



COTTON  
AUSTRALIA

**A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT**

ANNUAL REPORT  
2014-15

# ADVANCING AUSTRALIAN COTTON





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# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Weather conditions have presented our industry with significant challenges over the past year, and as this Annual Report went to press we were predicting a season of around half the bales of last year's.

However, there is still much to be thankful for – your representative organisation, Cotton Australia, has had a solid year, delivering much-needed benefits for growers.

Cotton Australia is in the second of its five-year Strategic Plan, which aims to achieve important goals in the four pillars of Policy & Advocacy, Research Direction, Stewardship, and Community & Capacity.

I am very pleased to say that Cotton Australia has had a great year in policy, advocacy and market promotion, and has delivered some fantastic wins across all of these areas, as this Annual Report will show.

I would draw particular attention to our Cotton To Market initiative. This important program links the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), Cotton LEADs(TM), direct promotion of our fibre in foreign and domestic markets, and the myBMP system.

Together, these programs spread the good story about our great industry to the world. Encouragingly, there is evidence that – by achieving certification in myBMP and participating in BCI – growers have been able to achieve a premium for their fibre. This is a huge step forward for growers, and on behalf of the Board I would like to congratulate the Cotton Australia team for bringing it to fruition, and I look forward to continued success in this area.

In addition to Cotton Australia's valuable policy work and promotion initiatives, the organisation delivers essential services to growers. It must be said that it cannot achieve any of these without the support of cotton growers. Cotton Australia's Board acknowledges the need to maintain a sound financial position, and I am glad to report that your organisation's fiscal position is very strong. Accordingly, the Board has decided to maintain the voluntary levy at \$1.50 per bale for this season.

I would like to sincerely thank all those growers who support the voluntary levy – your contribution is what enables Cotton Australia to continue with its essential work on behalf of farmers and the industry. All cotton growers benefit from Cotton Australia's hard work, and if all contributed the voluntary levy it could be reduced further still.

I would also like to thank the Cotton Australia member representatives, and other growers, who have attended our General Meetings and otherwise given their time to guide the Board on the most critical and pressing issues facing the industry. This direct feedback is crucial to the success of our organisation, and without it Cotton Australia could not have achieved all that it has.

Looking back on the year that was, I reflect on the many accomplishments of Cotton Australia, which would not have been possible without the tireless effort of my fellow Board members, our CEO Adam Kay, and the dedicated Cotton Australia team. Our organisation has proven its worth in the past 12 months, and I look forward to working with everyone over the coming year to achieve even more on behalf of growers.

Best wishes for the coming season.

**Lyndon Mulligan**  
Chairman



# CEO REPORT

The 2014-15 year has been even more challenging for our industry than the last, and also for Cotton Australia – the organisation that works on behalf of growers.

While some regions have done it tough, there is growth in our industry, particularly in the southern regions.

I am proud to be able to say that Cotton Australia has had a great year in its core business, which is to champion the interests of growers and the industry to important stakeholders – politicians, regulators and policy makers. I'm glad to report we've had some big wins.

Perhaps the most significant has been in the area of water, our most critical resource and a topic of extreme importance for all growers. In the past 12 months, Cotton Australia has helped overturn water embargoes in northern NSW, achieved a reversal in Government policy on water buybacks through a cap, helped move towards local management of irrigation schemes in Queensland, and achieved supplementary water licenses in perpetuity in NSW. That's just a few of an impressive list of achievements that directly benefit growers.

Cotton growers, through Cotton Australia, have also had a voice in halting the escalation in price of another key input – electricity. In the past year we have participated in the formation of the Energy White Paper and the energy market governance review, appeared at the Senate inquiry into electricity companies, and guided trials that have identified efficiencies to potentially put hundreds of thousands of dollars back in growers' pockets.

We've continued to work hard to guide crucial research and development in the industry. Importantly, we were able to secure a commitment to retain existing levels of Australian Government funding for research, ensuring the dividends will continue to flow to growers in the years to come. We also achieved an extension to the cotton planting window for the season, and facilitated the TIMS Committee to help progress the development of a Resistance Management Plan for Bollgard III. Those achievements were on top of our role as the industry body guiding the CRDC's research and development investments.

Cotton Australia has also been active in markets here in Australia and around the world to build demand

for our excellent fibre. Our Cotton To Market program continued to tell the world about the modern Australian cotton industry and convince leading international brands, retailers, manufacturers and designers to specify Australian cotton in their products.

On top of Cotton Australia's policy and advocacy wins, in the past year your organisation has also provided crucial on-farm services.

More detail on these and other achievements and services are detailed elsewhere in this Annual Report.

As you know, Cotton Australia is funded by a voluntary levy contributed by growers for every bale they produce. Sadly, not every grower contributes the voluntary levy, yet all growers share in the successes and achievements that the levy funds.

If you are a levy contributor, I take this opportunity to thank you – without your crucial support, Cotton Australia could not achieve all that it does on behalf of growers and the industry at large.

If you have chosen not to pay the levy, I ask you to reconsider and talk to your ginning representative about how you can contribute your share – the more that contribute, the stronger our organisation and industry will be, and the more we can achieve on your behalf.

The Board has reduced the voluntary levy over the last few years. If every grower in our industry contributed to the levy, it could be reduced even more.

Once again I thank the dedicated staff at Cotton Australia for their tireless hard work over the past 12 months. The team works extremely hard on behalf of the growers and the industry, and their efforts are to be commended.



**Adam Kay**  
Chief Executive Officer

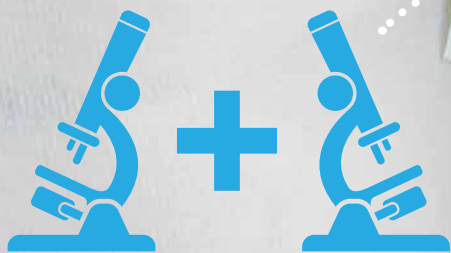


# 2014-15

A YEAR OF  
ACHIEVEMENTS FOR  
COTTON AUSTRALIA

## 100%

OF AUSTRALIAN COTTON GARMENTS CARRY  
THE AUSTRALIAN COTTON MARK SWING TAG



## \$3K-\$300K

IN POTENTIAL SAVINGS  
IDENTIFIED THROUGH AUDITS

## 300+

BRANDS, RETAILERS AND  
MANUFACTURERS SIGNED  
ON TO COTTON LEADS™

### COTTON TO MARKET A SUCCESS

This international program  
successfully promoted Australian  
cotton around the world.

### SUPPLEMENTARY WATER LICENSES IN PERPETUITY

After a decade of lobbying, water rights  
legislation was passed in NSW which  
strengthened the rights of irrigators and  
removed red tape that hampered investment  
in agribusiness.

### RESEARCH FUNDING PRESERVED

Cotton Australia and  
its allies successfully  
lobbied to retain dollar-  
for-dollar funding  
commitments from  
Government for R&D.

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### WATER EMBARGOES OVERTURNED

Cotton Australia and  
its allies successfully  
campaign to overturn  
NSW water embargoes  
that cost growers  
millions of dollars.

### ENERGY TRIALS PUT \$ IN GROWERS POCKETS

Trials organised by  
Cotton Australia and  
NSWIC identified  
efficiencies that reduced  
energy costs by \$3000 –  
\$300,000.

### ELECTRICITY COSTS REDUCED

Advocacy by Cotton  
Australia resulted in a  
regulatory determination  
that directly reduced  
electricity prices for  
growers.

## \$⚡\$



### TRANSPORT LOBBYING WINS

Lobbying by Cotton Australia secured Easter transport notices & exemptions, and worked to reduce over-zealous enforcement.

### COTTONMAP HELPS PROTECT CROPS

Cotton Australia's successful campaign saw 100% coverage under CottonMap.

### INCREASED PROTECTION FROM MINING & CSG

Cotton Australia fought for, and won, greater protections for landholders from negative impacts from mining & CSG, exploration and operations.

### COTTON CONFERENCE A WINNER

The Australian Cotton Industry Conference and Awards programs promote excellence in our industry.

### PROMOTING A POSITIVE IMAGE OF OUR INDUSTRY

Cotton Australia's communications programs tell the positive story about our industry to new audiences.

# 100%

COVERAGE IN COTTONMAP



# 134K+

COTTON CLASSROOM ACCESSED  
OVER 134,000 TIMES

# 1800

RECORD-BREAKING 1800 DELEGATES  
AT COTTON CONFERENCE

# 960+

MEDIA HITS IN 12 MONTHS

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING UP

# 195%

# 1000+

ATTENDEES AT COTTON  
INDUSTRY AWARDS

# ABOUT COTTON AUSTRALIA



Cotton Australia is the peak body for Australia's cotton producers, supporting about 1500 cotton farming families in NSW and Queensland. The organisation strives to foster a world class agricultural industry that's sustainable, valued for its economic and social contributions and produces very high quality cotton in demand around the globe.

Cotton Australia exists for its growers. Its resources, human and financial, are directed to initiatives and programs that benefit cotton producers directly and indirectly.

For over 40 years, Cotton Australia has grown alongside an industry that demands the highest standards, and during that time has delivered a series of sustained wins for its growers.

Cotton Australia was established in 1972 (as the Australian Cotton Foundation) and in 2009 merged with the Australian Cotton Growers Research Association

(also established in 1972). Led by a Board of 10 cotton growers and ginnerers, the organisation is funded by a voluntary levy paid by growers on each bale of cotton produced.

Cotton Australia provides a united voice for cotton growers across research and development, stewardship, natural resource management, biosecurity and cotton production issues such as water. This is achieved through policy and advocacy, education, communication and grower services.

Cotton Australia has offices in Sydney, Narrabri and Toowoomba and part-time field staff based in most of the cotton production regions. The activities of Board and Staff are directed by an Annual Operating Plan, underpinned by a 2013-18 Strategic Plan that sets out priorities and core areas of business.



