

**THE EFFECT OF PARTIAL ROOTZONE DRYING ON THE
PARTITIONING OF DRY MATTER, CARBON, NITROGEN
AND INORGANIC IONS OF GRAPEVINES**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, no material described herein has been previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is made in the text.

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Summary

Partial rootzone drying (PRD) is an irrigation management technique designed to reduce water use in grapevines without a decline in yield, thereby increasing water-use efficiency (measured as t/ML) (WUE). The principle of PRD is to keep part of the root system at a constant drying rate to produce soil-derived signals to above-ground plant organs to induce a physiological response. Major PRD effects include a reduced canopy size and greatly increased WUE with possible improvements in fruit quality. Although we have a good understanding of the hormonal physiology of PRD, little is known on the effect of PRD on partitioning of C, N and inorganic ions such as K. This thesis broadens our knowledge on the effects of PRD on grapevine field performance, growth and dry matter accumulation as well as its effects on physiology and biochemistry. In field experiments over 3 seasons, PRD reduced water use in grapevines without a significant decline in yield. PRD effects included reduced shoot growth and greatly increased WUE. Field-grown Cabernet Sauvignon, where the PRD grapevines were irrigated at half the control rate, and Shiraz where the PRD grapevines were irrigated at same rate as controls, confirmed that PRD is not simply an irrigation strategy that applies less water, rather it alters the way in which the plant responds to its environment, e.g. PRD alters the sensitivity of the stomatal response to atmospheric conditions and significantly influence enzymes that regulate nutrient accumulation and partitioning. PRD did not change the total amount of carbon and nitrogen on a whole plant basis. However, it caused a significant partitioning of carbon and nitrogen towards trunk, roots and fruit at the expense of shoot growth. This change in partitioning occurred as a result of altered activity of the enzymes controlling the assimilation of carbon and nitrogen. PRD significantly reduced nitrate reductase (NR) activity in grapevine leaves, which catalyses the first step in the assimilation of nitrate irrespective of the amount of water applied. The reduction in NR activity is correlated with the development of the PRD cycle and the associated reduction in stomatal conductance.

PRD also significantly altered grapevine sucrolytic enzyme activity that regulate source:sink relationships. PRD showed transient increases in leaf sucrose phosphate synthase (SPS) activity (formation of sucrose) compared to control, but significantly reduced leaf neutral invertase (sucrose cleavage) and leaf starch content in both field and potted experiments. This may indicate an increased photosynthetic capacity and a reduction in its sink strength for sucrose in favor of organs such as fruit and roots. This hypothesis was reinforced by the fact that berries showed significantly higher levels in glucose and fructose early in the season. Berry sugar content and Brix at harvest however was unaffected. Although PRD had no significant effect on berry characteristics at harvest such as Brix and pH, it occasionally reduced per berry K^+ content and increased total amino acid concentration that may lead to positive outcomes for wine quality.

PRD-treated grapevine roots on the 'wet'- and 'drying'-sides differed greatly in enzyme activity and osmolality. PRD significantly increased osmolality in both wet and drying roots by increasing total osmolyte concentration that may facilitate the movement of water from wet to dry roots. The increases in osmolality were also associated with increased free polyamine production (spermidine and spermine) in PRD roots that may be related to increased root growth and density.

List of Abbreviations

ABA	abscisic acid
ADC	arginine decarboxylase
AI	acid invertase
GWRDC	Australian Grape and Wine Research Development Corporation
C _i	intracellular CO ₂ concentrations
CK	cytokinins
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organization
°C	degrees Celsius
ET _o	evapotranspiration
FAA	free amino acid
FAN	free amino nitrogen
GDD	growing degree days
GOGAT	glutamine synthase/glutamate synthase
g _s	stomatal conductance
GS	glutamine synthase
IRGA	infrared gas analysis instrument
LA	leaf area
NADPH	nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate
NCCs	nitrogen-containing compounds
NI	neutral invertase
NR	nitrate reductase
PAR	photosynthetic active radiation
PAs	polyamines
P _n	photosynthesis
PRD	partial rootzone drying
RH	relative humidity
RuBP	ribulose- 1,5- bisphosphate
s.e.	standard error of the mean
SPS	sucrose phosphate synthase
SucSy	sucrose synthase
TDR	time domain reflectometry
TSS	total soluble solids
VSP	vertical shoot positioning
WUE	water use efficiency
Ψ _L	leaf water potential

Table of contents

	Page
Chapter 1: General introduction	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2 Partial rootzone drying management	2
1.2.1 Why is alternation in wetting zones important?	3
1.2.2 Why will a simple reduction in irrigated water not have the same effect?	4
1.2.3 Why is PRD of different irrigation volumes compared to control?	4
1.2.4 Main focus points of the PRD research in this study	5
1.3 Carbon assimilation and the source:sink relationship	5
1.3.1 Sources and sinks	6
1.3.2 Phloem transport	7
1.3.3 Source to sink relationship	8
1.3.4 Carbohydrate storage and the role of sucrolytic enzymes	8
1.3.5 Biomass partitioning and water stress	10
1.4 Nitrogen assimilation and water stress	11
1.4.1 The role of enzymes involved in nitrogen assimilation	12
1.4.2 Nitrogen containing compounds (NCCs)	13
1.4.3 Polyamines (PAs)	14
1.5 Function and accumulation of inorganic ions in grapevines	16
1.5.1 Potassium (K)	16
1.5.2 Phosphorus (P)	17
1.5.3 Calcium (Ca)	17
1.5.4 Magnesium (Mg)	18
1.5.5 Sodium (Na)	18
1.5.6 Sulphur (S)	18
1.6 Seasonal dry matter and nutrient distribution in grapevines	18
1.7 Importance of vigor for plant nutrition	19
1.8 Importance of water use in plant nutrition and the carbon and nitrogen ratio	19
1.9 General research hypothesis	20
Chapter 2: General materials and methods	22
2.1 Sites and conditions	22
2.2 Production of split-root vines	25
2.3 Soil moisture measurements	25
2.4 Gas exchange measurements	27
2.5 Leaf gas exchange and photosynthesis	27
2.6 Xylem sap collection	28
2.7 Plant organ sampling	29
2.7.1 Root sampling	29
2.7.2 Leaf sampling	29
2.7.3 Shoot sampling	29
2.7.4 Fruit sampling and measurements	29
2.8 Soluble sugars analysis	30
2.9 Amino acid analysis	31
2.10 Free polyamine analyses	31
2.11 Inorganic mineral analyses	32
2.12 Starch analysis	32

