



Media Release

18/02/19

Rain, not blame, needed after Menindee fish deaths

Statement attributable to Cotton Australia CEO, Adam Kay:

Cotton Australia acknowledges the findings of the Labor-commissioned Australian Academy of Science report into the causes of the recent Menindee fish deaths.

While we welcome some of the recommendations, there are others we disagree with.

There is no doubt the fish deaths at Menindee were a devastating sight, and a graphic reminder of the effects of this devastating drought.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan seeks to achieve a balance of outcomes for the environment, communities, and agriculture. As acknowledged by the Australian Academy of Science in their support of the initial framework of the Basin Plan, the Plan was born out of compromise and when complete, will deliver the 3200GL Plan for the environment as agreed to in 2012.

The Australian cotton industry is not immune to this devastating drought. This season's cotton crop is set to be half the size of last season's.

Blaming upstream irrigators for the fish deaths at Menindee, while there's no water in the system for anyone, is unfair and misguided.

It must be remembered, in most irrigation valleys in the northern Murray-Darling Basin, the general water allocation this season has been zero. There is simply no water in the system for anyone. We need rain, not blame.

Regarding the Australian Academy of Science's recommendations, the Northern Basin Review was independently assessed by scientists and received bi-partisan support. Redirecting this 70 gigalitres of water undermines this scientific evaluation.

Cotton Australia agrees with the report's push for more 'real time' water quality monitoring to improve the capability of predicting critical events.

We welcome any recommendation that will improve the management of water, as long as it still meets the Basin Plan's objectives as agreed to by all the states and territories.

Cotton Australia will take time to read and fully consider the potential impacts of the report's findings.

We urge decision makers to not make knee-jerk reactions in response to this issue, and we are committed to seeing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan implemented in full and on time.

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

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