AUSTRALIAN COTTON, CAREFULLY  
GROWN, NATURALLY WORLD'S BEST

# THE AUSTRALIAN COTTON INDUSTRY'S VISION



DIFFERENTIATED	RESPONSIBLE	TOUGH
A world-leading supplier of an elite quality cotton that is highly sought in premium market segments	A producer and supplier of the most environmentally and socially responsible cotton on the globe	Resilient and equipped for future challenges
SUCCESSFUL	RESPECTED	CAPABLE
Exciting new levels of performance that transform productivity and profitability of every sector of the industry	An industry recognised and valued by the wider community for its contribution to fibre and food needs of the world	An industry that retains, attracts and develops highly capable people

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE  
[cottonaustralia.com.au/uploads/publications/Cotton\\_Industry\\_2029\\_Vision.pdf](http://cottonaustralia.com.au/uploads/publications/Cotton_Industry_2029_Vision.pdf)

# 2013-18 COTTON AUSTRALIA STRATEGIC PLAN IN REVIEW

Cotton Australia's strategic plan 2013-18 sets a bold vision for the organisation, influenced by key drivers:

- // Resource access, competition and sustainability – water, land, workforce, institutional capacity, environmental health, energy, greenhouse gases, climate variability
- // Profitability – increasing the efficiency of cotton growing and value of the crop

- // Well-being – social, economic and environmental contribution to cotton communities and Australia improves and is recognised (social licence)

Cotton Australia's Strategic Plan 2013-18 sets out to meet the significant challenges faced by the industry by addressing the requirement for achievement in four key areas.

## POLICY AND ADVOCACY

### **Objectives:**

To influence government, supply chain and markets to improve the cotton crop's value

### **Outcomes sought:**

- // Government policy aligned and effective
- // Supply chain efficient and effective
- // Value of Australian cotton crop improved

## RESEARCH DIRECTION

### **Objectives:**

To ensure cotton RD&E is able to provide a continual pipeline of innovations to industry

### **Outcomes sought:**

- // RD&E system resourced and capable
- // Innovation creation/adoption rates

## STEWARDSHIP

### **Objectives:**

Enhance cotton's biosecurity, biotechnology, WH&S and environmental stewardship

### **Outcomes sought:**

- // Stewardship preparedness/responsiveness
- // Social licence maintained and strengthened

## COMMUNITY AND CAPACITY

### **Objectives:**

To improve capacity of cotton growers and value of cotton to the wider community

### **Outcomes sought:**

- // Capable cotton communities
- // Value of cotton recognised and improving

As this Annual Report shows, Cotton Australia has made significant progress in its second year of operation under this new strategic plan towards Cotton Australia's strategic goals.

Cotton Australia's Board, the executive team and staff are proud of their achievements.

Want to know more?

**Contact Cotton Australia directly:**

Call: 02 9669 5222 or Email: [talktous@cotton.org.au](mailto:talktous@cotton.org.au)

# THANK YOU TO OUR LEVY PAYERS

Cotton Australia is only successful and effective  
with the support of our levy payers.

Thank you for your continued support.

To view a full list of Cotton Australia levy payers,  
please visit:

[www.cottonaustralia.com.au/about/our-levy-payers](http://www.cottonaustralia.com.au/about/our-levy-payers)





# 10 REASONS TO SUPPORT COTTON AUSTRALIA

Since its establishment in 1972, Cotton Australia has been the voice for Australia's cotton growing industry. We exist solely to represent and advance the interests of the industry and achieve benefits for growers.

Cotton Australia is well respected and effective, consistently delivering outcomes for the industry that directly and positively impact growers' livelihoods. Our organisation delivers an impressive return on investment to growers – an independent study showed more

than \$10 was returned to growers for each \$1 of the voluntary levy contributed.

If you contribute the Cotton Australia voluntary levy, we thank you for your support.

If you are not a Cotton Australia supporter, we ask you to consider these 10 reasons to contribute the Cotton Australia voluntary levy.

## 01

**A VOICE FOR INDUSTRY TO CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS SUCH AS POLITICIANS, REGULATORS AND THE PUBLIC ON CRUCIAL POLICY ISSUES:** without this, growers and the industry would be subject to onerous regulatory regimes and lose access to critical resources such as water and other key inputs.

## 02

**AN ALLY WITH DIFFERENT AGRICULTURE INDUSTRIES FOR MORE POWERFUL LOBBYING:** we gather with other industries to deliver political muscle on crucial issues such as water and energy.

## 03

**ESSENTIAL GROUNDWORK FOR CROP PREPARATION:** we work with suppliers and negotiate with regulatory authorities to ensure seasonal operations, such as securing sufficient materials and dealing with transport regulators to protect the movement of machinery.



04

**ACTION ON R&D AND INPUT PRICES TO ENHANCE PRODUCTION AND REDUCE GROWING COSTS:** we direct industry R&D and support growers to adopt practices that deliver production benefits and efficiencies, and lobby to address input prices.

05

**BUILDING DEMAND AND BOLSTERING PRICES:** working actively throughout the supply chain, we enhance demand and price (in some instances) through the myBMP and Cotton To Market programs.

06

**PROVIDE ESSENTIAL GROWER AND INDUSTRY SERVICES:** we partner with organisations to deliver important industry functions such as high quality, independent extension programs through CottonInfo as well as training and leadership development programs.

07

**LEADERSHIP OF THE INDUSTRY'S BIOSECURITY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM:** we lead the stewardship of biosecurity, transgenic crop, insecticide and herbicide resistance management in the industry.

08

**A VOICE FOR COTTON TO THE MEDIA AND WIDER COMMUNITY:** we educate political, regulatory and community stakeholders about cotton's positive story through all forms of media and communication channels.

09

**A RALLYING POINT IN TIMES OF DIRE NEED:** in times of need, hardship and natural disaster, Cotton Australia is the rallying point for relief.

10

**A HUB TO CELEBRATE THE INDUSTRY'S ACHIEVEMENTS AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE:** by investing in and leading forums such as the Australian Cotton Conference, we provide a vehicle for the industry to share important knowledge and celebrate its success and contribution to Australia.



Water is one of the most critical resources for cotton growers, and Cotton Australia has been very active as usual in this area over the past year.

# WATER

## SECURING CRITICAL WATER RESOURCES FOR GROWERS

- // Rapid advocacy overturned temporary water embargoes in northern NSW**
- // Consistent and long-term advocacy results in accelerated Federal legislation affecting water buybacks, a win for growers and communities**
- // After a decade of lobbying, water rights legislation in NSW grants supplementary licenses in perpetuity – making it consistent with other licenses – another win for the cotton industry**
- // Local Management Arrangement implementation paused in Queensland, but work is underway to re-start the process with the State Government**

Water is one of the most critical resources for cotton growers, and Cotton Australia has been incredibly active in this area over the past year.

Importantly, there have been wins on behalf of growers. However, there are many more issues on the horizon and Cotton Australia's policy team will keep up the pace of advocacy in this important area.

### NSW TEMPORARY WATER EMBARGOES

Over the first months of the year the NSW Government imposed temporary water flow embargoes above along the length of the Barwon-Darling tributaries, affecting the Border Rivers, Gwydir and Namoi regions. The embargoes prevented cotton growers and other irrigators from accessing much-needed water for irrigation.

Following extensive negotiations by Cotton Australia and other irrigation representatives with NSW Minister

for Water, Niall Blair, the NSW Government announced the lifting of temporary water restrictions.

However, while the overturning of the embargo was appreciated, the timing of its removal was such that irrigators had very little access to what remained of flows generated by rain earlier in May, and we expressed our disappointment to the Government.

We had been hoping that the announcement could have been made two weeks earlier, when its lifting could have resulted in a real and beneficial impact. The reality is that the series of embargoed flows cost farmers at least \$30 million in lost productivity, which translates to a shortfall of at least \$90 million for the communities affected.

Immediately following the removal of the embargo, Cotton Australia advocated for irrigators to be allowed to use 'catch up' pumping to recover water lost as a result of the embargo – as this Annual Report went to press, Cotton Australia was still negotiating with Government to achieve this.

However, Cotton Australia has long argued for a permanent solution to embargoes, which have been prompted by insufficient water supply for the city of Broken Hill. It has been Cotton Australia's position that the NSW Government should implement a long-term plan to secure the water supply for Broken Hill, not only for the benefit of its citizens but also to give security to the farmers and their communities that are affected by the too-frequent embargoes. Desalination infrastructure and bore fields are potential solutions being considered by the Government, and Cotton Australia supports these as solutions.

Cotton Australia's policy team will continue to advocate on this issue to ensure a long-term solution can be delivered for growers in northern NSW. ►



## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

Over the coming year, Cotton Australia will be working on key policy initiatives to strengthen grower access to water. The challenges are to:

- Secure a long-term solution for Broken Hill's water supply, giving growers in northern NSW greater certainty for irrigation operations
- Work with the Queensland Government to progress Local Management Arrangement schemes
- Work with Government to minimise negative impacts on growers and communities from the implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan
- Help guide legislation to cap water buybacks to fruition





## QUEENSLAND LOCAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The change of government in Queensland early in 2015 effectively 'paused' the significant momentum that had built up as the SunWater channel irrigation schemes moved towards Local Management.

In May 2013, irrigators in Queensland were invited to participate in the Local Management Arrangements (LMA) of SunWater's channel irrigation schemes. Irrigator and national water commissioner Leith Bouilly was appointed by the Queensland Government to lead the due diligence assessment process for the schemes' transition.

The first step involved the establishment of interim boards for each of the eight schemes, and cotton growers in the St George, Emerald, Theodore and St George districts were invited to nominate for a board position.

Each interim board was to develop business proposals demonstrating how Local Management Arrangements are in the long-term interests of irrigators and the state, and align with the then-Government's commitment to growth of the agricultural sector.

Cotton Australia had been heavily involved in the process, attending meetings, assisting growers with the Boards and also sponsoring and leading delegations of Interim Board members on tours of the irrigation schemes in the Macquarie, Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Valleys.