2.13	Enzyme assays	33
2.13.1	Sucrose Synthase (SucSy) activity	33
2.13.2	Invertase activity	34
2.14	Total carbon and nitrogen analyses by dry combustion	34
2.15	Automatic weather station	34
2.16	Growing degree days	35
2.17	Evapotranspiration (ETo)	35
2.18	Statistical analyses	35

Chapter 3: Summary of weather conditions 2000-2004 **36**

Chapter 4: Effects of partial rootzone drying on water use efficiency and the reduction of shoot growth and canopy density **39**

4.1	Introduction	39
.2	Materials and methods	40
4.2.1	Field experiments where PRD received half the amount of control irrigation	40
4.2.2	Field experiments where PRD received the same amount of water as control.	41
4.2.3	Pot-grown Cabernet Sauvignon	44
4.2.4	Measurement of yield and harvest parameters	44
4.2.5	Stomatal conductance	44
4.2.6	Leaf area and canopy measurements	44
4.2.7	Shoot growth rate	45
4.2.8	Pruning weights	45
4.2.9	Leaf and stem water potentials	46
4.3	Results	46
4.3.1	Effects of PRD on shoot growth	46
4.3.2	Effects of PRD on leaf and stem water potentials	55
4.3.3	Effects of PRD on stomatal conductance	56
4.3.4	PRD and Photosynthesis	61
4.3.5	Effect of PRD on leaf area and canopy density	63
4.3.6	Effect of PRD on grapevine performance, dry weight accumulation and water use efficiency	67
4.4	Discussion	76
4.5	Conclusions	81

Chapter 5: PRD and exogenous ABA affect accumulation and partitioning of nitrogen, minerals and assimilated carbon in grapevine. **83**

5.1	Introduction	83
5.2	Materials and methods	85
5.3	Results	89
5.3.1	PRD and exogenous ABA effects on fruit and accumulated dry weight.	90
5.3.2	PRD and exogenous ABA effects on grapevine starch accumulation and partitioning.	91
5.3.3	PRD and exogenous ABA effects on grapevine mineral accumulation and partitioning	92
5.3.4	PRD and exogenous ABA effects on the partitioning of newly absorbed nitrogen.	98
5.3.5	PRD and exogenous ABA effects on the assimilation and partitioning of total nitrogen and carbon.	99

5.3.6	PRD field-experiment: effects on assimilation and partitioning of total nitrogen and carbon.	105
5.4	Discussion	112
5.5	Conclusions	122

Chapter 6: Partial rootzone drying reduces grapevine root and leaf nitrate reductase: the role of ABA and soil drying **124**

6.1	Introduction	124
6.2	Materials and methods	126
6.2.1	Experimental material and design	126
6.2.2	Stomatal conductance	129
6.2.3	Soil moisture measurements	129
6.2.4	Glutamine synthase (GS) activity	129
6.2.5	Nitrogen reductase (NR) activity assay by infiltration method	130
6.2.6	Nitrogen Reductase (NR) assay by extraction method	130
6.2.7	Determination of ammonium	131
6.2.8	Determination of nitrate	131
6.3	Results	131
6.3.1	PRD effect on ammonium levels and glutamine synthesis	131
6.3.2	PRD effect on berry NR activity	132
6.3.3	PRD effect on leaf NR activity	133
6.3.4	Factors affecting stomatal conductance and NR activity	138
6.3.5	PRD effect on xylem sap nitrate concentration	141
6.3.6	PRD effect on root NR activity	142
6.4	Discussion	145
6.5	Conclusions	148

Chapter 7: Osmotic regulation and sucrolytic enzyme activity in roots of partial rootzone drying: accumulation of sugars, amino acids and polyamines. **150**

7.1	Introduction	150
7.2	Materials and methods	153
7.2.1	Experimental material and design	153
7.2.2	Measurements of leaf physiology	154
7.2.3	Root tissue sampling and analyses	154
7.2.4	Root osmolality	154
7.2.5	Soluble sugars and osmolyte analysis	155
7.2.6	Amino acid analysis	155
7.2.7	Free polyamine analysis	155
7.2.8	Inorganic mineral analysis	155
7.2.9	Sucrolytic enzyme activity	155
7.4	Results	156
7.4.1	Root osmolality	156
7.4.2	Sugars and osmolytes	157
7.4.3	Amino acids	161
7.4.4	Free polyamines	163
7.4.5	Sucrolytic enzyme activity	166
7.4.6	Inorganic ions	169

7.5	Discussion	170
7.6	Conclusion	174

Chapter 8: Effects of PRD on enzymes of carbohydrate metabolism: the effect on accumulation of sugars, amino acids and polyamines. 176

8.1	Introduction	176
8.2	Materials and methods	180
8.2.1	Pot experiments	180
8.2.2	Field experiments	182
8.2.3	Stomatal conductance	183
8.2.4	Sucrose Phosphate Synthase (SPS) activity	183
8.2.5	Sucrose Synthase (SucSy) and invertase enzyme activity	183
8.2.6	Shoot sap and leaf exudate collection	183
8.2.7	Starch analysis	184
8.2.8	Soluble sugars analysis	184
8.2.9	Amino acid analysis	184
8.2.10	Free polyamine analysis	184
8.3	Results	185
8.3.1	The effect of ABA on enzymes involved in sucrose turnover in leaves	185
8.3.2	The effect of PRD on enzymes involved in sucrose turnover in leaves	186
8.3.3	The effect of PRD on the accumulation of sugars, amino acids and free polyamines in shoots.	190
	a) Starch accumulation in shoots	190
	b) Sucrose and nitrogen containing compounds (NCCs) in sap extracted from shoots	192
	c) Sugars and NCCs in shoots	194
	d) Amino acids in shoots	198
	e) Polyamines in shoots	202
8.4	Discussion	203
8.5	Conclusion	209

