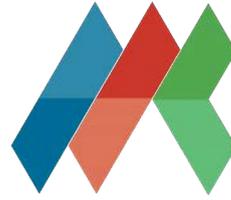




Mallee Regional  
**Innovation Centre**



GROWING SMARTER  
IN THE **MALLEE** 2022



# GROWING SMARTER IN THE MALLEE 2022

A REGIONAL SUMMIT | AN INITIATIVE OF THE MALLEE REGIONAL INNOVATION CENTRE

Thursday 5 and Friday 6 MAY 2022 | SuniTAFE Smart Farm, Irymple VIC



# Sponsors





# Welcome



Mallee Regional  
Innovation Centre

## Welcome from the Mallee Regional Innovation Centre

This regional AgTech Summit showcases the latest innovative developments in high value horticultural production.

Horticulture is a highly productive industry across the region. It creates jobs, business wealth and exports - boosting Australia's image as a centre of high-quality, clean and green food production.

There is a rich mix of industry sectors, each with its own history, skills and markets: dried fruit, citrus, almonds, wine grapes, table grapes and summerfruits to mention just a few.

We've seen continued growth and development across these sectors, but we all face some pressing challenges.

The region has a proud track record of innovation, with highly inventive solutions developed to respond to challenges in the past, examples include novel trellis designs, improved orchard management and greater water-use efficiency.

Continued innovation will enhance and secure the region's success as a leader in sustainable production. This Summit provides growers with hands-on exposure to the latest developments.

The Program has been developed with strong support from across the region's leading sectors to showcase the latest practical solutions.

Welcome to the Summit!

## Mayor's welcome

It seems only fitting given the pivotal role the horticulture industry has played in our region's story, and the vital role it will continue to play into the future, that Mildura hosts the 2022 AgTech Summit.

We have a proud history in our region as a breeding ground for innovation in horticulture.

Sunraysia-based growers and businesses have an enviable track record for coming up with techniques and technologies that have gone on to become industry-standard nationally.

This year's AgTech Summit is a great opportunity to see the latest horticulture developments and technology in action, speak to like-minded growers, and learn more about the opportunities that are available to meet the challenges facing the industry.

Thank-you to everyone who has made this year's AgTech Summit a reality, and a very warm welcome to all attendees at this year's event.

Cr Liam Wood

Mayor

Mildura Rural City Council



Mildura Rural City Council



# Program Overview

Day 1 | Thursday, 5 May 2022

Time	Subject	Speakers	Topic
10:00	Launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arron Wood (MC)</li> <li>• David Harris</li> <li>• Aunty Ronny Harradine</li> <li>• Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas MP</li> <li>• Leonie Burrows</li> <li>• Anne Mansell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome</li> <li>• Chief Operating Officer, SuniTAFE</li> <li>• First People of Millewa Mallee</li> <li>• Victorian State Minister for Agriculture</li> <li>• Chair of Mallee Regional Innovation Centre, Stratgic Advisory Panel</li> <li>• CEO Dried Fruits Australia, Member of Mallee Regional Innovation Centre, Strategic Advisory Panel</li> </ul>
11:00	Robotics/ Automation Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Robert Ross</li> <li>• Hunter Jay</li> <li>• Ashley Rootsey</li> <li>• Tom Andrews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automation of dried-fruit cordon pruning</li> <li>• Fruit picking robot in Goulburn Valley</li> <li>• Automated horticultural production</li> <li>• Connectivity and data management</li> </ul>
12:00	LUNCH   Farm Tours   Workshops   Practical Demonstrations   Trade Stalls		
1:30	Remote Sensing: sponsored by Select Harvests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Pablo Zarco-Tejada</li> <li>• Scott Gillet</li> <li>• Andy Chambers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remote sensing &amp; precision agriculture</li> <li>• Remote sensing &amp; irrigation</li> <li>• Remote sensing &amp; horticulture</li> </ul>
2:30	Yield Estimation Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James Underwood</li> <li>• Daniel Pelliccia</li> <li>• Guy Davidson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit counting &amp; yield estimation</li> <li>• Yield &amp; quality estimation</li> <li>• Handheld monitoring tools</li> </ul>
3:30	TEA BREAK   Workshops   Practical Demonstrations   Trade Stalls		
4:30	Innovative Energy Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mohsen Talei</li> <li>• Joe Kremzer</li> <li>• John O'Connor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fuel from crop waste</li> <li>• Hydrogen opportunities in horticulture</li> <li>• Hydrogen use in farming</li> </ul>
5:30	Close Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arron Wood (MC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lessons Learnt</li> </ul>
6:30	Summit Dinner at Willow & Ivie, sponsored by evokeAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matthew Pryor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future Forces: AgriFutures report</li> </ul>