By 2014 the LMA proposals had been submitted to the then-Queensland Government which, towards the end of its term, committed to completing the journey to local management. Then the Government changed.

Cotton Australia has been liaising with the new Palaszczuk Government in Queensland about the LMA schemes, impressing upon its leaders how critical the schemes are to cotton growers in the districts, their

importance to the local communities, and the significant time and effort growers have invested in bringing the process to its current state.

While we acknowledge it is proper for the Queensland Government to consider such a significant decision, we have urged it to make its decision in order to bring certainty for irrigators and their communities, and we are now actively calling on the new Government to endorse the move to Local Management, and re-engage the process.

We will keep growers informed of our progress in this area.

## NSW WATER LICENSES

In September 2014 the NSW Parliament passed water rights legislation through State Parliament, a win for the state's irrigators. Cotton Australia had called for the changes for more than a decade.

The Water Management Act 2000 Amendment Bill 2014 had been introduced with the intention of reforming the system for issuing licenses, making it more streamlined and flexible. It allowed for the issue of supplementary licenses in perpetuity, which had previously been an anomaly. Under previous regulation, supplementary water licenses could be cancelled without compensation to the licence holder.

The Act means supplementary licenses are now in the same category as 'high security, general security unregulated' licenses.

The passing of this legislation was important because it strengthened the rights of irrigators across the state and removed red tape that hampered investment in agribusiness. The amendments also set up the framework for the issue of floodplain harvesting licenses in future, which would also be in perpetuity and subject to compensation.





Further, the Act adjusts the process around water allocation announcements in the south of the state, amending the role of the ‘worst drought of record’ terminology in allocation calculations.

The changes were a win for growers because they ensure the announcement of higher allocations earlier in the cropping season than would otherwise be the case – this gives cotton growers and irrigators in the south of NSW greater certainty in planning and delivering cotton.

## WATER BUYBACKS

In March 2015 the Australian Government announced it would accelerate legislation to cap water buybacks at 1500GL as part of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, via amendments tabled to the Water Act 2007.

The introduction of the cap will enormously benefit growers and their communities affected by the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and was welcomed by Cotton Australia, which has been working hard for years to bring about change on this issue.

Cotton Australia’s long-held view is that buybacks have negative impacts on irrigator communities and should be shelved in favour of efficiency projects, which still deliver water to the environment but provide a stimulus to the regions’ economy as well as support productive agriculture.

As this document went to press, Cotton Australia was working with allies including the National Irrigators Council and National Farmers’ Federation to attract bipartisan support for the legislation’s passage through the Senate.

## RAISING WATER ISSUES WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN CANBERRA

In February Cotton Australia’s key advocates – CEO Adam Kay and General Manager Michael Murray – took the industry’s concerns to the heart of Government in Canberra. Key players were briefed on the concerns of growers and others in the industry in relation to water availability and electricity pricing.

The Canberra meetings provided Cotton Australia an opportunity to discuss the impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (MDBP) across cotton growing valleys and communities from the north of the basin to the south. Mr Kay and Mr Murray held discussions with the new Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, Bob Baldwin.

The cotton industry’s concerns surrounding the implementation of the MDBP were also raised with key staff from the Federal Department of the Environment, including the Deputy Secretary Climate Change and Water, Mr David Parker AM and First Assistant Secretary, Mr Tony Slatyer PSM.

In a positive step forward, Mr Baldwin visited Queensland regions of the northern basin early in 2015, hearing the concerns of growers and irrigators first-hand. Cotton Australia accompanied him on the tour.



Cotton growers have absorbed ridiculously high increases to electricity prices over the past decade, in some cases they have accelerated by 300% over five years.

# ELECTRICITY

## IMPROVING EFFICIENCY, REDUCING INPUT COSTS FOR GROWERS

- // Effective advocacy by Cotton Australia resulted in a regulatory determination that directly reduced electricity prices for growers**
- // Trials organised by Cotton Australia have identified efficiencies that reduced energy costs by \$3000 – \$300,000 for irrigators**
- // Cotton growers had a voice in key Government policy formation and reviews: the Energy White Paper, Senate inquiry into electricity companies, and the Australian energy market governance review**

Cotton growers have had to absorb ridiculously high increases to electricity pricing over the past decade, and they have accelerated recently, in some cases rising by 300% over the past five years.

Cotton Australia has long rallied the industry behind a campaign for fairer electricity prices, and in the past year has put a lot of work into improving the electricity pricing situation for growers.

The organisation maximises its policy effectiveness by partnering with other organisations also working hard in this arena, and is an active participant in the Agriculture Industries Electricity Taskforce, a collective of peak agricultural and irrigator groups focused on driving down electricity prices.

Cotton Australia's major initiatives on energy pricing have been focused around working with the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), accessing government support for energy efficiency projects, and participating in high level Government policy development and consultation processes, including the Energy White Paper, Senate inquiry into electricity network companies and the COAG Energy Council review on governance arrangements for the Australian Energy Market.

### WORKING WITH THE AER PRODUCES LOWER ELECTRICITY COSTS

In the first half of 2015 the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) made determinations which were positive for the Australian cotton industry. The AER's determinations were a response to revised regulatory proposals from suppliers in both states.

In NSW, Essential Energy argued for higher capital and operating expenditure for a five-year period until June 2019, which would have resulted in even higher electricity prices for farmers - a move opposed by Cotton Australia in its submission to the AER.

While the AER determines the total amount of revenue a network can return, the network and retailers set tariffs. The network component of an irrigator's electricity bill is usually between 50-60%, thus a reduction directed by the AER will not translate into the same reduction for a user's electricity bill. In the case of the AER's determination on Essential Energy's bid, network revenues would be reduced by 31%, which will effectively reduce the cost of electricity for growers by at least 10%.

Cotton Australia was pleased that the AER moved against Essential Energy's proposal - it recognised that, having built an excessively over-capitalised and 'gold-plated' electricity network that far exceeded actual usage requirements, Essential Energy had called for excessive revenue returns and further allowances for capital and operating expenditure.

While the AER determination was a positive step forward for those in NSW, the same can't be said for growers in Queensland. ►

## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Build on the wins achieved in the past year to continue pressuring regulators and legislators to restore balance and fairness in electricity pricing
- Further explore and promote methods for growers to reduce electricity costs directly through higher efficiency
- Continue to work with government and network companies to reform tariff pricing structures that are more appropriate for irrigators



Like Essential Energy, Queensland suppliers Ergon and Energex had also sought increases to operating and capital expenditure over the five-year period.

The AER's draft determination adopts a much more realistic 'Allowed Rate of Return' of 5.85%, as opposed to the current rate of more than 9%, which was ridiculous.

However, Cotton Australia was dismayed that, once factors such as the solar bonus feed-in tariff are accounted for, the actual reduction to customers' electricity bills will likely be in the order of 2% in many cases, according to the AER's own calculations.

Further disappointment followed in June 2015 when the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) made a determination to fix 2015/16 energy prices at the already high 2014/15 levels. While it is true that, for the first time in years, irrigators' electricity prices will remain stable (as opposed to the more common double-digit increases), the result is still disappointing.

We believe significant reductions are justifiable, and achievable. For example, Cotton Australia had called for the removal of unnecessary 'headroom' provisions, which currently add 5% to energy bills.

While the AER's determinations are a step forward, much more work needs to be done.

Cotton Australia will work to ensure regulators understand that, while positive, these determinations don't resolve the very significant issues that surround electricity affordability for cotton growers.

Cotton Australia has already called on the Australian Energy Market Commission and legislators to make changes to the rules governing electricity pricing regulations to make them fairer, and overturn the decade-old imbalance which negatively impacts growers and other primary producers.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROJECTS

Over the past year Cotton Australia, in partnership with the NSW Irrigators Council and the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage, has initiated a program to explore efficiency benefits for growers.

Seven energy efficiency audits have been completed, and four are in the final stages.

The project was ongoing as this document went to press, however the results to date have inspired confidence – the audits have identified savings of between \$3000 and \$314,000 per business, with the biggest benefits coming from improved pump efficiency, automated controls to allow off-peak pumping, and variable speed drives or power factor correction to avoid large shifts in demand.

Cotton Australia sees improved efficiency as complementary to its efforts to reduce electricity costs, and will continue to explore and promote efficiency dividends and energy saving benefits for growers.

## INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT POLICY

On top of its more direct efforts to influence the AER and promote energy efficiency projects, Cotton Australia also participated in a number of Federal Government's policy development and review processes, namely the development of the Energy White Paper; a Senate inquiry into electricity pricing; and a review of governance arrangements for Australian energy markets.





Cotton Australia made several recommendations in its submission to the Energy White Paper to address the most pressing issues faced by cotton growers, calling on the Government to:

1. Implement 'food and fibre' tariffs tailored to the needs of agricultural industries
2. Offer rebates and subsidies to help growers audit their energy usage and scope opportunities for heightened energy efficiency on-farm
3. Research the potential for local, renewable energy sources to supplement the existing grid network

In February 2015 Cotton Australia (in conjunction with the NSW Irrigators Council) made its case for the industry directly by appearing before the Federal Parliament's Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications' inquiry into the performance and management of electricity network companies.

The inquiry presented an important opportunity to convey the impact of significant increases in electricity pricing on cotton production. At the hearing, Cotton Australia and the NSWIC were able to present the industry's case on a number of topics, including:

- // Over-capitalisation by energy networks and their allowed rates of return
- // Consultation with energy network providers
- // The ability of growers to meet environmental demands when faced with rising electricity prices
- // The ability of advocate organisations to push for rule changes under the Australian Energy Market Commission

Cotton Australia was confident the inquiry highlighted the substantial inadequacies of the current systems for the determination of electricity network costs and revenues, and noted the committee's senator members appeared sympathetic to the position of cotton growers.

Cotton Australia was hopeful that the inquiry would act as the catalyst for major rule changes that govern the current electricity market and, in particular, stop the over-investment in capital expenditure by network companies. We also hoped to see drivers for business efficiency by the electricity networks and compulsory consultation with agricultural energy users reflected in future network determination processes. Whilst disappointed with the resulting report, Cotton Australia was spurred on to act further, and turned its attention to lobbying for these outcomes through existing channels, working at the highest levels to influence key regulators and the underpinning rules in the national electricity market.