Chapter 9: The accumulation of sugars, amino acids and polyamines in PRD berries: effects of sucrolytic enzyme activity and berry size 211

9.1	Introduction	211
9.2	Materials and methods	213
9.2.1	Plant material	213
9.2.2	Sucrose Synthase (SucSy) and invertase enzyme activity	213
9.2.3	Soluble sugars analysis	213
9.2.4	Amino acid analysis	213
9.2.5	Free polyamine analysis	213
9.3	Results	214
9.3.1	The effect of PRD on berry characteristics and growth.	214
9.3.2	The effect of PRD on enzymes involved in carbohydrate accumulation in berries that determines sink strength.	217
9.3.3	The effect of PRD on the accumulation of sugars, amino acids and polyamines in berries.	219
	a) Sugars and NCCs	219
	b) Amino acids	228

c) Polyamines	233
9.4 Discussion	234
9.5 Conclusions	238

Chapter 10: PRD effects on berry inorganic ion accumulation, especially potassium, and the effect of berry size. 240

10.1 Introduction	240
10.2 Materials and methods	241
10.3 Results	242
10.3.1 Coombe Vineyard experiments in 2000/1	242
10.3.2 Coombe Vineyard experiments in 2001/2	248
10.3.3 Coombe Vineyard experiments in 2002/3	251
10.3.4 Nuriootpa Shiraz in 2000/1	254
10.4 Discussion	256
10.5 Conclusions	261

Chapter 11 General discussion and conclusions 263

11.1 Discussion on PRD research	263
11.1.1 PRD effects on growth and the accumulation of dry matter	264
11.1.2 PRD effects on C and N assimilation at the biochemical level	265
11.1.3 PRD effects on the partitioning of carbon and nitrogen	273
11.1.4 PRD effects on berry characteristics and the accumulation of inorganic ions	275
11.2 Practical implications	278
11.3 Future directions	281

Literature cited 282

Appendix 299

List of figures

	Page
1.1 Implementation of partial root-zone drying in the field.	3
1.2 Scheme showing relationships between photosynthesis, respiration and the formation of carbohydrates and amino acids. 2-oxoglutarate (2OG), oxaloacetate (OAA), 3-phosphoglycerate (PGA), triose phosphate (TP), fructose biphosphate (FBP), glucose 1-phosphate (G1P), glucose 6-phosphate (G6P), fructose 6-phosphate (F6P), uridine diphosphoglucose (UDPG) [Lewis, 2000 #224].	6
1.3 GS/GOGAT assimilation cycle [Givan, 1979 #183; Salisbury, 1992 #94].	13
1.4 Schematic outline of detoxifying hypothesis [Rabe, 1990 #87].	14
1.5 Schematic illustration of polyamine biosynthetic pathways. (1) Arginine decarboxylase (ADC); (2) Agmatine Iminohydrolase (AIH); (3) N-Carbamoylputrecine amidohydrolase; (4) S-Adenosylmethionine decarboxylase (SAMDC); (5) Arginase; (6) Spermidine synthase; (7) Spermine synthase; (8) ACC synthase [Flores, 1990 #36].	15
2.1 Implementation of PRD irrigation set up in pots: A) PRD: water withheld from one side; B) control: water on both sides.	23
2.2 Xylem collection apparatus. A. Shoot insertion point. B. Collection vial.	30
3.1 Cumulative growing degree-days after budburst for two growing seasons of the Waite campus.	38
4.1 Soil water content (mm) of control irrigation of Cabernet Sauvignon in the Alverstoke vineyard measured at 0–700 mm depth by EnviroSCAN® during the 2000/01 season.	45
4.2 Soil water content (mm) of PRD irrigation of Cabernet Sauvignon in the Alverstoke vineyard measured at 0–700 mm depth by EnviroSCAN® during the 2000/01 season. (Two lines represent the data collected from different sides of the PRD vine).	45
4.3 PRD effect on shoot growth in Waite Cabernet Sauvignon during the 2000/1 season. (A+B) accumulated and (C+D) daily shoot growth rates of actively growing main and lateral shoots. PRD received half the amount of water as control. (means n=7; average of 5 measurements per plot; Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the mean; P value indicate the significance level of the main effect of irrigation).	50
4.4 PRD effect on shoot growth in Waite Shiraz during the 2000/1 season. (A+B) accumulated and (C+D) daily shoot growth rates of actively growing main and lateral shoots. PRD received the same amount of water as control. (means n=7; average of 5 measurements per plot; Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the mean; P value indicate the significance level of the main effect of irrigation).	51
4.5 PRD effect on shoot growth in Waite Cabernet Sauvignon during the 2001/2 season. (A+B) accumulated and (C+D) daily shoot growth rates of actively growing main and lateral shoots. PRD received half the amount of water as control. (means n=7; average of 5 measurements per plot; Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the mean; P value indicate the significance level of the main effect of irrigation).	52
4.6 PRD effect on shoot growth in Waite Shiraz during the 2001/2 season. (A+B) accumulated and (C+D) daily shoot growth rates of actively growing main and lateral shoots. PRD received the same amount of water as control (means n=7; average of 5 measurements per plot; Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the mean; P value indicate the significance level of the main effect of irrigation).	53
4.7 PRD and girdling effects on active shoot growth of Alverstoke Cabernet Sauvignon in 2001/2. (A) Accumulated shoot length (cm); (B) Shoot growth rate (cm/day). PRD started on the 24/11/01 and received the same amount of water as control. (means n = 6; average of 5 measurements per plot; Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the average).	54
4.8 PRD and pruning level effects on shoot growth of Nuriootpa Shiraz in 2000/1. (A) Accumulated shoot length (cm) and (B) average shoot growth rate (cm/week). PRD started on the 23/11/00 and received half the amount of irrigation water as control. Pruning levels consisted of retaining 30, 60 or 120 nodes per vine. (means n = 5; average of 5 measurements per plot; Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the average).	56
4.9 Stomatal conductance of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon in 2001. PRD received half the amount of water as control. (Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the average. * = significantly different (P<0.05)).	59
4.10 Stomatal conductance of Coombe Shiraz in 2001. PRD received the same amount of water as control. (Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the average. * = significantly different (P<0.05)).	59
4.11 Stomatal conductance of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon in 2002. PRD received half the amount of water as control. (Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the average. * = significantly different (P<0.05)).	60
4.12 Stomatal conductance of Coombe Shiraz in 2002. PRD received the same amount of water as control. (Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the average. * = significantly different (P<0.05)).	60

