

both offices to maintain and grow WAFEX sales on the domestic market in native and imported flowers.

Before long both the Perth and Melbourne operations were outgrowing their premises.

Today, WAFEX Melbourne runs out of a 1000 square metre warehouse in Grace St, Sunshine, while WAFEX Perth purchased 10 acres in the Swan Valley in 2001 to commission the company's first owned and dedicated flower packing facility.

"Logistically, it's a better outcome for the business. We're at the airports daily, we're at the wholesale markets in Footscray three days a week selling and picking up, lots of trucks depots and drop off points are down this way," Mr Parsons said.

"We're actually quite a long way from the hub of the Melbourne flower industry, which is in the Dandenongs. To service that, we do delivery runs three times a week, but for our core business – which is the airport, the markets – this is a good spot to be.

"We're on our own a bit out here, which I kind of like."

In 2008, Mr Parsons and Mr Musson identified a need to grow their own product.

WAFEX subsequently leased a flower farm north of Perth where existing crops including Banksias and Scholtizia were already planted.

The company structured this farm and has since carried out extensive re-planting programmes to expand it.

This was replicated in Melbourne last year with the purchase of a 70-acre flower farm called Longford Flowers, which included a crop mix of Serruria, Banksia, Leucadendron, Protea and Leucospermum.



"Historically, we buy off growers and repackage, which we will continue to do, but we were a bit concerned at our long-term supply. Growers were not expanding or investing or their kids weren't coming onto the farm," Mr Parsons said.

The next big venture was into flower breeding.

"Flowers are like fashion trends; everybody wants the latest and the greatest," Mr Parsons said.

"There's constantly new breeds coming onto the market, so we've set up a new company, called Helix Australia, and we will buy exclusive rights to new breeds and grow them, or contract-grow them and sell them through Wafex.

Adrian Parsons... no time to smell the roses.

Picture: DAMJAN JANEVSKI

"That's a global move, because with those new varieties we can license growers all around the world, we're not tied to Australia."

Mr Parsons and Mr Musson have also recently appointed general managers at both branches as part of a succession plan for WAFEX.

"We're trying to step back from the day to day," Mr Parsons said. **[BW]**

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