Cotton Australia will continue to liaise with government at all levels to ensure growers have a voice in the energy policy making process that will affect them.

Cotton Australia – on behalf of growers – plays a critical role in providing consistent and objective research direction to the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC).

# RESEARCH & STEWARDSHIP

SUPPORTING GROWERS TO DRIVE BEST PRACTICE, EFFICIENCY AND PROFITABILITY, AND STEWARDING VALUABLE TECHNOLOGY

**// Cotton Australia united our industry and other ag groups behind a successful campaign to retain current research and development funding arrangements and dollar-for-dollar matched contributions from the Australian Government**

**// Growers via Cotton Australia provide crucial research direction to the CRDC to ensure research priorities match grower needs and expectations**

**// The Cotton Australia facilitated TIMS Committee represents growers and industry with a unified voice when engaging with regulators – via technology licence holder Monsanto – on the adoption of Bollgard® III**

**// Growers granted an extension to the cotton planting window for the 2014-15 season, following an extension secured for growers in 2013-14**

Cotton Australia – on behalf of growers – plays a critical role in providing consistent and objective research direction advice to the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC). Through the joint CottonInfo extension team, Cotton Australia and joint venture partners – the CRDC and Cotton Seed Distributors – continue to provide crucial on-farm development, resources, and support for growers.

## PLANTING WINDOW EXTENSION SECURED FOR GROWERS

In the lead-up to planting for the 2014-15 season, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) responded positively to calls from the Cotton Australia-facilitated Transgenic and Insect Management Strategies (TIMS) Committee and Bollgard® II licence holder Monsanto to extend the season's planting window by two weeks.

The 2014-15 extension followed a similar extension secured for the 2013-14 season, and represents a significant win for growers. The extended planting window extension gives cotton growers much greater flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing weather conditions, and has the potential to help farmers act to better improve yield or reduce losses.

## PRESERVING R&D FUNDING A MAJOR WIN FOR GROWERS

In May 2014, Cotton Australia launched and led a united campaign to fend off threats to the current research and development funding arrangements, particularly in relation to the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC). Political influencers and the

## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Keep the benefits to growers from valuable research and development flowing, by lobbying Government to ensure crucial R&D funding is maintained
- Continue to work with the TMS Committee, the regulator and trait provider to ensure Bollgard III reaches the market smoothly
- Investigate, and advocate for, the potential for greater flexibility in planting windows





Australian Government's Commission of Audit proposed to slash the contribution made by the Government that currently match (dollar-for-dollar) the compulsory contributions made by cotton growers.

Cotton Australia successfully urged the Australian Government to reject the Commission of Audit's recommendations to cut funding to research and development agencies, avoiding a severe setback to the industry's competitiveness. Retaining the current system and funding levels recognises the vital contribution of research and development in significantly lifting the efficiency and productivity of our industry.

In February 2015, Cotton Australia represented growers before the Federal Parliament's Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport's inquiry into primary industry research and development levies. The opportunity was used to successfully reinforce the ongoing importance of the partnership in research, development and extension between industry and government, which has driven development and innovation in Australia's agriculture sector for more than 20 years.

External assessments of the impact of Australian rural research and development have consistently found high levels of benefits. The CRDC's assessments have identified minimum returns to growers of \$7 for every \$1 invested and \$14 to society. The current levy system is critical to delivering on the Cotton Industry 2029 Vision and to drive growth in the value of production.

## GROWER-LED COTTON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

Cotton Australia worked hard over the last year to ensure the crucial voice of growers is represented as the industry sets its research and development priorities. A key responsibility for Cotton Australia is advising the CRDC on industry research and development priorities as the representative organisation designated by the PIRD (Primary Industries Research and Development) Act 1989.

Cotton Australia's grower advisory panels convened in August 2014 to provide advice on CRDC's 2015-16 research, development and extension project procurement process.

Proposals are considered against five themes, each of which is interrogated and prioritised by a grower advisory panel. The 2015/16 call for proposals saw a total of 120 preliminary research proposals (PRPs) received with a total value of \$19.5m for the 15/16 financial year. This represented a significant increase on previous years.

43 PRPs were invited to submit full research proposals (FRPs) outlined below:

- // Farmers theme: 15 FRPs worth \$2,836,103 for 15/16 year
- // Industry: 7 FRPs worth \$1,954,777 for 15/16
- // Customers: 10 FRPs worth \$1,334,343 for 15/16
- // People: 9 FRPs worth \$1,219,324 for 15/16
- // Performance: 2 FRPs worth \$288,610 for 15/16

Cotton Australia's final General Meeting for 2014 (held in Brisbane in November) ensured growers – via their nominated member representatives – had direct input into the industry's research and development priorities.



Cotton Australia panels also raised other project ideas and areas of importance in addition to those put forward by researcher applicants. Growers and industry representatives scrutinised the FRPs to guarantee that the research effort is focussed on grower needs, and grower advisory panel leads presented their recommendations to the forum.

Growers were also given a voice at meetings of the Cotton Innovation Network. Formed in 2012, the CIN is focussed on improving the coordination of all research, development and extension activities to ensure the industry receives the best value for its investment in-line with the Cotton Sector Research Development and Extension Strategy.

The Network is chaired by Liverpool Plains grower, Juanita Hamparsum and includes representatives from Cotton Australia, CSD, CSIRO, CRDC, Federal Department of Agriculture, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, NSW Department of Primary Industries, and universities through the Australian Council of the Deans of Agriculture.

## TIMS COMMITTEE FACILITATES BOLLGARD® III FUTURE COMMERCIAL ADOPTION

Following the mid-2014 decision of the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator to confirm a licence for the commercial release of Bollgard® III and Roundup Ready® Flex cotton in Australia, Cotton Australia, the CRDC and Monsanto held information sessions in July. The sessions provided growers with a full update on the progress of the new crop variety. Sessions were held at Goondiwindi, Moree, Narrabri, Griffith, and Warren.

The Cotton Australia-facilitated Transgenic and Insect Management Strategies Committee (TIMS) Committee continues to work on the new resistance management plan (RMP) for the Bollgard® III as the industry looks

towards the pending commercial introduction of the new trait.

St George grower Hamish McIntyre currently chairs the TIMS Committee to provide crucial grower oversight of the process in conjunction with six additional grower representatives, four Crop Consultant Australia representatives, government bodies, and cross-industry agriculture groups.

As present, trait provider Monsanto is awaiting Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) product registration approval, which may not be issued until late 2015.

In the area of stewardship, the TIMS-supported RMP advocates for the ability to reduce refuges under Bollgard® III. Monsanto has committed to annually review the Bollgard® III RMP with the TIMS Insecticidal Transgenic Crops (*Bacillus thuringiensis*, or Bt) Technical Panel chaired by Dalby grower, Neville Walton. The review will be used to monitor licence agreements for refuge crops, pupae-busting, and planting windows to ensure the industry continues to be agile and proactive in the management of resistance issues.

## BEEES AND COTTON

Cotton Australia and the industry continue to engage with beekeepers and their representative bodies to respond to bee industry issues, building on last season's efforts in this area. Cotton Australia supports the roll-out of Crop Life Australia's BeeConnected app to connect growers, contractors and beekeepers, enabling two-way communication on the location of hives and crop protection activities. The industry's CottonInfo team have provided growers and consultants with greater and more targeted bee information via the Cotton Pest Management Guide 2014-15 and online resources.

The story of the responsible and sustainable nature of Australia's cotton industry is gaining traction with major Australian and international brands, retailers, manufacturers and designers, following a number of coordinated efforts, events, and promotional activities driven by Cotton Australia's Cotton to Market strategic direction.

# COTTON TO MARKET

POSITIONING AUSTRALIA IN THE WORLD FIBRE MARKET, SECURING CONTINUED MARKET ACCESS

**// Cotton Australia's Cotton to Market program continues to recognise the success story of the modern Australian cotton industry and promote the value of our fibre with Australian and international brands, retailers, manufacturers and designers**

**// More than 1 million 100% Australian cotton garments carry the Australian Cotton Mark swing tag in Target Australia**

**// 300+ brands, retailers and manufacturers sign on as partners to Cotton LEADS™**

**// First bales of Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) cotton shipped from Australia, with some Australian growers negotiating premiums for their BCI cotton**

The story of the responsible and sustainable nature of Australia's cotton industry is gaining traction with major Australian and international brands, retailers, manufacturers and designers, following a number of strategic partnerships, events, and promotional activities driven by Cotton Australia's Cotton to Market program. The strategy is helping to create additional value for Australia's cotton growers by future-proofing markets for our product.

It includes Cotton Australia's involvement in identity cotton programs – such as the Cotton LEADS™ program and the Better Cotton Initiative. These programs tackle head on cotton's declining share of the world fibre

market and aggressive competition from synthetic fibres, and proactively engages with brands, retailers and manufacturers with a desire to meet their corporate social responsibilities and respond to growing consumer interest in product provenance and the environmental impacts of their purchasing decisions.

## AUSTRALIAN COTTON STORY HITS THE MARKET

Efforts to encourage brands and retailers to include Australian cotton in their product mix have been hugely successful over the past twelve months. Cotton Australia promoted the Australian Cotton Marks, a suite of licensed promotional materials and swing tags to act as a vehicle for Cotton Australia to communicate directly with consumers via retail partnerships.