4.13	Stomatal conductance of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon in 2003. PRD received half the amount of water as control. (Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the average. * significantly different (P<0.05)).	61
4.14	Stomatal conductance of Coombe Shiraz in 2003. PRD received the same amount of water as control. (Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the average. * = significantly different (P<0.05)).	61
4.15	A) Stomatal conductance of Alverstoke Cabernet Sauvignon 2000/1 and B) PRD and girdle treatments as % of control. PRD and girdled vines received the same amount of irrigation water as control. PRD started on the 24/11/00. (means n = 6; vertical bars represent standard error of the average. * = significantly different (P<0.05)).	62
4.16	Effect of PRD on the relationship between stomatal conductance (mol.m-2s-1) and assimilation rate (log Pn, $\mu\text{molm}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$) at midday in Cabernet Sauvignon grown under glasshouse conditions (2003). (3 observations on each of 6 replicates).	63
4.17	The effect of PRD and no irrigation (as % of control) on photosynthesis (Pn) and stomatal conductance (gs) in split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon grown under glasshouse conditions (2003). (means n=6; PRD received water in only pot at any time; 'No water' received no water in either pot; * = significant (P<0.05)).	64
4.18	(A) Soil moisture and (B) leaf water potential measurements (13:00-15:00) in split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon grown under glasshouse conditions (2003). (Control received water on both sides; PRD received water on only one side at any time (means n = 6 \pm s.e.); 'No water' received no water on either side (means n = 2)).	64
4.19	Light penetration into the bunch zone at harvest in Cabernet Sauvignon (2002) and Shiraz vines. (means n = 7; Vertical bars indicate standard errors of the average).	66
5.1	Split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon used in labeled nitrogen experiment at the Waite campus (summer 2003).	89
5.2	Effects of PRD and exogenous ABA on grapevine stomatal conductance ((mmolm-2s-1) as a percentage of control; Cabernet Sauvignon, split-root potted vines). Data points represent the mean of 4 measurements on each of the 5 replicates (\pm s.e) * = significantly different compared to control (P<0.05).	91
5.3	Effect of PRD and exogenous ABA on organ starch concentration (mg/g dry weight) of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μM ABA on one side). Bars represent means of 5 replicates and bars with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05).	93
5.4	Effect of PRD and exogenous ABA on total starch (mg/organ) of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μM ABA on one side). Bars represent means of 5 replicates and bars with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05).	94
5.5	Effect of PRD and exogenous ABA on grapevine organ A) carbon (% dry weight) and B) nitrogen (% dry weight) of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μM ABA on one side). Bars represent means of 5 replicates; \pm s.e. Bars with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05).	104
5.6	Effect of PRD and exogenous ABA on organ %N/%C ratio of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μM ABA on one side). Bars represent means of 5 replicates; \pm s.e. Bars with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05).	105
5.7	A+B) Effect of PRD and exogenous ABA on accumulated organ carbon content (g) of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon vines (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μM ABA on one side). Bars represent means of 5 replicates; \pm s.e. Bars with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05). Percentages represent the relative distribution of total carbon between organs	106
5.8	A+B) Effect of PRD and exogenous ABA on accumulated organ nitrogen content (g) of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon vines (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μM ABA on one side). Bars represent means of 5 replicates; \pm s.e. Bars with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05). Percentages represent the relative distribution of total nitrogen between organs.	107
5.9	Effect of PRD and exogenous ABA on organ total N/C ratio of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μM ABA on one side). Bars represent means of 5 replicates; \pm s.e. Bars with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05).	108

5.10	Relative partitioning of A) total carbon and B) total nitrogen between organs at harvest in split-rooted grapevines (2003).	123
6.1	Split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon used for exogenous ABA treatment at the Waite campus (summer 2002).	131
6.2	Pot configuration for Split rooted Cabernet Sauvignon used for root analyses. Top two pots filled with standard potting mix and the bottom two pots with vermiculite.	132
6.3	Effect of PRD treatment on (A) stomatal conductance and (B) NR activity in leaves of field-grown Cabernet Sauvignon over one PRD cycle in 2001. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm$ s.e.; * = Significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	137
6.4	Effect of PRD treatment on (A) stomatal conductance and (B) NR activity in leaves of field-grown Shiraz over one PRD cycle in 2001. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm$ s.e.; * = Significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	138
6.5	Effect of PRD on the relationship between stomatal conductance ($\text{mmol.m}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$) and nitrate reductase activity (\log NR activity, $\text{nmol NO}_2\text{.g Fw}^{-1}\text{.h}^{-1}$) in field grown Cabernet Sauvignon in 2001. (Data from 3 sampling days (20/02/2001, 27/02/2001, 5/03/2001); 7 replicates per treatment)	139
6.6	The effect of PRD on stomatal conductance (gs) and NR activity as a percentage of control in Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz grapevines.	139
6.7	Correlation between leaf stomatal conductance ($\text{mmol.m}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$) and nitrate reductase ($\text{nmol NO}_2\text{.g Fw}^{-1}\text{.h}^{-1}$) in field grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon on (A) 05/03/2001 and (B) 08/03/2001.	140
6.8	A) Stomatal conductance and B) Nitrate reductase activity of Alverstoke Cabernet Sauvignon in 2000/1. PRD and girdled vines received the same amount of irrigation water as control (means $n = 6$; vertical bars represent standard error of the average. * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	142
6.9	Effect of exogenous ABA on the stomatal conductance (gs) of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon in 2002 (Control: water on both sides; ABA: water on both sides with additional $10 \mu\text{M}$ ABA on one side). (means $n = 5$; Bars represent the standard error of the mean; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	143
6.10	Effect of exogenous ABA on the leaf nitrate reductase activity of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon in 2002 (Control: water on both sides; ABA: water on both sides with additional $10 \mu\text{M}$ ABA on one side). (means $n = 5$; Bars represent the standard error of the mean).	144
6.11	The PRD effect on xylem sap nitrate concentration in Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz grapevines during the 2001/2 growing season (15/03/2002). PRD Cabernet Sauvignon received half the amount of control irrigation and PRD Shiraz received the same amount of irrigation as control. (means $n = 7 \pm$ s.e.).	145
6.12	A) Soil matric potential (kPa) and B) stomatal conductance ($\text{mmolm}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$) of split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines in 2002. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 10$; vertical bars represent the standard error of the mean; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	146
6.13	Soil matric potential and root NR activity after (A) 4 days and (B) 8 days of PRD treatment of split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines. PRDwet = PRD pot currently under irrigation; PRDdry = PRD pot with water withheld. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time. (means $n = 5$; vertical bars represent the standard error of the mean; Bars with different letters are significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	147
7.1	Root sap osmolality of split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines (8/04/2002). Eight days after the switch of wetting pots in PRD. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 10 \pm$ s.e).	159
7.2	Sugar contents of control, PRD 'wet' and 'dry'-side roots of split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines in 2002. (A) Sucrose, (B) glucose and (C) fructose. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 10 \pm$ s.e.; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	162
7.3	Osmolyte contents of control, PRD 'wet' and 'dry'-side roots of split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines in 2002. (A) Hydroxy-methyl-proline, (B) glycine betaine and (C) DL-Proline. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 10 \pm$ s.e.; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	163
7.4	Total osmolyte contents of control, PRD 'wet' and 'dry'-side roots of split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines in 2002. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 10 \pm$ s.e.; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	164

