - Excessive power of the supermarkets - pricing, cultivars, marketing.
 - Potato farmers take most of the risk with no control over profit margin.
 - Quality assurance of seed has variations in quality. Also size.
 - Non certified *seed*.
 - Lack of communication within the industry.

- Group Three**
- Profitability.
 - Succession Planning - need specialist advice.
 - Occupational Health & Safety - practical regulations.
 - Access to water for irrigation.
 - Misinformation about potatoes comes out from time to time and the industry doesn't respond.
 - Industry strategic plan.
 - Long term and short term training of labour and farm staff.
 - Payment guarantee.

- Group Four**
- Declining number of seed growers. Where is the next generation?
 - Maintaining sufficient quantities of seed to supply the market.
 - Adequate rewards for seed growers. Profit?
 - Maintaining adequate quality. What is quality? Redefine standards. Intrinsic quality, such as calcium level.
 - Payment mechanisms - timely payments, especially by merchants.
 - Centralised grading.
 - Communication between the seed grower and his customer.

- Group Five**
- Who are the next generation of seed growers and where are they?
 - How do we address change?
 - One set of certification standards for both the processing and fresh sectors?
 - Lifestyle farmers locking-up prime agricultural land.
 - Availability of skilled farm labour.
 - Access to water for irrigation.
 - Variability of seed quality.

- Group Six**
- Over-regulation of water.
 - Environmental issues are going to impact on agriculture.
 - No late blight resistant strains in Australia to the new race of late blight - biosecurity issues.
 - Fresh market is dominated by visual appearance - big impact on seed specifications.
 - Getting paid for seed.
 - Health issues may impact on the processing sector.
 - Retail industry ombudsman system has failed.
 - Aged population of growers - agriculture not *sexy* enough.
- Aged researchers and fragmental approach.

Opportunities

- Group One**
- More industry interaction. Have a one-day conference every second year to alternate with 2 day conference.
 - Employ an industry development officer for the potato industry.
 - Increase markets in export. Both seed and ware potatoes.
 - Develop forums for greater interaction between the seed and other industry sectors.

- Group Two**
- More industry communication.
 - Buyers need to be able to see their seed growing in the field and prior to packing.
 - More promotion of Victorian certified seed.

- Group Three**
- Improved quality of life through adopting better technology.
 - Better communication around the world between researchers and growers.
 - Industry Development Officer.
 - Export.
- Group Four**
- Cost savings in seed production by pooling resources.
 - Make seed growing and farming in general more attractive to young people.
- Group Five**
- New products.
 - Value adding.
 - Marketing - *buy me* packaging, *how to use* consumer education, quality control.
 - Understanding and handling physiological age.
 - More efficient irrigation systems.
 - Integration of the supply chain from seed to dinner plate.
 - NZ/Australian collaboration to get better value from investment in R&D.

Appendix III Survey Form and Summary of Survey Responses



Potatoes By The Sea, 2003

ViCSPA

Of the 185 delegates which attended the 2003 Workshop, only 36 returned these evaluation forms. Data is representative of the 36 returned questionnaire forms.

1. Major reason that made delegates decided to come to this workshop.

Technical update from the formal presentations.	45%
Good networking opportunity.	40%
Find out what's new in machinery, chemicals, etc.	6%
Time out from the farm.	5%
Felt obliged to be here because of peer pressure.	2%
Other	2%

Results show that the main reason that seed growers and industry representatives decided to attend the workshop was to gain a technical update and as a networking opportunity.

2. What (if anything) had made delegates hesitate about coming to this workshop

Very busy at home.	71%
Long way to travel.	21%
Cost.	4%
Not a good program.	4%

Commitments at home, either on the farm or at work was the main reason that made people hesitate about attending the workshop. A smaller percentage also felt that it was a long way to travel.

3. Information obtained that will help delegates improve their farming business

Technical	54%
Business Planning	14%
Establishing new contacts	12%
Learning from others	11%
Understanding their position in the market	9%

Results show that the majority of delegates gained valuable information for improving their farm business out of the technical sessions. Some sessions mentioned were those on disease, urea, cool stores, crop management, powdery scab and a general update. Delegates also valued the business planning sessions and felt that talks such as profit is a decision, creating spare time, OH & S and general motivation themes were useful. Establishing new contacts and learning from other farmers was also considered valuable.