Representing a substantial win for growers and the first major collaboration with an Australian brand as a part of the Cotton to Market strategy, national retailer Target Australia added the Australian Cotton Mark to more than one million cotton products across menswear, womenswear, children and homemaker departments. Each product, made of 100% Australian cotton, carries a swing-tag featuring the Cotton Mark logo, and a positive message about Australian Cotton. These messages were also distributed in a number of catalogues that have been delivered to almost every Australian household and available online. ►



## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Secure better trade terms for the industry by lobbying Government for advantageous trade terms during various trade negotiations with foreign countries, particularly China
- Promote Australian cotton to international brands and retailers who are looking for ethical, sustainable cotton suppliers
- Encourage retailers, manufacturers and designers to specify Australian cotton by continuing the success of the Cotton To Market program



THE COTTON AUSTRALIA TEAM AND ASSOCIATES PROMOTES AUSSIE COTTON TO THE WORLD AT THE INTERTEXTILE TRADE FAIR IN SHANGHAI



Early in 2015, Cotton Australia held a hugely successful cotton industry “Farm Tour” at Narrabri, inviting the Australian fashion industry to take a deeper look at the industry first-hand during harvest. The cotton fields of Auscott Narrabri and the Carberry family farm played host to the group, which included Kirstie Clements, author and former editor-in-chief of Vogue Australia, Apparel Group (Sportscraft, Saba, Willow, Jag) CEO, Adrian Jones, curator of the Darnell Collection and fashion consultant, Charlotte Smith and representatives of Target Australia as well as other key brands. The trip showcased the Australian cotton industry’s innovative and responsible approach to production and has since proved enormously valuable, helping to bridge the divide between fashion and the field.

Internationally, the Australian cotton story was successfully showcased before 70,000 delegates at the world’s largest fabric fair – the Shanghai Intertextile Trade Fair held in October 2014. Cotton Australia hosted a trade display to sell the attributes of Australian cotton including quality, reliability, short shipping times, environmental responsibility and our involvement with the Cotton LEADS™ program and the Better Cotton Initiative. The event provided an opportunity for Cotton Australia to interact directly with spinning mills, buyers, designers, brands, retailers and manufacturers.

In November 2014, Cotton Australia General Manager, Michael Murray, presented the Australian cotton story at the International Cotton Advisory Committee’s (ICAC) 73rd Plenary Meeting held at Thessaloniki, Greece. Cotton Australia focused on engaging with the industry in Australia through a number of grower meetings and CGA briefings.

In the political and Australian diplomatic sphere, Cotton Australia represented the Australian cotton industry at the fashion diplomacy roundtable chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop. The event explored how Australian fashion can be promoted on the international stage with support from the Australian Government, and Cotton Australia’s presence cemented Australian cotton’s place in the fashion industry.

## COTTON LEADS™ COLLABORATION TAKES OFF

More than 300 cotton businesses in 22 countries have now partnered with the Cotton LEADS™ program, pledging their ‘Commitment to Cotton’. This highlights the success and need for the program since its launch by the Australian and U.S. cotton industries in October 2013. Cotton LEADS™ partnerships are signed with spinning mills and manufacturers in most of the world’s textile producing countries, as well as leading retailers and brands in many of the world’s fashion capitals. A number of Cotton Leads™ partner engagement meetings were held across the globe and attended by Cotton Australia staff and grower Board members – a platform to reinforce the Australian cotton story with major fashion industry influencers.

Over the next twelve months, Cotton Australia – via Cotton LEADS™ – will continue to promote Australia’s industry-wide investments in technology, research and innovation that underpin continuous improvements and our ability to future-proof market access.





COTTON AUSTRALIA LED A TOUR OF NARRABRI COTTON FARMS AND GINNING FACILITIES FOR LEADERS OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY

## BETTER COTTON INITIATIVE REPRESENTS MAJOR OPPORTUNITY FOR AUSTRALIAN GROWERS

The ability for Cotton Australia to promote Australian cotton as ethically and responsibly produced is strengthened by grower participation in the myBMP (Best Management Practices) program, and widespread adoption improves the industry's credibility in the community and with brands and retailers both in Australia and overseas.

A large number of Australian cotton growers are moving to have these efforts recognised by achieving full myBMP certification of their farms, and registering to be part of the Better Cotton Initiative.

Cotton Australia signed a formal partnership agreement with BCI on behalf of Australia's cotton industry in June 2014 that allowed myBMP certified and BCI registered growers to sell their cotton as 'BCI cotton'.

In the 2014/15 season, some Australian cotton growers were able to negotiate a \$3 – \$8 per bale premium for their cotton sold as BCI cotton, representing a significant opportunity to leverage the sustainability investments made on farm.

Recently, Cotton Australia secured a seat on the BCI Council (its global oversight Board), and is represented by Goondiwindi grower and Cotton Australia Deputy Chair, Simon Corish, giving Australian growers a crucial seat at a table that includes some of the world's most influential brands and NGOs.

## BRINGING THE INDUSTRY TOGETHER

In March 2015 growers from six valleys, plus representatives from six merchants, the Australian Cotton Shippers Association, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation and Cotton Australia, met in Sydney for a workshop to update industry on progress with the Cotton To Market strategy. The workshop included a report on activity and achievements in the last 12 months, lessons learned and plans for the future. Industry engagement remains a vital part of the Cotton To Market strategy, with growers encouraged to provide feedback on the program.

Cotton Australia has worked hard in the past year to promote grower engagement with myBMP – the industry’s best management practice system.

# myBMP AND THE BETTER COTTON INITIATIVE (BCI)

## IMPROVING EFFICIENCY, PRODUCTIVITY AND PROFITABILITY FOR GROWERS

**// Cotton Australia is committed to promoting myBMP as an essential tool to improve efficiency, achieve greater premiums for growers, and protect the industry against social licence threats**

**// More than 60% of cotton farms are now registered in the myBMP program**

**// Cotton from a myBMP-certified farm can be sold through the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), and this season growers have negotiated premiums of between \$3 and \$8 per bale for BCI cotton**

Cotton Australia has worked hard in the past year to promote grower engagement with myBMP – the industry’s best management practice system.

myBMP continues to assist growers to meet regulatory requirements, improve farm safety, manage staff effectively and increase resource use efficiency.

The 11 comprehensive myBMP modules guide growers on best practice in biosecurity, biotechnology, energy and input efficiency, fibre quality, human resources and work health & safety (WHS), IPM (insects, weeds and diseases), natural assets, pesticide management, petrochemical storage and handling, soil health and water management.

Participants are backed by personalised support and technical assistance from the myBMP team, Cotton Australia regional managers and CottonInfo regional development officers.

The myBMP team is also working hard to upgrade myBMP’s system and content, including:

**//** a review of checklist items to be more user-friendly for growers

**//** reducing the total number of checklist items, making the process faster

**//** a new paper-based sign-up form to make registration with myBMP simpler

A concerted effort by Cotton Australia’s regional managers to lift engagement by growers with myBMP has been successful, and over 60% of cotton farms are now registered in the system. Cotton Australia has worked alongside CGAs and the CottonInfo team to achieve the result, with Cotton Australia Regional Managers working one-on-one with growers and farm managers to sign up and begin using the system.

Through agreements negotiated in the past year, myBMP is now the most direct mechanism for growers to benefit from growing global demand for sustainable and responsibly produced cotton.



## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Continue to increase grower engagement with myBMP to benefit growers directly and protect the industry from threats
- Review myBMP module content and continue to improve the myBMP user experience
- Complete the myBMP system's transition to a new website service provider

MUNGINDI GROWER AND COTTON AUSTRALIA BOARD  
MEMBER, BARB GREY, IS A MYBMP SUPPORTER

Cotton Australia has signed a landmark agreement with the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) on behalf of the industry, by which a BCI licence is transferred to Australian cotton produced under myBMP certification. (BCI is an international not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the responsible and sustainable production of cotton globally).

Cotton Australia had previously joined the Better Cotton Initiative as a member organisation, but this agreement represents the first time Australian myBMP-certified cotton can be sold into the global market under the BCI banner.

On behalf of the industry, Cotton Australia will manage the ongoing relationship with BCI, and will also work to ensure the myBMP system remains harmonised with any future changes to BCI systems.

The system has already resulted in a direct financial benefit for growers, with anecdotal evidence showing some growers have negotiated premiums of between \$3 and \$8 per bale for BCI cotton.

At a technical level, the myBMP website and system has begun the transition to a new service provider, which is expected to deliver long-term benefits while maintaining the robustness of the system.

**myBMP**

Growers use myBMP to get scientific knowledge, resources and personal support to meet best practice standards. myBMP benefits all growers by demonstrating to the community the Australian cotton industry's improved farming practices and careful management of our natural resources.

**BCI** Better Cotton Initiative

BCI stewards the global standards for Better Cotton, and brings together cotton's complex supply chain from growers to retailers.







CottonInfo is the joint venture for industry R&D extension between Cotton Australia, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) and Cotton Seed Distributors (CSD) – it has now completed its second full year of operation.

# COTTONINFO

## BUILDING ON SUCCESS

### // Joint venture between Cotton Australia, CRDC and CSD

### // The program is designed to give value to growers by directly engaging them on research, development and extension, and translating research into improved on-farm practices to improve efficiency

### // \$9.3 million committed over five years

CottonInfo is the joint venture for the delivery of R&D between Cotton Australia, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) and Cotton Seed Distributors (CSD) – it has now completed its second full year of operation.

This five-year, \$9.3 million program drove the introduction of on-the-ground Regional Development Officers (RDOs), who operate under the 'CottonInfo' banner.

These specialists work closely with staff from the parent organisations to deliver important research and extension information directly to growers.

CottonInfo's primary goal is to translate research findings into improved management practices that boost industry sustainability and profitability. In the past year the CottonInfo team has worked hard with growers to help improve their productivity and profitability via best practice implementation delivered with the myBMP system, and also helped the industry as a whole to become more responsive to emerging or emergency issues.

Regional development officers within the CottonInfo team are located across the cotton growing valleys, from Emerald in Queensland to Griffith in NSW, and are supported by technical specialists (who are each experts on a range of cotton research priorities), and myBMP staff members (who assist growers engage with the myBMP system).

The CottonInfo team provide growers with the latest information, driven by research, on a range of cotton topics – from soil health and plant nutrition to biosecurity and water use efficiency.