- 7.5 Free polyamine contents of control, PRD 'wet' and 'dry'-side roots of split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines (8/04/2002). (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 10 \pm \text{s.e.}$; bars with different letters are significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 166
- 7.6 (A) Soil matric potential and (B) Stomatal conductance of split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines in 2003. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$; Non-irrigated vines received no water for the duration of the experiment; means $n = 2$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)) PRD irrigation was switched on average every 4 days. 167
- 7.7 Root SucSy activity of non-irrigated, control, PRD 'wet' and 'dry'-side roots in split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines under glasshouse conditions in 2003. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). Non-irrigated vines received no water for the duration of the experiment; means $n = 2$). 170
- 7.8 Root AI activity of non-irrigated, control, PRD 'wet' and 'dry'-side roots in split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines under glasshouse conditions in 2003. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$). Non-irrigated vines received no water for the duration of the experiment; means $n = 2$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 171
- 7.9 Root NI activity of non-irrigated, control, PRD 'wet' and 'dry'-side roots in split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines under glasshouse conditions in 2003. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). Non-irrigated vines received no water for the duration of the experiment; means $n = 2$). 172
- 7.10 Inorganic ion contents (mg/g dry wt) of control, PRD 'wet' and 'dry'-side and non-irrigated roots of split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines after A) 2 days and B) 12 days of PRD treatment and soil drying. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different from control ($P < 0.05$); Non-irrigated vines received no water for the duration of the experiment; means $n = 2$). 173
- 8.1 Leaf SPS activity in split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines of control and with synthetic ABA ($10 \mu\text{M}$) applied to the roots measured on the 02/05/2002. (Both treatments received the same amount of water on both sides; means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$). 190
- 8.2 (A) Soil matric potential (kPa) and (B) stomatal conductance ($\text{mmol.m}^{-2}.\text{s}^{-1}$) of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon in 2002. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = Significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 191
- 8.3 (A) Stomatal conductance ($\text{mmol.m}^{-2}.\text{s}^{-1}$) and (B) leaf SPS activity of field-grown Cabernet Sauvignon in the Coombe vineyard (2002). (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = Significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 193
- 8.4 (A) Stomatal conductance ($\text{mmol.m}^{-2}.\text{s}^{-1}$) and (B) leaf SPS activity of field-grown Shiraz in the Coombe vineyard (2002). (PRD received the same amount of irrigation as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = Significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 194
- 8.5 Leaf starch contents of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon in 2001 (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$). 196
- 8.6 Shoot sap sugar and NCC concentrations of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon in 2002. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$). 197
- 8.7 Sucrose concentration of petiole sap in split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon under glasshouse conditions in 2003. (Control received water on both sides; PRD received water on only one side at any time (means $n = 6 \pm \text{s.e.}$); 'No water' received no water on either side (means $n = 2$)). 198
- 8.8 The evolution in leaf (A) sucrose, (B) fructose and (C) glucose concentration ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon vines during the 2001 season from veraison to harvest. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 200