# Program Overview

Day 2 | Friday, 6 May 2022

Time	Subject	Speakers	Topic
7:00	Farm Tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Zel Coetzee</li> <li>• Dr. Michael Treeby</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location: Agriculture Victoria Smart Farm</li> </ul>
9:00	Autonomous Vehicles: sponsored by ofi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alex Barber &amp; Daniel Edwards</li> <li>• Andrew Glare</li> <li>• Cam Clifford</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomous vehicles for spraying</li> <li>• Autonomous Vehicles</li> <li>• Retrofitting automation</li> </ul>
10:00	Data Driven Decisions Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeremy Duniam</li> <li>• Damien Heintze</li> <li>• Roei Yaakobi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data integration for management</li> <li>• Digital Ag in horticultural production</li> <li>• Data integration for horticultural production</li> </ul>
11:00	Irrigation Integration: sponsored by Lower Murray Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tristan Steventon</li> <li>• John Pargeter</li> <li>• Hamish Roy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drones for irrigation</li> <li>• Software integration for irrigation systems</li> <li>• Yield monitoring &amp; irrigation integration</li> </ul>
12:00	LUNCH   Farm Tours   Workshops   Practical Demonstrations   Trade Stalls		
1:30	Traceability Panel: sponsored by Victorian State Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kieran Murphy</li> <li>• Nathan Hancock</li> <li>• Jeff Scott</li> <li>• Michael Dossor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framework &amp; standards</li> <li>• Citrus project</li> <li>• Table grape pilot: problem solving</li> <li>• Table grape pilot: technical challenges</li> </ul>
2:30	Climate Impacts Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jodie Harrison</li> <li>• Jeremy Giddings</li> <li>• Dr Tim Reeves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eBook on climate data for the Mallee</li> <li>• Regional climate impacts study for Mallee CMA</li> <li>• Innovations in drought impact adaptation</li> </ul>
3:30	Closing Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arron Wood (MC)</li> <li>• Angela Avery</li> <li>• Jade Benham</li> <li>• Tim Jackson</li> <li>• Dr. Christine Pitt</li> <li>• Rebecca Wells</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summit Close</li> <li>• Research Director, Agriculture Victoria</li> <li>• Mayor, Swan Hill Rural City Council</li> <li>• CEO, Almond Board of Australia</li> <li>• Founder and Managing Director, Farmers 2 Founders</li> <li>• CEO, Mallee Regional Innovation Centre</li> </ul>



# What's on?

## Speakers and panel sessions

### THURSDAY, 5 MAY 2022

#### Launch | 10:00 - 10:45 am

Arron Wood – MC

David Harris – Chief Operating Officer, SuniTAFE

Aunty Ronny Harradine – First People of Millewa Mallee

Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas MP – Victorian State Minister for Agriculture

Leonie Burrows – Chair of Mallee Regional Innovation Centre, Strategic Advisory Panel

Anne Mansell – CEO Dried Fruits Australia, Member of Mallee Regional Innovation Centre Strategic Advisory Panel

The Summit will be formally launched by The State Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas MP, following a Welcome to Country from Aunty Ronny Harradine, from the First People of the Millewa Mallee Aboriginal Corporation

#### Robotics/Automation | 11:00 - 12:00 pm | Chaired by Stephen Bennett, Merbein Robotics

Labour availability is a huge challenge for all growers, as are OH&S controls and cost pressures from export market competition. One powerful response is to promote greater automation. This should create better skilled, and better paid jobs that are more interesting. How far can robots & automated systems support horticultural production and what are the risks?

#### Remote Sensing | 1:30 - 2:30 pm | Chaired by Ben Brown, Select Harvests Sponsored by Select Harvests



### SELECT HARVESTS

As orchards get larger, labour scarcer and all inputs more expensive, we have to find smarter ways to target cost effective and timely interventions in orchard management. This is where remote sensing comes into the picture! Drones, planes and satellites are used to capture data which is then analysed to help drive better and cheaper orchard management actions - including spraying, irrigation and fertigation.

