

FRUIT FLY

Conference delegates see 'Blue Skies'

The Goulburn Murray Valley Fruit Fly Project recently hosted the 7th Australian Biology of Tephritid Fruit Flies Conference, which brought together key research, findings and emerging opportunities in the management and control of the pest.

The two-day conference (May 28 & 29) was held in Shepparton, the pome fruit capital of Australia.

The conference's theme was "Blue Sky Applied" and highlighted blue-sky research that can be 'applied' to provide practical solutions for Australian horticulture.

In addition to profiling the latest fruit fly research, the conference provided a conduit and extended the connections between National Research, the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT Plus Consortium) and Fruit Fly Area Wide Management.

A range of presentations served to inform and update stakeholders of the latest progress and outcomes in fruit fly research and the practical implications involved for Australian horticulture.

Greater Shepparton City Council and Shires of Moira and Berrigan actively supported the conference. Greater Shepparton City Council Mayor, **Kim O'Keeffe** delivered a welcoming address to attendees who had travelled to Shepparton from all over Australia and overseas to participate in the event.

Goulburn Murray Valley Fruit Fly Project Coordinator **Ross Abberfield** described the conference as 'an invaluable opportunity to bring the sharpest of minds in the field together'.



Yarra Valley Regional QFF Coordinator Bronwyn Koll, Director SnapTrap Kim Khor, Goulburn Murray Valley Regional QFF Coordinator Ross Abberfield, Macquarie University Professor Phil Taylor, Macquarie University Dr Vivan Mendez.



The conference was opened by Greater Shepparton City Council Mayor Kim O'Keeffe, pictured with GMV Fruit Fly Project Coordinator Ross Abberfield.

"We had approximately 150 registrations with 43 abstracts and numerous poster presentations over the two day conference. The number of presentations for Blue Sky Applied in Shepparton nearly doubled that from last year's conference in Canberra," Mr Abberfield said.

"This is a national event and brings together researchers from each end of the professional spectrum. It enables them to look, listen, learn and connect with their peers and recognised fruit fly research scholars," he said.

"We've received positive feedback as a result of the conference about the value in focusing on linkages between 'blue sky' research and the actual application of this research, which I believe is an exciting outcome.

"A number of delegates expressed their intention to investigate funding options where pure research could be applied to provide practical solutions, while several attendees indicated that they would draft future funding proposals for grants, linking 'blue sky' research with economic, environmental and social issues which directly impact on Australian biosecurity and the horticultural industry."

Mr Abberfield said the opportunity to further strengthen the connection between scientific research and the industry itself will hopefully be further explored, with the conference an important inception point for this shift in thinking.

"It is certainly exciting to see what may eventuate in the area of opportunities for further research and collaboration for the GMV region," Mr Abberfield said.

Speakers at this year's event included Dr **Mark Schutze**, senior entomologist, Biosecurity Queensland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QDAF), Dr **Paul Cunningham**, Associate Professor, Research Leader, Invertebrate & Weed Sciences, Agriculture Victoria Research and Professor **Anthony Clarke** who chaired the session on Fruit Fly Ecology and Microbial Interactions.

Other notable presenters included Dr **Simon Baxter**, Dr **Nancy Schellhorn** and Professor **Phillip Taylor**.