Feedback from growers on the effectiveness of the CottonInfo joint venture has been positive. Growers appreciate having boots on the ground backed by the sophisticated and extensive myBMP system.

Cotton Australia's own regional managers, located in all cotton growing regions, will continue to support the CottonInfo team and its RDOs into the coming year to ensure the program's success.

**For more information on CottonInfo and myBMP, go to the myBMP website: [www.mybmp.com.au](http://www.mybmp.com.au)**

Cotton Australia has worked hard over the 2014-15 cotton season to negotiate – on behalf of growers and transport operators – various exemptions (concessions) that allow vehicle and trailer combination types and over-dimension loads and machinery to be operated and transported on public roads.

# TRANSPORT

## IMPROVING EFFICIENCY FOR GROWERS AND OPERATORS, INFORMING THE INDUSTRY

**// Cotton Australia's transport forums held in Queensland and NSW provided growers, transport operators and contractors with timely and critical information in the lead-up to harvest and Easter**

**// Cotton Australia's lobbying efforts secured Easter transport notices and exemptions for growers significantly earlier than previous seasons, representing a major win for growers and the industry**

**// Round module and ginned bale transport information provided by Cotton Australia gave growers easy-to-use guidelines and the confidence to operate in a complex regulatory and enforcement environment**

Cotton Australia has worked hard over the 2014-15 cotton season to negotiate – on behalf of growers and transport operators – various exemptions (concessions) that allow vehicle and trailer combination types and over-dimension loads and machinery to be operated and transported on public roads. The policy team's efforts in this area have secured a more sensible, safe and practicable transport system for growers and their transport operators.

In the lead-up to the Easter long weekend, a particularly busy period for machinery movements and module transport, Cotton Australia worked with regulatory

authorities and local police to ensure growers received Easter transport notices much earlier in the season.

The policy team and regional managers held transport forums in February and March 2015. These events proved essential to growers seeking to make harvest transport arrangements earlier in the season.

Forums were held at St George, Dirranbandi, Cecil Plains, Moree, Gunnedah, Wee Waa, Nevertire, Griffith, and Hillston – and were well attended and very well received by growers and transport operators. The forums provided an opportunity for attendees discuss a range of transport issues related the cotton industry's harvest period, and raise broader transport issues with regulators and local police.

There are strict legal responsibilities for all parties involved in the transport logistics supply chain, including cotton growers. Cotton Australia's efforts help reduce the compliance burden on growers through the preparation of plain English best practice transport guidelines.

This season, Cotton Australia updated information on single strap systems, and provided greater certainty for growers uses winches other than those available from B-Safe. As with all seasons, Cotton Australia provides information on the range of permissible module and bale transport systems, including:





## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Secure Easter travel exemptions in perpetuity
- Deliver consistency for growers and contractors by harmonising transport regulations and enforcement between Queensland and NSW
- Improve productivity by continuing to explore improvements in load-handling efficiency

- // six round modules system (single strap options)
- // seven modules systems (two and three cross strap options)
- // nine module restraint guidelines
- // ginned bale transport guidelines

Additionally, Cotton Australia advocates for reforms to out-dated regulations that have not kept pace with technological and other advances in the Australian cotton growing industry.

Over the coming season, Cotton Australia's policy team will maintain consistent, pro-active and direct engagement with key transport regulators, including:

- // National Heavy Vehicle Regulator
- // National Transport Commission
- // Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads
- // NSW Roads and Maritime Services

In particular, Cotton Australia will continue working with the National Heavy Vehicle Regular on the potential for harmonising load restraint systems across Queensland and NSW, further reducing the burden on growers and transport operators operating across state boundaries.

## ENGAGING WITH TRANSPORT POLICY ISSUES

At a higher level, Cotton Australia, the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) – of which Cotton Australia is a member) and allied groups also met this season to discuss future infrastructure opportunities for our industry to drive down transport costs. Options included an inland train line from Melbourne to Brisbane and Cotton Australia will continue to engage with the process to ensure growers are fairly represented.



COTTON AUSTRALIA HELD TRANSPORT FORUMS FOR GROWERS AND TRANSPORT CONTRACTORS IN COTTON-GROWING REGIONS, INCLUDING GRIFFITH IN SOUTHERN NSW

Cotton Australia deliver information and services of critical importance to growers to ensure the safe, compliant and efficient operation of cotton farms.

# ESSENTIAL GROWER SERVICES

## CRUCIAL AND UNIQUE SERVICES DELIVERED FOR GROWERS

**// Reduced the incidence of spray drift damage with 100% CottonMap coverage**

**// Assisted growers with harvest preparation and securing contractors**

**// Helped growers, employees and contractors stay safe on farm**

Again this season, Cotton Australia deliver information and services of critical importance to growers to ensure the safe, compliant and efficient operation of cotton farms.

The essential and unique grower services are delivered by Cotton Australia and its dedicated team of Regional Managers on the ground in each cotton growing valley.

Cotton Australia's efforts in this space provide experienced with a timely reminder for experienced growers and valuable reference and guide for newer growers.

### COTTONMAP: REDUCING SPRAY DRIFT DAMAGE

Cotton Australia's campaign to reduce spray drift damage was enormously successful in 2014-15, with the CottonMap reaching a record 100% coverage of the planted hectares for the season, up from 99% in 2013-14. This season, Cotton Australia rallied growers earlier in the season, resulting in a quicker uptake of CottonMap.

Cotton Australia was notified of approximately 4000 hectares of cotton affected by phenoxy spray drift

which, equated to 1.93% of the planted crop – slightly below recent season (2008-9 – 2013-14) averages of 3.06%.

Cotton Australia will continue to build on the long-term success of CottonMap in future campaigns to reduce the incidence of spray drift damage.

### COTTONSAFE: KEEPING GROWERS SAFE

Cotton Australia's CottonSafe campaign provided growers with access to the latest work health and safety (WHS) information that is tailored specifically for the Australian cotton industry.

CottonSafe allows growers to effectively identify hazards, assess risks and implement plans to control risks. The information assists growers in providing a safe working environment for all employees and contractors in accordance with applicable WHS regulations, reducing the rate of injury and easing financial pressures.

The Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety (ACAHS) continued and strengthened its partnership with the industry by providing new cotton safety factsheets each month with the assistance of Cotton Australia.

Cotton Australia's continued emphasis on farm health and safety is having a positive reach, with cotton represents less than 0.02% of all claims in Australian agriculture for injuries less than four days and five-plus days, according to ACAHS.





myBMP modules on pesticide application, pesticide storage, integrated pest management, petrochemical storage and human resources and work health and safety provides best management practice system for growers to continuously improve on-farm safety and practices. In particular, the myBMP health and safety plan and policy provides growers with detailed WHS information to put into practice on farm.

## BE HARVEST READY: PREPARING FOR HARVEST

Each season, Cotton Australia compiles resources and tools and delivers this information to growers to ensure they are ready for harvest. Cotton Australia provides growers with all the information they need for the coming harvest, including:

- // potential hazards, safety requirements and duty of care to workers
- // industry best practice around loading and transport, particularly for modules and moving pickers
- // the factors that can affect cotton quality during picking
- // good farm hygiene practices, particularly with the movement of picking machinery between farms and valleys
- // management of defoliants and gin trash

## SECURING A CONTRACTOR WITH PICK N MATCH

Without charge, growers were provided access to regional information to efficiently connect growers with harvesting contractors and machinery providers.

Each season, Cotton Australia reviews and updates the information to distribute timely information for growers in each valley, particularly the valleys experiencing difficulty in securing contractors.

Feedback showed Pick N Match to be a valuable tool welcomed by growers and transport contractors alike.

## LOOK UP AND LIVE

Growers operating near overhead powerlines were again urged of the 'look up and live' campaign rolled out by the Queensland and NSW energy companies.

The 'look up and live' fact sheets, farm safety videos and safe harvest brochures remind all employees, contractors and visitors of operating near powerlines, particularly during the busy harvest period.

Cotton Australia played a key role in disseminating this information to growers and liaised with the energy companies to assist with their 'look up and live' activities in the lead-up to and during harvest.



Cotton Australia is plugged into critical land access processes at both state and federal levels, and is directly involved in government policy formation in order to protect grower interests.

# MINING & COAL SEAM GAS

## PROTECTING GROWER ACCESS TO LAND AND WATER

**// Cotton Australia was involved in the process to deliver recommendations from the NSW Chief Scientist which bolster protections for growers in the state**

**// Queensland growers benefited from a bigger say in resources operations on their land, following the introduction of the Regional Planning Interest Act, influenced by Cotton Australia**

**// NSW growers have access to a strengthened arbitration framework, which was introduced following a process involving Cotton Australia**

Although the impact of resources exploration and operations is not uniformly felt across our industry, where it does affect cotton growers the consequences can be severe, and contentious.

Cotton Australia is plugged into critical land access processes at both state and federal levels, and is directly involved in government policy formation in order to protect grower interests. This includes participation in the NSW Petroleum Access Group and will result in the release of guidelines for land access and revised agricultural impact statement process.

Cotton Australia's work in this area of policy over the past 12 months has produced some significant wins, including strengthened rights for growers and other landholders, and bolstered mechanisms for compensation for growers in NSW.

### NSW CHIEF SCIENTISTS' REPORT BOLSTERS GROWER RIGHTS

In November last year Cotton Australia welcomed the NSW Government's response to the Chief Scientist & Engineer's recommendations for coal seam gas (CSG) exploration and extraction, and the release of its NSW Gas Plan.

The adoption of the Plan was the result of consistent lobbying by Cotton Australia and other representative groups. The NSW Chief Scientist's recommendations and the NSW Gas Plan identified issues and concerns previously flagged by the cotton industry, and the solutions proposed were aligned with recommendations by Cotton Australia.

They include stronger protection of water and land resources, transparency in processes, greater communication with stakeholders, increased scientific rigour, and a fair system for land access and compensation.

