Redlands era comes to an end

Queensland Government budget cuts announced last September had a major impact on turf research in Australia with the Redlands Research Station closing. Departed lifestyle horticulture team leader Matt Roche looks back on the facility’s research achievements of the past 13 years.

For nearly 13 years, research activities at Redlands Research Station in Queensland have come to an end. The termination of the Lifestyle Horticulture programme, which included flower, nursery and turf research, development and extension, was a result of the Queensland Government’s decision to cease activities in this area in an effort to save money.

On 11 September 2012 all Redlands staff members, with the exception those associated with the $8.6million glasshouse facility located at the site, were told that their substantive positions were no longer required. Permanent staff members, including those in the turf research team, were given the choice to take a voluntary redundancy or be redeployed elsewhere within the Queensland Public Service.

The decision came as a complete shock to all staff located at the site which is located about 45 minutes from Brisbane’s CBD. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) site was one of many victims of the massive cuts announced by the state government with an estimated 14,000 full-time equivalent public sector jobs axed.

At the time of writing this article (December 2012), the future of the research facility remains unclear. The 60 hectare site will remain in-situ for a minimum or 12-24 months before any action is taken. It may take more than five years for the site’s research capacity (infrastructure) to be lost.

There is talk of potential development across the site which would see the western side of Hillsland Creek sold off first. This area used to house the chemical phytotoxicity testing facility, wear trial and poultry research centre and currently contains the Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) funded project ‘Erosion Demonstration Control Facility’ (TU12005) which is now being led by Shane Holborn of Biosciences Australia Pty Ltd.

Back-up material of all warm-season reference collection plots plus additional cultivars are preserved in tubs at Redlands in an attempt to limit encroachment or contamination and maintain genetic purity.