4. Parts of the workshop that were found to be of no use at all

None, it was all useful in some way	83%
Annual General Meeting (AGM)	6%
Old topics with no new solutions (ie scabs)	6%
Group Sessions	3%
Legislative talks	3%
Session 1	3%

Most people found all the sessions to be of some use. There were some comments about the structure of the AGM which could have been more use if there had been more time available for questions and for people to have their say.

5. Was the time available outside the formal sessions to catch up with people and examine the trade displays sufficient

Yes 94%

No 6%

6. What people enjoyed **most** about the workshop

Networking	42%
The speakers	15%
Casual atmosphere	11%
Variety	7%
Food	7%
District tour	7%
Dinner with Mike Stephens	7%
Good timing with programme	3%

It appears that delegates enjoyed many facets of the workshop. The most important being the networking together with the casual atmosphere which made this possible. People also enjoyed the speakers.

7. What people liked **least** about the workshop

Concurrent sessions meant having to chose	25%
Too short	26%
AGM cut short, no question time	20%
Not enough question time at sessions	14%
Too much info, more relevant examples required	5%
Topics with no solution (eg powdery scab)	5%
Group discussion topics too broad, not useful	5%

From the data given in appears that some people did not like the concurrent sessions as they wanted to attend both. Others felt that the conference was too short and rushed, not allowing for extensive question time during the sessions.

8. At the next conference/workshop, people would you like to see:

More technical presentations	24%
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More interaction and smaller group sessions	22%
More business management sessions	20%
More opportunity for networking	13%
More trade exhibitors	7%
More machinery demonstrations	7%
More options in the program	7%

It appears that delegates would like more of everything. Perhaps the organisation committee should consider running a 2 ½ or 3 day event

Best and worst presentations

People enjoyed a range of speakers. Some presentations appealed to some people and not to others. The **most popular** were Pita Alexander and Mike Stephens. Other names mentioned were Milton Rodda, Trevor Wicks, Andrew Sullivan, Richard Falloon, Dolf de Boer, Nigel Crump and John Marshall.

Some people noted that they **least enjoyed** presentations by John Maynard, Stuart Holland, Leigh Walters, Brendon Ridoni, Milton Rodda, Pita Alexander and the AGM

Ideas for next conference:

Passing on the Farm Business

Marketing your product session

Having technical issues one day and business (domestic issues) another day to cater for 1 day registrations.

Appendix IV
Promotional Brochure

“Potatoes by the Sea, 2003”

The Third Biennial Seed Potato Industry Workshop & Trade Display August 18-19, 2003

Portland Civic Centre and Precinct

Potatoes by the Sea, 2003 is the third biennial seed potato industry workshop/conference and trade display. It follows from Warragul in 2001 and Colac in 1999. The underlying message for the two day event will be farm best practice, and the organising committee have put together a top level program of overseas, interstate and local expertise. This year we will combine machinery and trade exhibits with the workshop conference venue and the Portland Civic Centre is well suited for this. A half-day field trip will also offer machinery demonstrations and the opportunity to look at potato farming in the Portland district. And for those people who love their potatoes but are less interested in the latest research on scab control, (or whatever) there is an alternate program for parts of the workshop. You will not get better value for your time or for the \$175 registration fee than is offered by this two-day event, with lunches, morning and afternoon teas, field excursion, conference papers, trade displays and conference dinner all included.

How to register

Included with this leaflet is a single page registration form. Complete the form and send it to the executive officer, Seed Potatoes Victoria, PO Box 571, Warragul Vic 3820. There are three registration options:

Full registration \$175 + GST

Includes everything for the two days. Even join us for a pre-conference drink on Sunday evening.

Day registration \$90 + GST

If you are only able to come for one of the two days, you can elect to have a single day registration.

Dinner Only \$35 + GST

*As an accompanying partner, this may be
the option for you.*

Workshop Program - Short Version (Provisional)

Day 1

Session 1. What Makes a Top Potato Farmer

Benchmarking Best Practice
Running a Better Business

Pita Alexandra
David Parker

Session 2. Potato Crop Management (Concurrent Sessions) Alternative Program Available

Organic & Inorganic Soil Treatments
New Zealand Research on Powdery Scab
Best Practice Disinfestation and Farm Hygiene
Managing Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus
Best Practice Pink Rot control
Selecting for Resistance to Common Scab

Nigel Crump
Richard Falloon
Dolf de Boer
Calum Wilson
Trevor Wicks
Calum Wilson

Session 3. Industry Sessions (Concurrent Session) Alternate Program Available

ViCSPA Annual General Meeting
Machinery Exhibits and Trade Displays

Session 4. District Tour

Tour groups to visit numerous venues in the district, including a best practice cool store, potato planters in action, and demonstrations of the laying of trickle irrigation tape in potato crops.