#### Yield Estimation | 2:30 - 3:30 pm | Chaired by Dr. Zel Coetzee, Agriculture Victoria Smart Farm

Good orchard mapping is essential to understand the yield and productivity of different areas. It also allows you to predict future crop yields and so negotiate more advantageous supply contracts. It turns out that the combination of eye, hand and brain are a remarkable tool kit, but our speakers are making great progress towards automating that combination.



# What's on?

## Speakers and panel sessions (Cont.)

### **Innovative Energy | 4:30 - 5:30 pm | Chaired by Brett Millington, Mildura Regional Development and Member of Mallee Regional Innovation Centre Strategic Advisory Panel**

Energy costs are rising and climate impacts becoming more severe. We all want to adopt cheaper, low emission sources of energy but, how do we know what will work in practice? Hydrogen is touted as the great source of fuel for the future. We ought to have a great advantage here in Mildura given the significant solar farms that can be harnessed to generate the hydrogen, but what do we do then? This session will help inform our decisions about the next steps.

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## **FRIDAY, 6 MAY 2022**

### **Autonomous Vehicles | 9:00 - 10:00 am | Chaired by Brett Pringle, ofi Sponsored by ofi**



Driving large farming equipment along each row of an orchard can be tedious, time-consuming and raise OH&S risks from sprays. It's also not easy to find and retain skilled staff. The activity is ideally suited to automation. These presentations which will show you how autonomous vehicles are now a reality in orchard management.

### **Data Driven Decisions | 10:00 - 11:00 am | Chaired by Peter O'Donnell, Southern Cross Farms and Member of Mallee Regional Innovation Centre Strategic Advisory Panel**

Growers are now bombarded with information from all sorts of sources - soil moisture probes, weather stations, pest monitors, yields per block, water usage, labour costs. There is a huge challenge to integrate all of that data to help support decisions not distract you. The three speakers in this session all bring proven capability to convert that data into a format that supports orchard management.



# What's on?

## Speakers and panel sessions (Cont.)

### **Irrigation Integration | 11:00 - 12:00 pm | Chaired by Anthony Couroupis, Lower Murray Water Sponsored by Lower Murray Water**



We all understand about the increasing variability of inflows to the Murray-Darling Basin and the increased scarcity and price of water allocations. This session follows on from the previous panel and focusses on using data to drive one of the most important orchard management decisions, when to irrigate and how much water to apply.

### **Traceability | 1:30 - 2:30 pm | Chaired by Paul Henderson, AusIndustry Sponsored by AusIndustry**



#### **AusIndustry**

Consumers, retailers and importers all want confidence that they know where their purchases come from. A robust traceability supply system confirms that products are safe, clean, and sustainable from paddock to plate, which also ensures secure access to premium overseas markets. This is a priority at a national, state and industry level. The Australian Government is investing \$68.4 million to establish the National Traceability Framework. Locally, the citrus and table-grape sectors are leading pilot studies funded by the State Government to develop practical, fit-for-purpose protocols and systems.

### **Climate Impacts | 2:30 - 3:30 pm | Chaired by James Kellerman, Mallee Catchment Management Authority Sponsored by Mallee Catchment Management Authority**



Understanding and adapting to climate change impacts will be critical to the continued successful development of horticulture across the Mallee region. This session confirms data on the past, present and projected future climate for the region, identifies likely impacts for the key sectors and then identifies programs to help promote and support adaptation responses.



# What's On

## Speakers and panel sessions (Cont.)

### Closing Session | 3:30 - 4:00 pm

Arron Wood – MC

Angela Avery – Research Director, Agriculture Victoria

Jade Benham – Mayor, Swan Hill Rural City Council

Tim Jackson – CEO, Almond Board of Australia

Dr. Christine Pitt – Founder and Managing Director, Farmers 2 Founders

Rebecca Wells – CEO, Mallee Regional Innovation Centre

We have all been to conferences where we get excited while we are there, but by the following week life has returned to normal. We want this summit to be different. We will use this last twenty minutes to agree the priority issues that we are all going to commit to addressing at a regional scale. So this summit has enduring impact.

We have a small panel of highly informed people from different backgrounds and experience. They are going to help us pull out a few priority issues from the fantastic range of issues and innovations we have all learnt about over the last two days, for us to take forward together.

