

Media Release

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MANY of the research stations that would be sold off in the State Government's proposed shake-up of grains research and development have already suffered serious staff cutbacks and have been operating well under capacity for many years.

Grains Research Foundation Limited (GRFL) chairman Damien Scanlan said dozens of grains research jobs in areas such as crop nutrition, plant breeding, grain quality, pest and disease management and farming systems had already been slashed by stealth.

"Walk through any of these targeted facilities and it's obvious that they are running at less than half capacity due to massive cuts by the State Government," he said.

"As staff have left they just haven't been replaced."

"The cuts to technical staff over a period of years have been brutal."

With most of the research facilities now running well below capacity, the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries Tim Mulherin has announced plans to sell-off eight research stations, including the grower funded Leslie Research Centre in Toowoomba.

Minister Mulherin has refused to give an assurance that millions of dollars worth of growers' equity in the Leslie Research Centre would be recognised when it is sold.

Growers have called for Government to acknowledge their equity in any sales of assets that were purchased by growers.

Mr Scanlan said "recognition of grower equity" does not mean selling an asset that was purchased by grain growers and then spending the money at other research facilities without giving growers an on-going proprietary interest.

"Growers should not be fooled by the Minister's talk of dis-invest and re-invest, which does not address the equity issue," Mr Scanlan said.

Mr Scanlan said the Government recognised the sugar industry's equity in research facilities in 2003 when it vested \$40m worth of assets in BSES Ltd.

He said a similar arrangement now needs to be made with the grains industry."

"Grain growers would then be in a position to use their equity in the Leslie Research Centre to begin rebuilding the research effort for their industry in Queensland," he said.

“If growers don’t stand up for themselves now and the equity in the Leslie Research Centre is lost, the industry in Queensland will be at the mercy of a Department that has demonstrated its agenda of cutting investment in grains research and development.”

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