- 8.9 The evolution in leaf sugar-alcohols (A) mannitol and (B) pinitol concentration ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon during the 2001 season from veraison to harvest. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 201
- 8.10 The evolution in leaf NCCs (A) hydroxy-methyl-proline, (B) glycine betaine, (C) methyl proline and (D) proline concentration ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon during the 2001 season from veraison to harvest. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 201
- 9.1 Effect of PRD on the increase in (A+C) berry weight (g fresh wt) and (B+D) evolution in TSS ($^{\circ}\text{Brix}$) of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon vines during the 2001 and 2002 period from veraison to harvest (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significant ($P < 0.05$); ** = significant ($P < 0.01$)). 221
- 9.2 Effect of PRD on the increase in (A+C) berry weight (g fresh wt) and (B+D) evolution of TSS ($^{\circ}\text{Brix}$) of field-grown Coombe Shiraz vines during the 2001 and 2002 period from veraison to harvest (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$). 222
- 9.3 The evolution in berry (A) sucrose, (B) glucose and (C) fructose concentration ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon vines during the 2001 season from veraison to harvest. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 226
- 9.4 The evolution in berry NCC (A) glycine betaine, (B) methyl proline and (C) proline concentration ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon vines during the 2001 season from veraison to harvest (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 228
- 9.5 The evolution in berry (A) sucrose, (B) glucose and (C) fructose concentration ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) of field-grown Coombe Shiraz vines during the 2001 season from veraison to harvest (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control but only on one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$). 229
- 9.6 The evolution in berry NCC (A) glycine betaine, (B) hydroxy-methyl-proline, (C) methyl proline and (D) proline concentration ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) of field-grown Coombe Shiraz vines during the 2001 season from veraison to harvest (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control, but only on one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$). 230
- 9.7 The polyamine contents of berries of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz at harvest in 2002. Cabernet Sauvignon PRD vines received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; PRD Shiraz received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; Control vines received water on both sides at the same time; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$). 239
- 10.1 The changes in K (A+C) and Ca (C+D) ion concentration (mg/g dry wt) and ion content (mg/berry) respectively in Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon berries during the ripening period in 2001 between veraison and harvest. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 250
- 10.2 The changes in Mg (A+C), P (C+D) and S (E+F) ion concentration (mg/g dry wt) and ion content (mg/berry) respectively in Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon berries during the ripening period in 2001 between veraison and harvest. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)). 252
- 10.3 The changes in Ca (A+C) and K (C+D) ion concentration (mg/g dry wt) and ion content (mg/berry) respectively in Coombe Shiraz berries in 2001 during the last month before harvest. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control but only on one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$). 253
- 10.4 The changes in Mg (A+C), P (C+D) and S (E+F) ion concentration (mg/g dry wt) and ion content (mg/berry) respectively in Coombe Shiraz berries in 2001 during the last month before harvest. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control but on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$). 254

- 11.1 Effect of PRD treatment on grapevine enzyme activities related to growth, source:sink relationship, carbon partitioning and nitrogen assimilation (* = may be related to reduced amounts of irrigation water compared to control and/or the effect on berry size; SPS = Sucrose Phosphate Synthase; SucSy = Sucrose Synthase; AI = Acid Invertase; NI = Neutral Invertase; NR = Nitrate Reductase). 276
- 11.2 Effect of PRD treatment on the accumulation and partitioning of carbohydrates and nitrogenous compounds (* = may be related to reduced amounts of irrigation water compared to control and/or the effect on berry size; Spd = Spermidine; Spm = Spermine). 277

List of tables

	Page
2.1 Climatic data for the experimental sites located in South Australia (Waite Campus data is a mean of 3 years (2000-2003); Nuriootpa is historic means up to 1998).	25
2.2 Standard potting mixture.	26
3.1 Growing season monthly average temperature (°C) 2000-2003 of the Waite campus.	38
3.2 Growing season monthly ETo(mm) of the Waite campus.	39
3.3 PRD period monthly rainfall (mm) 2000-2003 of the Waite campus (Effective rain is classified as precipitation more than 2 mm).	40
4.1 Leaf water potentials (MPa) of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz vines (20/01/01).) Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time. (means $n = 7 \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	57
4.2 Leaf water potentials (MPa) of Alverstoke Cabernet Sauvignon vines (midday). Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received the same amount as control irrigation (means $n = 6 \pm$ s.e.; means with different letters are significantly different ($P < 0.05$); n.s. = not significant).	57
4.3 Midday leaf and stem water potentials (MPa; midday) of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon vines (18/03/03). Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received half the amount of control irrigation (means $n = 7 \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$))	58
4.4 PRD and pruning level effects on shoot growth components and leaf area (LA) at veraison in Nuriootpa Shiraz (2001). (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received half the amount of control irrigation. Pruning levels consisted of retaining 30, 60 or 120 nodes per vine; means $n = 5; \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	68
4.5 Correlation matrix of canopy components at veraison of field-grown Shiraz at the Nuriootpa research station (2001). (PRD received half the amount of control irrigation; light grey cell: $P < 0.05$; dark grey: $P < 0.01$).	68
4.6 PRD and pruning level effects on shoot growth components and leaf area at harvest in Nuriootpa Shiraz (2001) (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received half the amount of control irrigation. Pruning levels consisted of retaining 30, 60 or 120 nodes per vine; means $n = 5; \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	68
4.7 Correlation matrix of canopy components at harvest of field-grown Shiraz at the Nuriootpa research station (2001). (PRD received half the amount of control irrigation; light grey cell: $P < 0.05$; dark grey: $P < 0.01$).	69
4.8 The effect of PRD on and shoot growth components and leaf area at harvest in Cabernet Sauvignon at the Alverstoke site (2001) (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received the same amount as control irrigation; means $n = 6; \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	69
4.9 Effect of PRD on yield and berry characteristics of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon at harvest. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received half the amount of control irrigation; means $n = 7; \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	71
4.10 Effect of PRD on grapevine shoot growth components and water use efficiency of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received half the amount of control irrigation; means $n = 7; \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	72
4.11 Summer hedging and winter pruning weights of Cabernet Sauvignon vines under PRD irrigation (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time; means $n = 7; \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	73
4.12 Effect of PRD on grapevine yield and berry characteristics in Coombe Shiraz at harvest (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received the same amount as control irrigation; means $n = 7; \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	74
4.13 Effect of PRD on grapevine shoot growth components and water use efficiency of Coombe Shiraz (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received the same amount as control irrigation; means $n = 7; \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	75
4.14 Summer hedging and winter pruning weights (kg dry weight) of Coombe Shiraz in 2001 (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received the same amount as control irrigation; means $n = 7; \pm$ s.e.; n.s. = not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	75

