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Nuffield scholarship for Darlington Point grower

Irrigation grain grower Mathew Stott from Darlington Point, near Griffith, NSW, will tonight be awarded Australia's leading farming scholarship, a Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship.

Mr Stott 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 Stott will use his scholarship, sponsored by the Grains Research and Development Corporation, to investigate maximising the effectiveness of limited water resources in the irrigation industry.

He will study sub-surface drip irrigation (SDI) on medium to heavy clay soils at a depth of 50-60cm in a bid to increase corn and other crop yields while significantly reducing water consumption.

Mr Stott, who manages 1200 hectares of irrigation at Darlington Point, says although Australia has some of the most advanced water-use-efficient farming systems in the world, he hopes his studies "will take us to the next level of efficiencies in irrigated agriculture".

There is no doubt that with climate change and government policy there will be less irrigation water available in the future, he says. "Our natural resource is limited and we have to ensure we maximise the use of every drop of water.

"I want to be at the leading edge of technology to ensure my business, the local community and the irrigation industry survives and prospers into the future."

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 16 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 Stott hopes to travel to the United States, Israel and possibly South America.

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