## evokeAG Summit Dinner

256 Irymple Avenue, Nichols Point

The evokeAG Summit Dinner will be held at Willow & Ivie in Nichols Point on Thursday 5 May. The event will provide the perfect opportunity for networking and to hear from Matthew Pryor from Tenacious Ventures about the future of the agri-food system.

AgriFutures®  
**evoke**<sup>AG</sup>





# What's on?

## Workshops

A parallel program of workshops over the lunchtime and tea-breaks to provide a forum through which those speakers can expand on their presentations at greater length and in a setting which encourages greater dialogue with the audience.

### Victoria Drought Hub



**Tim Reeves, Rebecca Wells & Professor Tim Cummins, Victoria Drought Hub**  
Thursday, 5 May, 12:10 - 12:40 pm | Classroom 1

This session will give an overview of the Victoria Drought Hub, the consultation process and planned activities and projects. MRIC is a partner in the Victorian Drought Resilience, Adoption & Innovation Hub. With support from the Future Drought Funds, the Victoria Drought Hub is bringing together a unique partnership to support agriculture, environment, communities and regions to adapt, reorganise and transform to prepare and become more resilient to the impacts of drought.

### Pathways To Successful Start-Ups Based On Farmers As Innovators



**Dr. Christine Pitt, Farmers 2 Founders**  
Thursday 5 May, 12:15 – 1:15 pm | Classroom 2

Farmers 2 Founders will call on problem sets and pain points of producers in the Mallee area to showcase innovation strategies and an entrepreneurial mindset.

### Research Findings On The Ability Of Farmers To Adopt Innovations



**Dr. Tim Clune, La Trobe Business School, La Trobe University & Victoria Drought Hub, Capacity Head**  
Thursday 5 May, 12:50 – 1:20 pm | Classroom 1

Review of recent research and consideration of implication for agribusiness.

### Ripe Robotics



**Hunter Jay, CEO Ripe Robotics**  
Thursday 5 May, 12:30 – 1:00 pm | Classroom 3

A casual discussion about the future of autonomous harvesting. Where the technology currently is, what the next steps will be, and what growers can be doing to get ready.

### Using Spatial Imagery To Drive Decisions On Horticultural Production



**Andy Chambers, Airborne Logic Pty Ltd**  
Thursday 5 May, 3:45 – 4:15 pm | Classroom 1

AgTech and precision measurement for. Productivity improvement, and adaptation. Is the climate right?



# What's on?

## Workshop (Cont.)

### Using Data From Drones To Support Decision



Tristan Steventon, StevTech Pty Ltd  
Thursday 5 May, 3:45 – 4:15 pm | Classroom 2

Tristan will be showcasing innovative drone data solution, in particular the Aerobotics farm management platform that allows growers to manage tree health and irrigation efficiently. He will also showcase how we analyse data using artificial intelligence to support decision making.

### Hyper-Spectral Analysis For Detection Of Pests



Professor Pablo J. Zarco-Tejada, University of Melbourne.  
Thursday 5 May, 3:45 – 4:15 pm | Classroom 3

Remote sensing & precision agriculture

### Digital Toolkit



Guy Davidson, Onside  
Friday 6 May, 12:30 – 1:00 pm | Classroom 1

Remove paperwork and digitise operations, safety and biosecurity for your rural business.

### A Practical Demonstration Of TieUp Farming Technology



Roei Yaakobi, TieUp Farming  
Friday 6 May, 12:30 – 1:00 pm | Classroom 2

Collecting harvest data, assigning general tasks to workers, as well as creating and assigning spray tasks so all your audit requirements are captured on the run and available when you need them. Including how to manage the new Award system.

### Providing Support Services And Training To Create Pathways To Successful Start-Ups



Josh Lipscombe, Launch Vic  
Friday 6 May, 12:30 – 1:00 pm | Classroom 3

LaunchVic is the Victorian State Government startup agency. To help more Ag entrepreneurs to start up, LaunchVic have partnered with Agriculture Victoria on a \$2.2 million initiative designed to boost the number of Victorian AgTech startups and build entrepreneurial culture and capability in this crucial sector. In this session, you will learn about how you can explore new ideas around challenges and solutions for agriculture, and support the growth of the AgTech community.



