

## EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

### SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

**Outcome:** CSIRO  
**Output Group:** - CSIRO

#### **DEST Question No. E950\_04**

Senator Carr provided in writing

#### **Question:**

When the Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus (WSMV) was discovered in CSIRO's Plant Industry facilities a decision was made by the then Divisional Chief, Dr Jim Peacock, to destroy all plant material that might have acted as a host for the virus. This action was confirmed by Dr Peacock in his letter to the Canberra Times, 24 April 2003.

Can CSIRO provide the evidence to show that this action was prudent and necessary at the time?

#### **Answer:**

##### *Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus*

CSIRO based its decision on information available about the Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus (WSMV) in Australia at that time. When the decision was made, on 16 April 2003, CSIRO was not aware of the presence of the virus in Australia, and understood the virus was considered an exotic previously unreported in Australia.

CSIRO's actions were conducted with the best interests of the Australian grain industry in mind, and aimed to contain the virus and assist in any eradication programs that may be implemented. To this end, CSIRO's actions were prudent and necessary and were supported by the National Management Group (NMG), convened by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and including representatives from State and Territory Agriculture departments, industry, Plant Health Australia and the Grains Council of Australia.

The NMG subsequently agreed on Friday 30 May 2003 that, based on available evidence, the Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus is established and widespread in south-eastern Australia and has been for a long time without causing noticeable production losses. The original source of the virus is unknown.