



## Separating market stalls to shed light on source of produce

By NATASHA RUDRA

STALLHOLDERS at the Capital Region farmer's market were yesterday split between two sheds as part of a new policy to separate food growers from food sellers.

At the weekly market in Exhibition Park, farmers who had grown or made their own food occupied a large producers shed, while those selling items on behalf of other farmers took up a smaller shed and outdoor area.

Organisers said the separation would make it easier for buyers to identify the source of food.

Market co-founder Peter O'Clery said the two-shed policy was a response to customer demands for transparency.

"Customers were saying they wanted to be able to talk to the people who grew their food, and that's a common theme in farmer's markets," he said.

He was confident the system would encourage a "level playing field" and not spark ill-feeling between producers and non-producers.

Organic baker Jock Quirk, in the producers shed, said: "I don't like this shed - it's dark. I'd rather be in the other shed. But I agree with what they're trying to do. If you produce your food, rather

than buy it from somewhere in Sydney, it's a good [thing]."

Shoppers seemed happy to browse for groceries, preserves and hot food in the producers shed as well as in the smaller agents shed, where egg specialist Mark McSpadden had set up.

Mr McSpadden, who owns a free-range egg farm, said the new rules meant he could not sell his own eggs in the producers shed.

"It's a bit disappointing to be in the [non-producers] shed because we produce 90 per cent of our eggs and we just get a few in from somewhere else," he said.

"But we've told all our customers. They know where we are and they've followed us."

Regular market patron Sophie Beauvais, of Watson, said she could see how the new system might disadvantage some sellers.

"For some producers it might be a bit unfair," she said. "Maybe they produce 90 per cent of their food and sell something on behalf of a neighbour - then they have to move to the other shed. It would be a bit unfair if people thought less of the food in the other shed."

But Ms Beauvais said she came to the markets for fresh local produce to eat in season, and the separate sheds would make little difference to her shopping.



Organic baker Jock Quirk finds the producers area too dark, but supports the two-shed system.

Photo: STEFAN POSTILES