# What's on?

## Farm tours

### Agriculture Victoria Research's (AVR) Mildura SmartFarm

**Dr Michael Treeby & Dr Zelmari Coetzee**

**Friday 6 May, 7:15 am & 8:00 am**

**DJPR SmartFarm, Campbell Ave between McCracken St and Twenty Second St, Irymple VIC**

Agriculture Victoria Research's (AVR) Mildura SmartFarm has been established to improve current management practices and develop future management systems, primarily for almonds. Six experimental plantings - each addressing specific industry-related questions that align with industry's strategies - cover 16 hectare.

The Mildura SmartFarm tour will provide a brief overview of the experimental plantings and focus on the validation of an autonomous closed-loop irrigation system through the extensive soil moisture sensor network installed in the higher density almond planting.

AVR is also implementing new digital traceability technologies with a focus on unique tree, fruit and nut identification software and services which will be demonstrated during the tour. This research builds on AVR's SmartFarm tree database and develops systems and services using Application Programming Interfaces (API's) and is part of Agriculture Victoria's Traceability & Food to Market programs.



# What's on?

## Farm tours (Cont.)

### SuniTAFE SMART Farm

Dr Nicole Byrnes

Thursday 5 May and Friday 6 May 12:00 pm | At event site

The SuniTAFE SMART Farm, a 30 hectare training and operational farm currently being transformed to face an innovated, automated and technology driven future. The farm is renowned for its high quality output across its eight different crops and is a hub that is transforming horticulture training to SMART farming as we invest in training people in SMART equipment, technologies and best practice processes. SuniTAFE SMART Farm is host to trials and testing and provides access to cutting edge technologies, innovations and data.

The tour includes a stop at a trial in collaboration with multinational plant nursery, Agromillora of dwarf almond and olive plantings. The exciting innovation allows SuniTAFE to harvest the crop using a winegrape harvester, ensuring an environmental approach to harvesting, as no fruit hits the orchard floor as with traditional harvest methodologies.

The technologies installed have seen SuniTAFE make changes on how they operate and provide students and industry with access to support their adoption and knowledge to SMART farming.



Booking is essential for farm tours, please use the QR code to register.



# What's on?

## Practical Demonstration

Thursday 5 May, 12:00 - 1:30 pm & 3:30 - 4:30 pm

Friday 6 May, 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Event site

In the breaks head over to the Practical Demonstrations area to have a look at some of the cutting-edge technology on display, with a special feature on autonomous vehicles.

- **Agg-Tech Machinery** – GUSS Autonomous Sprayer

Showing the fully autonomous GUSS spraying units. A single employee can manage up to 8 units from the comfort of a pick-up truck using a laptop control.

- **AME Group** – GOTrack Autonomous Tractor Operation System, Online Spray Control & Job Management System

Specialise in automating processes for horticulture. They will be demonstrating the latest in Picking Platforms, and a GoTrack demo unit.

- **Haeusler's** – Smart Apply Crop Analyzer & John Deere Precision Ag Technology

Agents for the latest John Deere precision farming equipment, showing both a Smart Tech Tractor and a Plant Density Sprayer

- **RAMPS, La Trobe University** – Tractor Mounted Pruning Cutting System

Demonstrating the latest tractor-mounted dried-fruit cordon cutting system

- **SuniTAFE** – Nursery tour

The SuniTAFE Nursery facility has recently seen a full refurbishment and maintains best management practices via accreditation through the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA). The refurbishment includes the recent addition of an automated climate control system, water disinfection process, and a direct-inject fertigation system. The combination of these systems allows for precision monitoring and efficient management of inputs.



