

Policy | 2014

Saving Invermay

HIGHLIGHTS

Labour will:

- Keep the Invermay open as a fully functioning agricultural science research centre.
- Continue to back Invermay both as a productivity driver for our agricultural sector and the heart of cutting edge science in Otago

The Issue

Invermay is an AgResearch agricultural science centre just out of Mosgiel. It specializes in animal genomics, a vital service for our agricultural industry, which contributes to the productivity of our livestock farmers.

Invermay is a hub for genomics in Otago, with Dunedin Mayor David Cull reporting there are 200 geneticists working in the region.

In late 2013, the current government announced plans to relocate nearly 100 jobs from Invermay to an AgResearch hub at Lincoln University in Canterbury. Only a skeleton operation would be left at Invermay.

Scientists are currently scheduled to leave Invermay in 2017 but the effects of the decision to close the centre are being felt already. AgResearch's top scientists are casting about for work elsewhere and some have already left the organisation.

The current government's choice is strongly opposed by AgResearch staff, the farmers who benefit from its work, and the local community. Both internal and independent reviews have found that it is in New Zealand's economic interest to retain Invermay's genomics research capability.

Labour MP David Clark's petition to save Invermay has so far gathered around 9,000 signatures.

Labour's Plan

Labour will keep Invermay open as a centre for genomics research and a hub for genetics work in Otago. Dunedin and the wider Otago region cannot afford to lose another high wage, high skill, innovative employer.

This decision is cost-free. In fact, it will save the need for expenses related to making staff redundant or moving them, and will mean that the government does not need to invest to build new facilities at Lincoln to duplicate what already exists at Invermay.

A vibrant, expanding Otago economy needs places like Invermay that employ talented people on good incomes that get circulated through the local economy. The presence of hi-tech, innovative operations creates spill-over benefits and fosters related businesses. That has been the case with Invermay, and it's something that Labour will work to preserve for the future.