Cotton Australia had long advocated for a scientific approach to the study of resources exploration and operations on farming, and congratulated the NSW Government on its commitment to implement all of the Chief Scientist's recommendations – these produced significant wins for cotton growers and primary producers in the state: ►

## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

### Challenges for the coming year

While the past year has seen significant achievement in the area of land protection for growers, the work to protect landholders continues. Cotton Australia will:

- Work to harmonise protections and regulations across the states
- Follow up the policy win in NSW by ensuring the NSW Chief Scientist's recommendations and the NSW Gas Plan are implemented quickly and smoothly
- Ensure the Regional Planning Interest Act is implemented and effectively providing protection for Queensland growers
- Participate in consultation processes that will impact on NSW growers, including the development of benchmark landholder compensation rates (IPART) and community benefits fund (DRE)





- // The appointment of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), as the lead independent regulator for CSG compliance and enforcement, bolstered protections for growers
- // Existing exploration licence applications, as well as future applications, were frozen until the new regime can be established, giving landholders and communities much greater certainty
- // Compensation for landholders and communities for CSG exploration and operations was also implemented, with the regulating body, IPART, directed to annually benchmark compensation against rates paid in other states
- // A whole-of-government environmental data portal is to be implemented, which will bring greater transparency to the process. On top of this, the Government identified the need for baseline data, something Cotton Australia had long been advocating for

Cotton Australia urged the Government to bring security to the adoption of the recommendations by establishing a timeline for their introduction and funding for adoption, and will continue to liaise with Government to ensure growers remain protected.

## REGIONAL PLANNING INTEREST ACT, QLD

Following persistent lobbying by Cotton Australia, Queensland growers gained land protections with the introduction of the Queensland Government's Regional Planning Interest Act in the middle of 2014.

The new Act and its regulations are significant because they give farmers of the state's most productive agricultural land a far greater say as to what resource activity can or cannot occur on that land. The Act recognises agriculture as a priority activity where it occurs on some of the best land in Queensland, and on that land resource activity must work around agriculture rather than agriculture working around the resource industry.

In effect, on land covered by the regulations, if a resource company cannot get the voluntary agreement of the landholder then it will have to apply for a Regional Planning Interest Act approval, meet some very significant conditions, and then receive approval to have an impact on the landholder's land of no greater than two percent – at best.

Cotton Australia worked with a coalition of agricultural organisations to present a united voice and achieve the change for growers. Our allies included the Queensland Farmers Federation, Central Downs Irrigators, Darling Downs Cotton Growers Association, the Central Highlands Cotton Growers & Irrigators Association, and the Basin Sustainability Alliance and AgForce.

Cotton Australia will remain engaged in the process to implement the Act and regulations, which will include ensuring the assessment process is right and that all cotton growers and landholders fully understand their rights and responsibilities.





## REVIEW OF NSW ARBITRATION FRAMEWORK

The NSW Government has adopted all 32 recommendations made by Bret Walker SC, who was commissioned by the NSW Government to review the arbitration framework after concerns were raised over costs for growers and the need for improved governance in the system.

Cotton Australia was engaged in the process, making a submission to Government and then participating in stakeholder meetings earlier this year, with some important wins resulting.

One of the most important wins was recognition of the value of a growers' time involved in the arbitration process – the recommendations cover compensation for the time and costs involved in obtaining legal and expert advice. Timeframes for the arbitration process have also been capped, and the costs of arbitration will be met by resources explorers.

Cotton Australia had also called for greater transparency in the appointment of arbitrators, and minimum qualifications for the arbitrators themselves, and these were also addressed.

All of these policy achievements have been beneficial for cotton growers – they have addressed important and long-standing concerns from landholders, and have helped turn the land access and protection dial away from 'conflict' and towards 'respect and negotiation'.

Cotton Australia will now work towards harmonisation of regulations and protections across the states. It also stands ready to assist and advise growers affected directly by mining exploration and operations activities.

The background of the page is a photograph of a cotton field at sunset. The foreground is filled with rows of cotton plants, their white bolls ready for harvest. In the distance, a small green harvester is visible in the field. The horizon is marked by a range of blue mountains under a clear blue sky. A bright yellow sun is partially visible on the right side of the horizon.

“Cotton Australia’s  
Cotton Classroom  
page is an  
incredible resource  
providing facts  
pages, videos,  
lesson plans,  
excursion ideas  
and heaps more”

Ruth Whitton,  
Teacher  
Mildura Christian College



We have continued to invest in the next generation of our cotton workforce by attracting people to the industry's diverse career opportunities.

# EDUCATION

IMPROVING CAPACITY, PROMOTING OUR INDUSTRY'S GREAT STORY

**// Cotton Australia's online 24/7 Cotton Classroom uniquely accessed more than 134,000 times over the course of the year, up from 84,000 during the year prior**

**// Brand new high school educational video launched to support Education Kit**

**// Scholarships help identify and secure future cotton workforce and leaders**

Cotton Australia is proud to produce and deliver innovative learning resources and experiences to schools, teachers and the wider community. We work hard to share the positive success story of our modern, world-leading industry by providing up-to-date educational tools and resources to educators and students right across the country. Our efforts in this area also create community acceptance and respect for the cotton industry.

We have continued to invest in the next generation of our cotton workforce by attracting people to the industry's diverse career opportunities.

Cotton Australia achieves this through a range of initiatives, including:

## EXPANDING THE REACH OF COTTON EDUCATION RESOURCES

Cotton Australia has developed a suite of educational resources and tools for primary and secondary schools. The resources directly link to the Australian Curriculum, ensuring that teachers are supported to provide positive learning experiences about the industry and outcomes



COTTON AUSTRALIA 2014 YOUNG FARMING CHAMPION LAURA BENNETT





EDUCATORS GET HANDS ON WITH A PICKER DURING  
A TEACH THE TEACHER EVENT AT EMERALD



for their students. The resources also span a number of curriculum areas to promote respect for the Australian cotton industry within the community and the industry's workforce of the future.

Our digital learning resources – available at the 24 hour Cotton Classroom – had more than 134,000 unique visitors, up from 84,000 during the year prior. This figure represents more than 30% of Cotton Australia's total web visitors, highlighting the importance of Cotton Australia's work in this area.

The Cotton Classroom hosts a number of tools, including our interactive, tablet-friendly Senior Secondary Education Kit, lesson and unit plans, resources for teachers, videos and presentations, excursion information, fact sheets, and case studies of our industry's enthusiastic next generation of participants.

Cotton Australia's membership of the Primary Industries Education Foundation of Australia (PIEFA) was enormously beneficial of the past twelve months, with 17 new units of work developed collaboratively, many of which are relevant to the cotton industry. The units were launched by the Federal Minister of Education, Christopher Pyne, and are now available in Scootle (the national online repository for curriculum linked education resources for schools). These units support teachers providing learning experiences about the cotton industry from foundation to year 10 across a range of curriculums.

Cotton Australia has launched a new video for high school students that explores the industry's environmental responsibility credentials, continuous improvement and innovation, research and development and cotton and the consumer.

Cotton Australia is also working on a series of posters to be released later in 2015.

## CONNECTING WITH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Cotton Australia held, sponsored and attended a number of events to connect face-to-face with teachers and students to help extend the reach of our educational resources.

Events where we connected with teachers include:

- // Teacher cotton farm tours organised collaboratively with CGAs by Cotton Australia and hosted by growers in the Central Highlands, Dawson and Macintyre Valleys and Mungindi.
- // Queensland Agricultural Educators Conference
- // Victorian Association of Agricultural and Horticultural Educators Conference, The Australian Science Teachers Conference, Geography Teachers Association of Victoria Conference, Social & Citizenship Education Association of Australia Conference, Australian Association of Environmental Educators Conference and the Design and Technology Teachers Association Conference (represented by the Primary Industries Education Foundation of Australia)

Events where we connected with students include:

- // The Sydney Royal Easter Show, attracting more than 800,000 people each year
- // Royal Queensland Show Rural Discovery Day, attracting more than 1300 students and 250 teachers/carers each year
- // Cotton Australia's Education Coordinator and Regional Managers presenting at schools
- // Local shows, community events, and field days
- // Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area Ag Inspirations Camp, attracting 100 students from 15 high schools



THE ROYAL EASTER SHOW WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THOUSANDS OF CITY DWELLERS ABOUT THE COTTON INDUSTRY AND OUR GREAT NATURAL FIBRE



- // Tuppal Food & Fibre Festival, attracting more than 1000 students
  - // Taste Coleambally – Food & Farm Festival
  - // Numerous school visits in valleys and through Skype
  - // University of Queensland Gatton Careers Fair
  - // AgVision Agri-Careers Expo (450 students attending)
- Events and competitions sponsored by Cotton Australia include:
- // The ArchiBull Prize (reaching 4000 students)
  - // The QLD Natural Fibres Make and Model Competition
  - // Rotary Youth in Cotton (RYCOTT) camps at Narromine
  - // Paddock to Plate dinner to fundraise for the Wee Waa High School farm
  - // Mildura Christian College trip to Tandou Farms' Menindee Lakes operations

## SCHOLARSHIPS

Cotton Australia offers a number of scholarships, internships and work experience opportunities for teachers and students to assist further education in cotton and promote cotton careers.

Our scholarship program, enabled by the Cotton CRC Legacy Fund, offered 10 Final Year Undergraduate Project Sponsorships, 2 Central Highlands Cotton Growers and Irrigators Association & Cotton Australia Emerald Agricultural College Scholarships and 1 undergraduate scholarship to the Australian Agronomy Conference.

Cotton Australia also hosted three work experience students at our offices in Sydney and Toowoomba, sponsored 4 young people to undertake development

through the Young Farming Champions Program to connect with students participating in the Cotton Australia-sponsored Archibull Prize, and offered funding for 10 students to attend the Emerald Ag College TASTE program.