Photo:  
Guss Autonomous Sprayer



Photo:  
Ramps, La Trobe University



# What's on?

## Trade Stalls

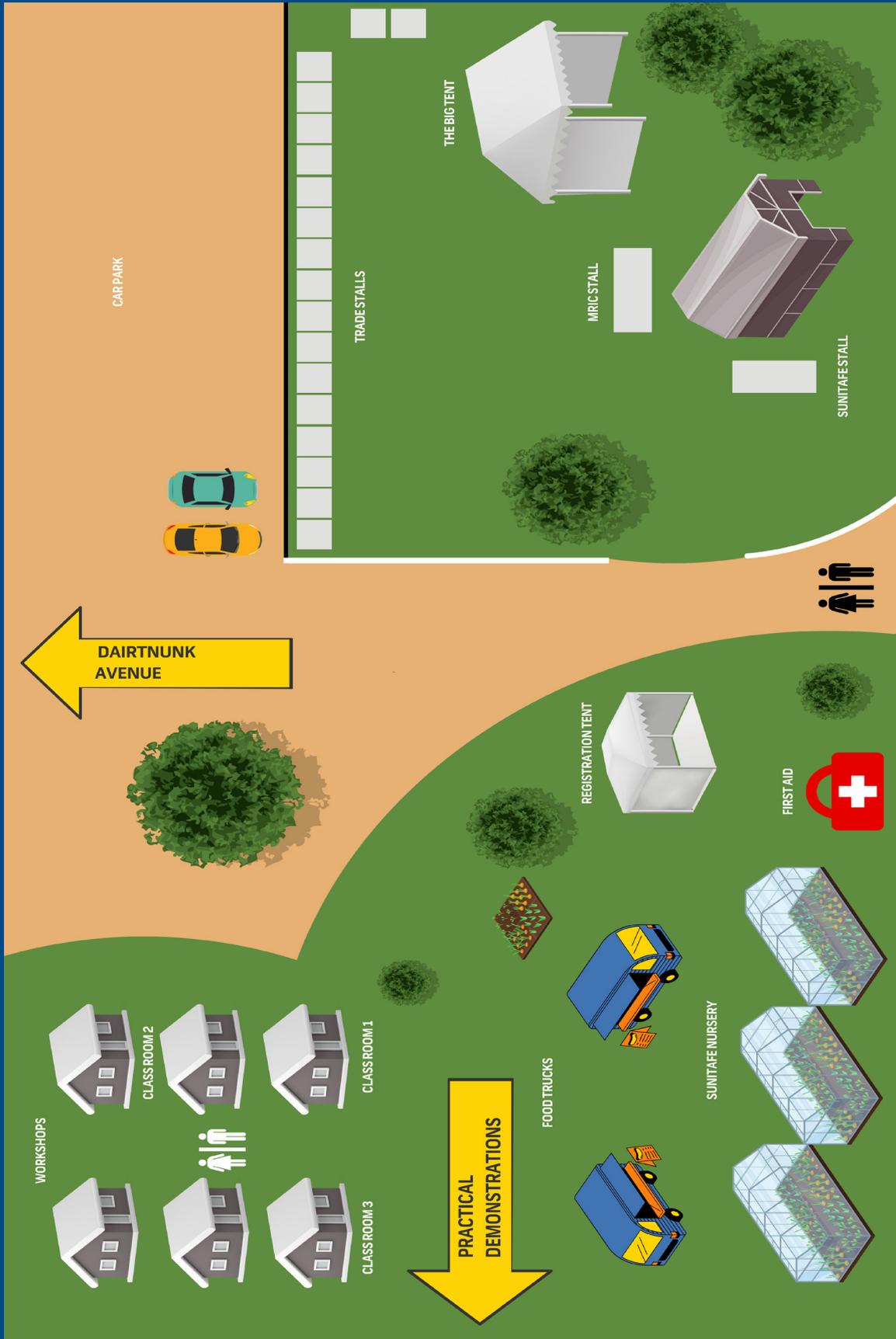
The Summit is show-casing a wide range of innovative developments in products and services. Delegates will be able to browse high-quality trade-stalls.

- Almond Board of Australia
- Analytical Laboratories & Technical Services Australia
- BIOPAC POST HARVEST AT WORK
- Connected Farms
- FAIR FARMS
- fieldin
- Lower Murray Water
- Mallee Catchment Management Authority
- Mallee Councils – Smart Cities
- Mallee Regional Innovation Centre
- Mottech Parkland
- Result Group
- Rocket Seeder AgTech Seeds Pre-accelerator
- Rubens Technologies
- Society of Precision Agriculture Australia (SPAA)
- SuniTAFE SMART Farm
- SWAN Systems
- TieUp Farming





# Map





# Mallee Regional Innovation Centre

## About Mallee Regional Innovation Centre (MRIC)



The Mallee Regional Innovation Centre's (MRIC) four focal areas are horticulture, water, energy and the environment in irrigated production and natural resource management along the Murray River from Swan Hill, through to Mildura and the South Australian border.

The Centre is striving to prioritise and fast track research projects to strategically address key challenges of the region in these focal areas. The MRIC is adding value to the region, complementing established activities and seeking opportunities to foster new areas of development and bring new capabilities to the region.

