

NSW
12 December 2000

Chairman – Citrus Inquiry
Productivity Commission,
Canberra

Dear Sir,

The plight of the citrus industry in the Riverina is of concern to the local community and Griffith can ill afford to lose this industry.

My concern is that the industry is unlikely to survive as it has in the past as a commodity focusing on the concentrate market. The hope for the future is that it will change to one that, through value adding, will create a new range of products sought after by consumers. We are told that the next generation will spend 85% of their money on products that are yet to be developed.

Citrus is a healthy, natural, fresh food available throughout the year. The challenge is to use it to create a new product that will appeal to consumers who now drink products such as Coke. Overseas, we are told, new age drinks based on fruit juices are claiming a significant part of the market (Australian 25 November).

The traditional marketers of citrus appear to have failed the industry. Growers must consider their future – staying in the industry and examining the exciting new opportunities they can create, living with continually declining returns for citrus as a commodity or moving out of the citrus industry. This message is likely to apply to other growers producing a commodity. The future for irrigated agriculture is likely to depend more on strategies of value adding, niche markets, “new age” cooperatives and sound financial planning than simply producing a commodity.

The Griffith community may well have a new vibrant industry if citrus growers encourage their representatives to spend more time talking to people knowledgeable in agribusiness, food technology and product innovation than politicians.

Warren Muirhead