4.15	Yield and shoot components at harvest for Cabernet Sauvignon at the Alverstoke site (2001) (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received the same amount as control irrigation; means n = 6; \pm s.e.; n.s. = not significant (P<0.05)).	76
4.16	PRD and pruning level effects on yield components at harvest in Nuriootpa Shiraz (2001). (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld on one side at any time and received half the amount of control irrigation. Pruning levels consisted of retaining 30, 60 or 120 nodes per vine; means n = 5; \pm s.e.; n.s. = not significant).	77
4.17	Correlation matrix of harvest components at harvest of field-grown Shiraz at the Nuriootpa research station (2001). (PRD received half the amount of control irrigation; dark grey cell: P<0.01).	78
5.1	Harvest data for pot-grown Cabernet Sauvignon (2003). Means indicated with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05) and means without letters are not significantly different (P<0.05).	92
5.2	Organ dry-weights for pot-grown Cabernet Sauvignon (2003). Means indicated with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05) and means without letters are not significant different (P<0.05).	93
5.3	Total inorganic ion content (mg/organ) at harvest of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μ M ABA on one side). Means indicated with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05). Percentages represent the relative distribution of total mineral content within the vine.	98
5.4	Inorganic ion concentration (mg/g dry wt) at harvest of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μ M ABA on one side). Means indicated with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05).	99
5.5	Correlation matrix between inorganic ion contents (mg/berry) and berry dry weight at harvest of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon. Grey cell: P<0.05; dark grey: P<0.01.	100
5.6	Correlation matrix between inorganic ion concentrations (mg/g dry wt) and berry fresh weight at harvest of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (Grey cell: P<0.05; dark grey: P<0.01).	100
5.7	Abundance of labeled nitrogen (atom% excess 15 N) at harvest of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μ M ABA on one side). Data represent means after natural abundance of 15 N was subtracted. (Means indicated with different letters are significantly different (P<0.05); means n = 5).	101
5.8	Total 15 N (mg/organ) of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (Control: water on both sides; PRD water withheld from one side; ABA: water on both sides with additional 10 μ M ABA on one side).	103
5.9	Berry nitrogen content at harvest of field-grown Cabernet Sauvignon at the Waite campus. Control: vines received water on both sides of the vine; PRD: water withheld to one side – half of control irrigation; (means n = 7 \pm s.e.).	109
5.10	Berry nitrogen content (g/berry) at harvest of field-grown Shiraz at the Waite campus. Control: vines received water on both sides of the vine; PRD: water withheld to one side – full amount of control irrigation; (means n = 7 \pm s.e.).	110
5.11	Berry N/C ratio at harvest of field-grown Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz at the Waite campus. Control: vines received water on both sides of the vine; PRD: water withheld to one side; Cabernet Sauvignon PRD received half of control amount of irrigation; Shiraz PRD received full amount of control irrigation; (means n = 7 \pm s.e.).	110
5.12	Berry nitrogen at harvest of field-grown Shiraz at the Nuriootpa research station (2001). Control: vines received water on both sides of the vine; PRD: water withheld to one side; Cabernet Sauvignon PRD received half of the amount of control irrigation (means; n = 5 \pm s.e.).	111
5.13	Leaf nitrogen and carbon concentration (% dry wt) at harvest of field-grown Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz at the Waite campus. (Control: vines received water on both sides of the vine; PRD: water withheld to one side; Cabernet Sauvignon PRD received half of control amount of irrigation; Shiraz PRD received full amount of control irrigation; means n = 7 \pm s.e.).	112
5.14	Leaf N/C ratio (% dry weight) at harvest of field-grown Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz at the Waite campus. (Control: vines received water on both sides of the vine; PRD: water withheld to one side; Cabernet Sauvignon PRD received half of control amount of irrigation; Shiraz PRD received full amount of control irrigation; means n = 7 \pm s.e.).	112
5.15	Shoot nitrogen and carbon concentration (% dry wt) at harvest of field-grown Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz at the Waite campus. (Control: vines received water on both sides of the vine; PRD: water withheld to one side; Cabernet Sauvignon PRD received half of control amount of irrigation; Shiraz PRD received full amount of control irrigation; means n = 7 \pm s.e.).	113
5.16	Shoot N/C ratio (% dry weight) at harvest of field-grown Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz at the Waite campus. (Control: vines received water on both sides of the vine; PRD: water withheld to one side;	

	Cabernet Sauvignon PRD received half of control amount of irrigation; Shiraz PRD received full amount of control irrigation; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	114
5.17	Shoot nitrogen and carbon content (% dry weight) at harvest of field-grown Shiraz at the Nuriootpa research station (2001) (Control: vines received water on both sides of the vine; PRD: water withheld to one side; Cabernet Sauvignon PRD received half of control amount of irrigation; (means; $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$)).	115
6.1	Xylem sap NH_4^+ of PRD-treated and girdled Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines in the Alverstoke vineyard (19/12/2000). (PRD and girdled vines received the same amount of irrigation water as control; means $n = 6 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	135
6.2	Glutamine synthase activity measured in leaves of field-grown grapevines in the Coombe vineyard (8/02/2001) (PRD received half the amount of control irrigation) and Shiraz (PRD receiving the same amount as control). (means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; n.s. = Not Significant ($P < 0.05$); GS activity is defined as $\mu\text{mol L-glutamate } \gamma\text{-monohydroxamate/min}$).	135
6.3	NR activity measured in berries of field-grown Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines in the Coombe vineyard (7/02/2001) (PRD received half the amount of control irrigation; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; n.s. = Not Significant ($P < 0.05$); NR activity measured as $\text{nmol NO}_2.\text{gFW}^{-1}.\text{h}^{-1}$).	136
6.4	NR activity (%) and stomatal conductance ($\text{mmol.m}^{-2}.\text{s}^{-1}$) measured in leaves of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon under glasshouse conditions in 2001. (means $n = 6 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	141
7.1	Root sugars and osmolytes ($\mu\text{Mol/g}$ fresh wt) for split-rooted pot-grown Cabernet Sauvignon (8/04/2002). PRD received water in only one pot while water was withheld from the other at any given time. Control received water in both pots. 'PRD average' is the mean between PRD 'dry' side and PRD 'wet' side roots. (means $n = 10 \pm \text{s.e.}$; means indicated with different letters are significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	161
7.2	Amino acid contents ($\mu\text{mol/g}$ fresh wt) of control, PRD 'wet' and 'dry'-side roots of split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines (8/04/2002). 'PRD average' is the mean between PRD 'dry' side and PRD 'wet' side roots. (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 10 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	165
7.3	Leaf water potential (MPa) after 12 days of PRD treatment in split-rooted 'double-pot' Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines under glasshouse conditions (2003). (Control: vines received water on both sides; PRD: water withheld from one side at any time; means $n = 6 \pm \text{s.e.}$; n.s.= not significant ($P < 0.05$)).	167
7.4	Water content (%) of powdered root samples for analyses of split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon under glasshouse conditions during PRD treatment in 2003. (means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$; means indicated with different letters are significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	168
7.5	Root sugars and osmolytes ($\mu\text{Mol/g}$ fresh wt) in split-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon under glasshouse conditions after 2 days of PRD treatment in 2003. PRD received water in only one pot while water was withheld from the other at any given time. Control received water in both pots. (means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$; means indicated with different letters are significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	169
8.1	Leaf sucrolytic enzyme activity in split rooted Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines on 07/05/2002 (4 days after a switch in PRD; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	192
8.2	Sucrolytic enzyme activity in apical and basal leaves of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines (2003). (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	195
8.3	Leaf starch concentration of field-grown Nuriootpa Shiraz at harvest in 2001. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	197
8.4	Sugars and NCCs ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) in shoots of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon at harvest in 2001. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	202
8.5	Sugars and nitrogen containing compounds ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) in leaves of field-grown Coombe Shiraz at harvest in 2001. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	202
8.6	Sugars and NCCs ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) in shoots of field-grown Coombe Shiraz at harvest in 2001. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	203