The Centre is coordinating joint research and development projects and delivering contracts on a fee-for-service basis through pairing in-depth knowledge from the partners of the local area with the world leading research capabilities of the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University. The Mallee based SuniTAFE is also a partner of the Centre and through applied research will deliver training to address emerging skill requirements.

## Meet the team



### Rebecca Wells | Chief Executive

Rebecca was appointed by The University of Melbourne as inaugural chief executive of the Mallee Regional Innovation Centre in 2019. The Centre has four key areas of research and development - horticulture, water, energy and the environment.

Formerly appointed by Bendigo and Adelaide Bank as a member of the Community Bank National Council, and by the Victorian Government as a member of the Mallee Regional Partnership, she has extensive experience in communications, marketing, governance and community development.

Rebecca also has more than 10 years of non-executive director experience, including six years as chair of the Merbein and District Community Bank Branch of Bendigo Bank and five years as chair of Northern Mallee Leaders Inc.

Rebecca's study and career has taken her to Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and London before returning to Mildura to take up positions with La Trobe University, the Australian Table Grape Association and Mildura Rural City Council.



# Mallee Regional Innovation Centre



Matthew Toulmin | Research Manager

Matthew Toulmin has led the event team, working to find the speakers and the sponsors and then arranging the wide range of activities to attract and engage delegates. He is an enthusiastic economist who has worked for twenty years across regional Victoria helping progress investments that promote sustainable communities.

He is particularly proud of his work for the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline, which replaced 17,500 km of open channels with 9,159 kilometres of rural pipeline. The new pipeline saves over 100 ML of water a year and so can now provide a high-quality, reliable water supply to 7,000 rural customers and 36 towns across the Wimmera and Mallee, as well as ensuring vital environmental flows for the rivers and wetlands of the region. Matthew worked with regional communities, farmers and water businesses to help develop the approach and then drafted the business case that won the region \$688 million to fund the necessary works.



Paula Mastrippolito | Business Support Coordinator

Paula Mastrippolito is the Business Support Coordinator for the Mallee Regional Innovation Centre and is based in Mildura at the Centre's SuniTAFE offices.

Paula has a broad range of experience and skills in governance, risk management and strategic planning having worked with complex systems and process in several larger organisations.

As the Business Support Coordinator Paula manages the administration support for MRIC and supports the Centre staff in their roles.



Mike Stewardson | Director

Professor Mike Stewardson is the Director of MRIC. Mike leads the Water, Environment and Agriculture Program in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology at the University of Melbourne, and is Interim CEO of the proposed ONE Basin CRC. His research interests include ecohydraulics, hypomorphology and freshwater ecosystem management.



# Mallee Regional Innovation Centre



Professor Ashley Franks | Co-Director

Professor Ashley Franks is the Co-Director of MRIC, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability) and Director of the Securing Food, Water and Environment Research Focus Area at La Trobe University. He has extensive research management experience having served as the School of Life Science's Research Director and the Academic Coordinator of Research For the College of Science, Health and Engineering. As an Applied Environmental Microbiologist, his has research interests in soils, plant-microbe interactions and sustainability.



David Harris | Co-Director

David Harris is a highly experienced Manager of large teams and a successful private business owner. Starting his career as an Electrician has given David broad practical hands on skill base and understanding of trades. After completion of his A Grade Electrical License David entered University and completed a Bachelor of Business prior to commencing as a Qualified Valuer with Knight Frank Australia.

An opportunity then arose to acquire a Real Estate Business in Mildura which David owned and successfully operated for 17 years. A desire to enter the larger corporate market saw David sell the business and move into a Senior Leadership role as a State Manager with LJHooker in 2007.

Managing over 80 offices in Victoria and Tasmania proved a great training ground for overseeing large disparate teams and when a new opportunity arose as a Commercial Manager with Crowe Horwath (Findex) David was a logical choice. Over 6 years with Findex David managed a variety of teams in multiple offices as a Regional Commercial Manager (WA, SA, Tas and NW Vic).

A desire to give back to the Community and to take on a new challenge lead to David's change to his current role as Chief Operating Officer with SuniTAFE. Acquiring a broad range of skill sets from a wide variety of roles during his career has allowed David to assist SuniTAFE to become widely respected and efficiently run, and has contributed to SuniTAFE's recent recognition as Large Training Provider of the Year (2019).



Growing Smarter in the Mallee 2022 is an Initiative of the Mallee Regional Innovation Centre  
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