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Adrian Pederick MP

Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Shadow Minister for Forests

Labor clouds future of research and development

The state Labor government's commitment to Agriculture Research and Development remains unconvincing as funding cuts threaten projects and staff numbers.

Opposition Agriculture spokesman Adrian Pederick said significant cuts had placed a cloud of concern over the state foremost R&D body, SA Research and Development Institute (SARDI).

'The \$2.7 million cut will undoubtedly eat into SARDI's ability to pursue and deliver the same range of programs as in the past,' Mr Pederick said.

SARDI's Chief Executive Pauline Mooney has said "any reduction to SARDI's programs would lead to its eventual departure from research areas ... that would ultimately result in less support going to farmers".

'In Budget Estimates last week I asked for a breakdown of where precisely \$2.7m would be saved. Despite signing off on the cuts, Minister O'Brien was unable to say what jobs and programs would be lost.

'A recent report highlighted a decline in Australia's agricultural productivity. That decline mirrored the decline in public sector research investment over the same period, demonstrating the correlation between the two.

'While Minister O'Brien talks confidently of SARDI's future, there is no getting away from the fact that less input equals less output.

'Questions also remain about the future of SARDI's assets with the planned merger between SARDI and the University of Adelaide.

'And I have been informed by the industry that the cuts in staff have led to increased cost of services provided, making SARDI's services less competitive. This will further complicate the issue.'

Contact: Adrian Pederick - 0429 692 921

Visit Adrian's website www.adrianpederick.com.