8.7	Amino acid concentration (nM/g fresh wt) in leaves of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines at harvest in 2001. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	204
8.8	Amino acid concentration (nM/g fresh wt) in shoots of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines at harvest in 2001. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; n.d. = not detected).	205
8.9	Amino acid concentration (nM/g fresh wt) in leaves of field-grown Coombe Shiraz at harvest in 2001. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; n.d. = not detected).	206
8.10	Amino acid concentration (nM/g fresh wt) in shoots of field-grown Coombe Shiraz at harvest in 2001. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; n.d. = not detected).	207
8.11	Shoot sap polyamine concentration (ng/ml) of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz (15/03/2002). (PRD Cabernet Sauvignon received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; PRD Shiraz received the same amount of irrigation as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	208
8.12	Free polyamine content (ug/g fresh wt) in leaves of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon (14/02/2002). (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	208
9.1	Berry size (g/berry) of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz at harvest in 2003. (PRD Cabernet Sauvignon received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; PRD Shiraz received the same amount of irrigation as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	223
9.2	Sucrolytic enzyme activity in berries of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines (2003) measured at two different times during ripening. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	224
9.3	Sucrolytic enzyme activity in berries of field-grown Coombe Shiraz grapevines measured shortly after veraison in 2003. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	225
9.4	Sugars and NCCs (μM per berry) in berries of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines at harvest in 2001. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	227
9.5	Sugars and NCCs ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) in berries of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines at harvest in 2002. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	231
9.6	Sugars and NCCs (μM per berry) in berries of field-grown Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines at harvest in 2002. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	231
9.7	Sugars and NCCs ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) in berries of field-grown Coombe Shiraz grapevines at harvest in 2002. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	232
9.8	Sugars and NCCs ($\mu\text{M/g}$ fresh wt) in berries of field-grown Nuriootpa Shiraz grapevines at harvest in 2001. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	233
9.9	The evolution in the concentration of free amino acids (nM/g fresh wt) in Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon berries during the ripening period in 2001 (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7$; a = significantly different ($P < 0.10$); * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	235
9.10	The concentration of free amino acids (nM/g fresh wt) in Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon berries during veraison and harvest in 2002 (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; * = significantly different ($P < 0.05$)).	236
9.11	Amino acid concentration (nM/g fresh wt) in berries of field-grown Coombe Shiraz grapevines during the 2001 season. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7$; a = significantly different ($P < 0.10$)).	237

9.12	The concentration of free amino acids (nM/g fresh wt) in Coombe Shiraz berries during veraison and at harvest in 2002. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$; a = significantly different ($P < 0.10$)).	238
10.1	The inorganic ion concentration ($\mu\text{g/g}$ dry wt) and ion content ($\mu\text{g/berry}$) in Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon berries at veraison in 2002. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	256
10.2	The inorganic ion concentration ($\mu\text{g/g}$ dry wt) and ion content ($\mu\text{g/berry}$) in Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon berries at harvest in 2002. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	256
10.3	The inorganic ion concentration ($\mu\text{g/g}$ dry wt) and ion content ($\mu\text{g/berry}$) in Coombe Shiraz berries at veraison in 2002. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	257
10.4	The inorganic ion concentration ($\mu\text{g/g}$ dry wt) and ion content ($\mu\text{g/berry}$) in Coombe Shiraz berries at harvest in 2002. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	258
10.5	The inorganic ion concentration ($\mu\text{g/g}$ dry wt) and ion content ($\mu\text{g/berry}$) of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon berries at veraison in 2003. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	259
10.6	The inorganic ion concentration ($\mu\text{g/g}$ dry wt) and ion content ($\mu\text{g/berry}$) of Coombe Cabernet Sauvignon berries at harvest in 2003. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	259
10.7	The inorganic ion concentration ($\mu\text{g/g}$ dry wt) and ion content ($\mu\text{g/berry}$) of Coombe Shiraz berries at veraison in 2003. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control only on one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	260
10.8	The inorganic ion concentration ($\mu\text{g/g}$ dry wt) and ion content ($\mu\text{g/berry}$) of Coombe Shiraz berries at harvest in 2003. (PRD received the same amount of irrigation water as control only on one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 7 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	261
10.9	The Ca, K, Mg, P and S concentration ($\mu\text{g/g}$ dry wt) in Nuriootpa Shiraz berries at harvest in 2001. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	262
10.10	The Ca, K, Mg, P and S contents ($\mu\text{g/berry}$) of Nuriootpa Shiraz berries at harvest in 2001. (PRD received half the amount of irrigation water as control by irrigating on only one side at any time; control received water on both sides; means $n = 5 \pm \text{s.e.}$).	263
11.1	Various physiological responses of grapevines on PRD treatment (% change compared to control). (n.s. = not significant). Shaded areas = PRD effects that may be related to a degree of water stress.	289