

GM debate grows

By JO MORRIS

A MINIMAY farmer has described genetically modified wheat as industry sabotage.

Network of Concerned Farmers spokesman and farmer Geoffrey Carracher said despite the Victorian Premier John Brumby's support for GM wheat trials in Horsham and Mildura, it was a wasted exercise.

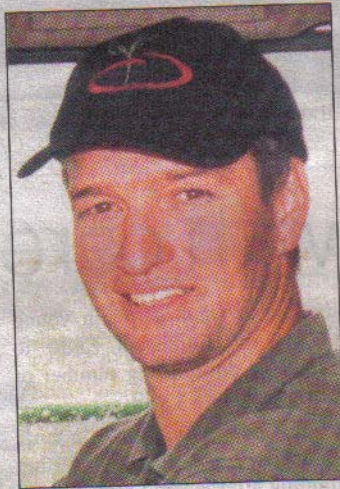
"No market in the world wants it," he said.

"The Canadians and the Americans went out to their clients around the world when GM came up and found that no-one wanted to buy it and so they haven't gone down that path."

Mr Carracher said the issues of GM wheat were similar to those of GM canola.

"If GM wheat is brought into Victoria what will happen is that the market perception will be that Victoria is growing GM wheat and it will be up to non-GM farmers to prove that they are not.

"Victoria will have to sell as



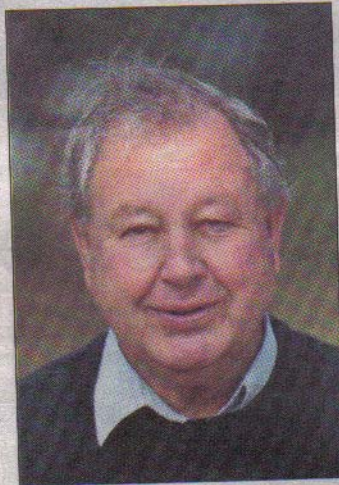
Andrew Weidemann

GM because you won't be able to prove that you're not GM, it's too expensive."

Mr Carracher also questioned the independence of the current wheat trials.

"There are no independent trials," he said.

"The Victorian Government owns the patents, that's why the Premier's talking that way."



Geoffrey Carracher

Rupanyup farmer and Victorian Farmers Federation Grains Group vice-president Andrew Weidemann said he thought the trials of GM wheat, some of which showed a 20 per cent higher yield than non-GM varieties, were positive.

"It's going to out-perform the current wheat varieties that we know and eventually, once per-

fect, it can be used in other crop varieties to make crops produce a lot more on a lot less moisture," he said.

"Conventional breeding practices couldn't achieve what GM technology has achieved in such a short time.

"I think you've only got to think about the flow-on effect to the regional community."

Mr Weidemann said it was positive that trials were being done in Horsham.

"I think that this type of technology is obviously the flow-on effect after the canola moratorium was announced to be lifted," he said.

"Now research organisations will focus heavily on this type of research and the future benefits will be that we will have good research facilities here in Horsham used to their capacity and more researchers joining them over time and more jobs created."

● **What people in the street think — page 22.**