



Media Release

Adelaide becomes home to super greenhouse

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Adelaide will become home to a 'super greenhouse' that will place it at the cutting edge of international plant research and its rapid application to the agriculture and bio-plant industries.

The establishment of the \$26-million facility is being jointly announced today by [Premier Mike Rann \[1\]](#) and Federal Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science & Research, [Kim Carr \[2\]](#).

To be known as The Plant Accelerator, the super greenhouse will be built at the University of Adelaide's [Waite Campus \[3\]](#) at Urrbrae as the largest and most sophisticated public facility of its type in the world.

It's the national flagship of the new [Australian Plant Phenomics Facility \[4\]](#) and is being jointly funded by an alliance of the Commonwealth (\$11.35m), the SA Government (\$10 million) and the University of Adelaide (\$4.8m) under the [National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy \[5\]](#) (NCRIS).

Turning the first sod for The Plant Accelerator at the Waite site today, Mr Rann said the centre would spearhead research to benefit agriculture and horticulture, particularly in the context of climate change and environmental degradation.

"This South Australian facility will play a leading international role in achieving more sustainable agriculture, enhancing biodiversity and improving the yield and quality of crops that can tolerate drought, raised salinity levels and disease," he said.

The Plant Accelerator will feature a series of 50 high-tech glasshouses and laboratories that will house over 1km of conveyor systems that will deliver plants automatically to state-of-the art imaging, robotic and computing equipment.

This will allow continuous measurements of the physical attributes (the phenotype) of up to 160,000 plants a year.

The accelerator mode of this facility will come from its ability to more rapidly identify those varieties that will be successful, and therefore reduce the time to market.

"South Australia's research base will be provided with seamless and affordable access to its cutting-edge technologies, and our agri-business industries - food, wine and agriculture - will be the first to benefit from the application of its fruitful research," Mr Rann said.

Federal Science & Research Minister, Kim Carr, said The Plant Accelerator was already attracting the attention of other countries keen to emulate Adelaide.

"Plant phenomics is a science that has the power to transform our lives," he said.

"This Accelerator is exciting interest among local and international companies looking to forge research partnerships. So a facility borne of collaboration looks set to generate even more collaboration and that's a great result."

Scientists based at the [Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics \[6\]](#) at the University of Adelaide's Waite Campus developed the proposal for The Plant Accelerator, which was supported by the State Government in its successful bid to NCRIS to fund eleven SA projects.

The two leading proponents of The Plant Accelerator proposal were [Professor Mark Tester \[7\]](#), Federation Fellow with the School of Agriculture, Food and Wine and [Professor Geoff Fincher \[8\]](#), Director of the Waite Campus.

Vice Chancellor and President of the University of Adelaide, [Professor James McWha \[9\]](#), said the NCRIS funding was welcome support.

"The new facility will be world class in every respect and will help in national efforts to provide a competitive edge for Australia's \$27 billion annual agriculture export industry," he said.

"The Waite is the pre-eminent plant science research site in Australia, with a critical mass of 1200 researchers from at least eight organisations on one campus.

"The facility will further raise the national and international prominence of the Waite Campus as a centre for excellence in plant science, genomics and breeding research and will attract additional international scientists and post-graduate students."

Later this week, Minister Carr will launch, in Canberra, The Plant Accelerator's partner operation, the High Resolution Plant Phenomics Facility.

"Together, these facilities will give Australia a head-start in a rapidly evolving field of research that will deliver practical benefits to Australian primary producers, whether they are growing cereals, grapes or oil-seeds, horticultural, medicinal or pasture plants," the Minister said.

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At the launch of The Plant Accelerator: University of Adelaide Vice-Chancellor and President Professor James McWha, Federation Fellow Professor Mark Tester and Premier Mike Rann. Photo by Cobi Smith, courtesy of the Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics

[Full Image \(54.83K\) \[15\]](#)

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