



HON WARREN TRUSS MP
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

M E D I A R E L E A S E

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Dried fruit industry and the Australian Government – partners in the future

The Australian Government and Australia's dried fruit sector are to become partners in a major project to boost industry profitability, sustainability and competitiveness, Agriculture Minister Warren Truss announced today.

Mr Truss said the project will receive \$556,000 from the Australian Government's new Industry Partnership initiative.

"The Coalition Government set aside \$4.7 million in this year's Budget for a new one-year initiative under the *Agriculture – Advancing Australia* package, to work in partnership with participating industries to identify and address challenges, training and leadership needs, market opportunities and adjustment options," Mr Truss said.

"The Coalition has now made an election commitment to extend the program for a further three years at an additional cost of \$15 million.

"In 2003, the Australian Dried Fruits Association asked a consultant to study the dried grape sector, and recommend options for a redevelopment and restructuring plan.

"Among other things, the plan recommended support for a range of initiatives designed to stimulate investment in a sector that has been doing it tough for a number of years.

"The plan outlined the challenges facing the sector and the continuing adjustment processes it is likely to experience.

"The dried fruit industry has recognised that it will benefit greatly from participating in the Australian Government-Industry Partnership initiative.

"The Australian Dried Fruit Industry Partnership Project, in fact, involves five separate, but related, projects that target specific areas the industry has identified as important to its long-term sustainability.

"The five projects will involve:

- developing business skills
- improving technical (information) resources
- improving industry planning through better database management
- identifying new marketing and promotion strategies.

"The \$556,000 Australian Government contribution to the Dried Fruit Industry Partnership Project will be matched by industry in-kind and other support, demonstrating the significant benefits from industry and government working together."