

Behind the scenes leader retires

Pat Walsh is a name that relatively few in the Australian cotton industry will recognise, but he has played an integral part in the development of the industry as we know it. Pat retired as Commercial Manager, CSIRO Division of Plant Industry at the end of December, after 15 years of behind the scenes management of the development of the wide range of CSIRO cotton varieties.

Pat's role in CSIRO was created by Jim Peacock, then Chief of the Division, in recognition of the need for science and commercial reality to develop side-by-side. Over 14 years together Jim and Pat chartered the commercial path of CSIRO's Plant Industry, through the development of appropriate licences and intellectual property protection. As Jim remarked recently: "For 14 years Pat kept me out of gaol!" While lighthearted in its intent, Jim's comment highlights the commercial reality for companies, in ensuring that their development work does not impinge on the legal or intellectual property rights of others.

Pat's role was a first for Plant Industry,



Pat Walsh.

and the development of close industry links which has emerged during his tenure, is often held up as the best model of an industry focused development program in CSIRO. It has created an outward focus for CSIRO's research, and ensured that there was an ongoing close relationship between the researchers and industry.

The key to achieving that was Pat's natural ability to lead the way, which ensured

that each side had a good understanding of the other, and that there was mutual respect for the roles played by each of the parties, in achieving a common goal.

For CSIRO's plant breeders and researchers, the key to the development of new technologies lies in the 'freedom to operate', whereby they are able to utilise existing technologies, with the approval of the technology owner, to develop new cotton varieties, such as Ingard, Roundup Ready, and most recently, Bollgard II.

This freedom to operate is achieved through licensing of the background technology and the subsequent licensing of any derived or new technology.

By ensuring the protection of the new technology, Pat has ensured a flow of royalties back to CSIRO which has benefited ongoing cotton research, and provided a funding stream to CRDC. The key to achieving CSIRO's commercial results was the CSD relationship, through Cottgene, keenly fostered by Pat, over time with the various CSD Boards and CEOs.

At a small farewell function hosted by CSD to mark the "ending of an era" John Grellman, Chairman of the Board, re-iterated the excellent longterm collaboration between CSIRO and CSD and paid special tribute to the professional contribution made by Pat in all matters relating to the commercialisation of CSIRO germplasm.

"The strong relationship between CSIRO and CSD is an excellent example of what can be achieved with good collaboration between research and commercial partners. The key focus for both partners has always been to provide the best germplasm, including yield, fibre quality, disease package and traits to the Australian cotton grower. Pat will be missed by all at CSD and we wish he and Margaret all the very best in their years of retirement," said John.

Pat was not only active for the cotton industry, but also managed Plant Industry's involvement in other industries, notably the formation of Gene Shears Pty Ltd, and has managed other specific strategic research alliances.

Pat's legacy to CSIRO and the Australian cotton industry is a large portfolio of intellectual property, comprising international patents on gene technology, internationally protected plant varieties and a range of licenced rights. And most importantly, world leading cotton industry based on the world's best technology. 🌱