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Embargoed to midday Friday 5 October AEST

5 October 2007

## Nuffield scholarship for Port Lincoln's Lester Marshall

Oyster farmer Lester Marshall from Port Lincoln, South Australia, will tonight be awarded Australia's leading farming scholarship, a Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship.

Mr Marshall is one of only 16 Australians to receive a 2007 Nuffield Scholarship. He will be presented with his award tonight at the Innovative Farming Australia awards dinner, part of the Nuffield Australia Spring Tour being held in Fremantle, WA.

Nuffield Farming Scholarships, each worth \$25,000, give young Australian farmers the opportunity to travel internationally and explore agricultural issues and opportunities in a global context. There are about 1300 Nuffield scholars worldwide.

Mr Marshall will use his scholarship to investigate regional brands and how company-branded products can drive market pull and consumer awareness. By sourcing information from recognised and successful regional brands, he hopes to gain an insight into implementing a powerful regional brand – Australia's Seafood Frontier – for the Eyre Peninsula. "Hopefully Eyre Peninsula will become the Barossa Valley of seafood. We want to be known for our premium seafood. This could give us a competitive advantage against cheaper imported products," he says.

Mr Marshall is managing director of Coffin Bay Oyster Farm at Port Lincoln, which he started with his wife Julianne 15 years ago. Today they employ 12 staff and produce six to eight tonnes of oysters a week, on average, sending product across Australia. They would like to soon start exporting.

Mr Marshall's Nuffield Farming Scholarship is the first to be sponsored by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, highlighting the corporation's commitment to developing people in the industry. "The FRDC is actively seeking to foster an environment that encourages and values learning, innovation, and R&D adoption," says FRDC Executive Director Dr Patrick Hone. "The Nuffield program will provide an excellent opportunity for Lester to learn from others and bring this knowledge and innovation back to Australia."

Nuffield Australia CEO Mr Jim Geltch says many Nuffield Scholars go on to become active leaders in agriculture and the community.

"For many, the scholarship experience changes their lives by opening their eyes to the wider world and giving them the confidence to pursue their goals," Mr Geltch says.

The 2007 Australian Nuffield Scholars will leave Australia in either February or June 2008 for a compulsory Global Focus Program. This will involve travel to China, North America, South America and Europe investigating agricultural marketing and trade issues, environmental issues and experiencing the different social and cultural aspects of each region.

Following the initial six-week program, the scholars will go their individual ways to pursue specific study programs in the country or countries of their choice. Mr Marshall plans to visit France and North America and Australia's own King Island.

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