CONFERENCE DINNER Speaker)

Mike Stephens (Guest

Day 2

Session 5. Seed Potato Risk Management

Measures to Minimize Risk of Litigation
Risk Management for Occupational Health
How to Manage a Cash Surplus

To be announced
Andrew Sullivan
Pita Alexandra

Session 6. Industry Issues and Opportunities

Small Group Sessions
Creating Spare Time
Creating More Seed

Mike Stephens
Milton Rodda

Session 7. Potato Crop Management Cont'd (Concurrent Session) Alternate Program Available

Virus Diagnostics and Crop Monitoring
Managing Rhizoctonia
Best Practice Crop Nutrition
Enhancing Round Seed Production

Brendan Radoni
Joanne Petkowski
Norbert Maier
John Maynard

Session 8. Conference Close

Summary of Outcomes

Doug Marshall

Portland - rich in history, exceptional coastline, a centre for new technology

Portland claims to be the birthplace of Victoria and the central business district has many old and unusual buildings. The historic buildings walking tour takes in these sites and is even better with a local guide. Nearby is the heritage listed coastline of Cape Bridgewater and Cape Nelson with magnificent scenery and numerous coastal walks available for the intrepid. A seal colony can be visited at Cape Bridgewater and whales are periodic visitors to this coastline between June and September. It is in the area of technical innovation that many visitors find Portland an intriguing place. It is already a centre for aluminium production and technical support for agriculture. Geothermal energy is used within the city and is the only geothermal energy city in Australia. But the wind energy project is the most exciting and Portland is becoming a major technology and production centre for this new form of electricity generation. If you haven't been to Portland before, you may wish to arrange to stay longer than just the two days allocated for *Potatoes by the Sea*, 2003.

Personal Profiles of Some of Our Conference Presenters

Pita Alexander

Pita is a farm management accountant who operates his accountancy practice from Christchurch, New Zealand. He has always maintained an active interest in the practicalities of farm management and he developed New Zealand's best known farm benchmarking service from his original client base within his practice. It now extends to over 300 farms throughout New Zealand and Australia. Pita has developed a reputation as the *guru* of farm benchmarking and will share his thoughts and knowledge with us. He says that he intends to challenge a few of our standard beliefs about benchmarking.

Andrew Sullivan

Andrew manages the Victorian Farm Safety Training Centre, Ballarat and was formerly active in potato farmer training with the certificate 3 and certificate 4 programs of the University of Ballarat. Over the past five years he has delivered farm safety training to a wide diversity of farmers throughout Victoria and has a practical approach to how health and safety measures can be implemented on the farm. Our track record in the potato industry is not a good one, with at least one major incident occurring during harvest each year. Andrew's approach will be to inform everybody of their legal obligations as well as simple health and safety measures that can be implemented at a practical level.

Richard Falloon

Richard is a New Zealand plant pathologist who has been working on the infamous powdery scab of potatoes for many years. Richard has developed a

number of successful and economically viable soil and seed treatments for New Zealand potato growers against powdery scab. His work has been internationally recognized as *cutting edge* technology and he will be able to share the results of his latest trials with us at this workshop.

Mike Stephens

Mike Stephens is well known for his broadcasting and writing. Less well known is that he lives near Ballarat at Yendon with his wife Jo and any of their four children who happen to be home. He is an entertaining and lively speaker and facilitator who draws upon many years of practical experience in his presentations. We have invited him to be our guest speaker at the Workshop dinner, and he is also going to separately share with us some thoughts on how to successfully manage time.

David Parker

Formerly the general manager of Myer Grace Bros Pty Ltd, David Parker is now a minister with the Uniting Church. His commercial experience has been developed through the highly competitive world of retail merchandise and he intends to share some of the commercial wisdom and practice, from the corporate world with the seed industry and its particular problems of slow payments, contract agreements and customer demands on product quality.