



Media Release

01/02/2019

Cotton Australia responds to South Australian Royal Commission report

The findings of the South Australian Royal Commission into the Murray-Darling Basin commended Australia's cotton industry, while also making recommendations that could impact its future.

The Commissioner, Bret Walker SC, said in the report Australia's cotton industry had 'almost been demonized', and rhetoric of cotton being a 'thirsty crop' and an industry made up of 'greedy farmers' should be rejected. The Commissioner said cotton 'should not be denigrated' in comparison to other crops.

Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay said some of the Commissioner's recommendations would throw the Basin Plan into jeopardy, which would hurt irrigated agriculture.

"This very detailed report compiled by the Commissioner is long and intricate, and it will take time to fully assess the potential impact of the recommendations," Mr Kay said.

"What is clear is that the findings and recommendations are based off a complex legal interpretation of the Water Act, and that the Commissioner views the environment as taking absolute precedence in the Plan. Our industry continues to support the Plan's aim of providing balance for the environment, communities, and the economy."

"The aim of the Plan was never to return the Basin's environment to a pristine state. The Commissioner's legal interpretation of the Plan may or may not be correct, but if it is, it is the Water Act that needs to be amended, not the core approach of the Plan."

Mr Kay said some of the recommendations would need further scrutiny.

"If the recommendation of repealing the Northern Basin Review (NBR) and reversing the 70GL reduced water recovery target is accepted, it would be an unwarranted assault on our democratic process. The NBR was built into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan from the outset and had bi-partisan support. Abandoning its findings and re-doing the NBR would undermine the hard work that has been done to ensure a balance is achieved."

"Similarly, we have long supported improvements in metering and compliance, including around floodplain harvesting. We are a transparent industry, and to ensure that

transparency, state governments must boost the systems in place to ensure metering data is accessible and thoroughly monitored.”

“We remain proud of our industry and growers, and as the Commissioner said, ‘nothing in the report should be understood, let alone feared, as a voice against the continued enterprise of our already top notch irrigation farmers’.”

Cotton Australia is the peak representative body for Australia’s cotton growing industry.

Cotton Australia media contacts:

Lucy Brennan
Communications Manager – Stakeholder Engagement, Cotton Australia
0455 035 666

Adam Kay
CEO, Cotton Australia
0437 695 222