## PARTNERSHIPS

The Primary Industries Education Foundation's (PIEFA), of which Cotton Australia is a member, in addition to the new teaching resources, delivered a range of benefits to the cotton industry including: the appointment of 12 schools to operate as centres of excellence to support food and fibre education, building a strong case for the allocation of additional funding under the Agriculture in Education Initiative to extend the reach of existing resources, the provision of 203 food and fibre educational resources to Scootle, and developing a partnership with the Australian Academy of Science to develop teaching resources relating to the primary industries under the highly regarded 'Primary Connections' suite of resources.

Cotton Australia continues to work closely with a number of schools and universities in NSW, Queensland and Victoria, and also with teacher associations, state education departments, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC), National Farmers' Federation (NFF), Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF), Rural Skills Australia, and AgriFood Skills Australia.

Harnessing the potential of these partnerships helps to lift engagement with Cotton Australia's suite of educational resources and expands the reach of the Australian cotton story.

# AUSTRALIAN COTTON CONFERENCE AND COTTON INDUSTRY AWARDS

UNITING OUR INDUSTRY, CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

**// A record-breaking 1,800 delegates attend the 17th Australian Cotton Conference held in August, 2014**

**// Cotton Australia, in conjunction with the Australian Cotton Shippers Association (ACSA), organises and manages each Australian Cotton Conference, including plans for 2016's 18th Australian Cotton Conference**

**// More than 1,000 people gathered to celebrate the recipients of the 2014 Australian Cotton Industry Awards**

The 17th Australian Cotton Conference – themed Our Fibre, Our Focus, Our Future – opened on August 5 and closed with the annual Australian Cotton Industry Awards gala event on August 7, 2014. The event is organised and managed by Cotton Australia in conjunction with ACSA.

Conference Committee Chair, Cotton Australia Board member and Mungindi grower, Barb Grey, oversaw a dedicated team of conference organisers to ensure the success of the event.

The success of the Conference demonstrates the resilience and positive attitude amongst those in our great industry. Growers from all cotton-growing valleys

– from Emerald in Central Queensland to the expanding regions in southern NSW and northern Victoria – attended the conference and contributed their ideas in 23 plenary sessions, workshops and master-classes over three days.

The extensive Conference program covered topics including:

- // global cotton markets, contracts and brand marketing
- // forecasting the future for Australia's cotton industry
- // tools for integrated pest management
- // masterclasses and workshops on nutrition and nitrogen management, dryland cotton farming, crop establishment and managing energy costs
- // irrigation and resistance management
- // cotton physiology
- // social media

The Conference unites the entire cotton supply chain together, attracting a great number of researchers, scientists, agronomists, financial advisors, suppliers, students and educators.





2014 AUSTRALIAN COTTON INDUSTRY AWARDS RECIPIENTS

More than 1,000 people gathered to celebrate the recipients of the 2014 Australian Cotton Industry Awards at a ceremony held at the conclusion of the Conference. The number of nominations received across all categories of the Awards program in 2014 was higher than previous years, which resulted in an extremely high standard amongst the finalist's pool.

The Awards program recognises excellence and achievement in Australia's cotton industry throughout the supply chain, from growers and ginners to product suppliers, consultants, agronomists and researchers.

2014 recipients include:

- // Monsanto Cotton Grower of the Year, Tim and Sally Watson, Sunland Ag (Hillston, NSW)
- // AgriRisk High Achiever of the Year, Brendon Warnock, Warnock Agronomics (Narrabri, NSW)
- // Chris Lehmann Trust Young Achiever of the Year – sponsored by Bayer CropScience, Zara Lowien (Moree, NSW)
- // Cotton Seed Distributors Researcher of the Year, Dr Stuart Gordon (Geelong, Victoria)
- // Incitec Pivot Fertilisers Service to Industry Award, Andrew Parkes (Moree, NSW)

In March, 2015, Cotton Australia organised the Monsanto Cotton Grower of the Year Field Day hosted at Tim and Sally Watson's Sunland Ag farm at Hillston, NSW. The Field Day attracted more than 300 cotton growers and industry representatives from across NSW and Queensland to Hillston, and the event was used to share the latest research and innovative practices through two practical workshops a number of presentations by industry experts covering sprinkler irrigation systems and water use efficiencies, precision agriculture, including the use of drones, effective crop rotation systems, agronomy, and traits and the latest technology available to assist with crop and soil management.

The annual Field Day is an initiative of Cotton Australia with support from the Australian cotton industry's joint extension program – CottonInfo, and is sponsored by Monsanto Australia, AgriRisk, Cotton Seed Distributors, Incitec Pivot Fertilisers and Bayer CropScience.

# ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

PROMOTING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL CREDENTIALS,  
WORKING TO PROTECT GROWERS FROM  
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IMPACTS

**// Cotton Australia has rolled out programs to maintain the industry's social licence to operate in a global market increasingly focused on responsible cotton production**

**// In conjunction with the CRDC, Cotton Australia launched a landmark sustainability report which establishes the environmental credibility of the cotton industry with important stakeholders, including legislators, regulators and the public**

Cotton Australia has worked hard over the past year to represent the interests of growers on key sustainability policy issues, and maintain the industry's social licence by promoting its sustainability credentials.

The key areas of focus were the launch of the cotton industry's latest environmental credentials document, and Government policy setting on carbon farming and emissions reduction.

## AUSTRALIAN GROWN COTTON SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

In November 2014 the Australian Grown Cotton Sustainability Report was launched, a comprehensive review of the industry's social, environmental and economic footprint.

The report, a joint initiative of Cotton Australia and the CRDC, provides a snapshot of how the industry is performing against 45 sustainability indicators – from crop yield and quality, water use and riparian land management to education levels, employment, health and social capital.

This document, prepared according to Global Reporting Initiative guidelines, was authored by Roth Rural and Regional, overseen by a Cotton Australia / CRDC working group.

Building on the cotton industry's 23-year commitment to independently assessing its performance, the report takes the next step by tracking and publicly recording our economic and social credentials on top of environmental benchmarks.

However, more than just a summary of our social and environmental credentials, the report has significant implications for the future economic viability of Australia's cotton industry, and thus the financial health of growers.

Australia's cotton crop is completely export-dependent, and without access to international markets we simply don't have an industry. Increasingly, the users of our product – the biggest retail brands and textile manufacturing companies in the world – are specifying that the cotton they use come from responsible sources.

The Australian Grown Cotton Sustainability Report – combined with the myBMP system, the Better Cotton Initiative and the Cotton LEADS(TM) program – join to play an important role in helping to promote our cotton overseas.

Together, they bolster the environmental and social credentials of Australia's cotton industry in an increasingly competitive world market, securing future markets for growers.

Importantly, Cotton Australia along with our R&D partner CRDC, view the process of improving and reporting on our sustainability as a continuous task. Following the release of the 2014 report, the two organisations have turned their attention to the next steps in the process of sustainability progress reporting and opportunities for improvement.





## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

Cotton Australia will continue to represent the interests of growers in this arena by:

- Maintaining a vigilant watch for policy direction changes at Federal and State level that might negatively impact growers, and challenging them appropriately
- Promoting the cotton industry's high sustainability credentials to important stakeholders both in Australia and around the world

## CARBON FARMING & EMISSIONS REDUCTION

Australia has international obligations to meet regarding emissions reduction, including Kyoto and national reporting. The carbon footprint of Australia's cotton industry is small, but agriculture overall remains on the radar of regulators because emissions remain relatively significant – this may impact the cotton industry in the future.

The Australian government is developing new national emissions reduction targets, which would come into effect after 2020.

With the National Farmers Federation, we have lobbied to protect grower interests, and have helped shape government policies and programs to ensure they better benefit the industry.

In the previous year the Coalition repealed the carbon tax – an election promise and a win for the farming sector given the costs it imposed on businesses. The new Direct Action policy was implemented, with the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) as centrepiece. Cotton Australia, working with its affiliates, remained engaged with government through this change to provide direct feedback on policy and programs. We highlighted the importance of funding for RD&E in developing carbon farming methods and understanding industry's footprint, and the opportunity to recognise myBMP as an existing framework to help growers reduce emissions and deliver production goals.

Ahead of the first auction of the ERF, the Government released a cotton-specific approved method for use under the Fund to generate carbon credits. Cotton Australia, the CRDC and industry researchers provided feedback on the method in its development.

Cotton Australia monitored the first ERF auction to determine whether opportunities were there for growers to benefit. However, case studies run by CottonInfo have shown economics would not at present (given the average carbon price) stack up for growers to participate in the ERF. Nevertheless, Cotton Australia continues to keep a finger on the pulse to build our understanding of the opportunities for growers now and in the future, and ensure government gets feedback on barriers and industry priorities.

Cotton Australia is a project partner in a carbon farming extension project for cotton, delivered by CottonInfo. The project is integrating new and emerging carbon farming information into trusted cotton industry extension and BMPs to help growers and advisors better understand the emissions reduction and abatement opportunities on-farm, and potential opportunities under government policies. Cotton Australia supports project direction through the Steering Committee, provides input on current policy and manages the update of relevant myBMP modules.

Beyond government policy, we have also acted to pursue the Cotton To Market program, which incorporates responsible production programs such as Cotton LEADS™ and the Better Cotton Initiative – important vehicles for communicating the industry's efforts to reduce its footprint.

Going forward, Cotton Australia's focus will remain on ensuring growers benefit from the implementation of industry best practice and supporting research, development and extension. Our myBMP program includes practices to reduce a farm's carbon footprint, enhance production and improve efficiencies.

We will continue to ensure government recognises grower contributions through the myBMP program and efforts at industry level, and will also protect grower interests by participating in future government policy developments.

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & CAPACITY

## SECURING THE WORKFORCE, INVESTING IN LEADERSHIP, INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT LABOUR POLICY

**// Continuing to invest in leadership to drive the industry's growth and prosperity into the future**

**// Influenced government workforce policies for the betterment of industry**

**// Informed government of the industry's workforce issues (skills gaps and labour shortages) and directing government funding towards training opportunities**

**// Worked with industry partners to develop an industry-wide workforce plan for cotton**

Cotton Australia takes an active role in building the capacity of our existing workforce, attracting skilled and smart cotton workers to the industry, investing in the next generation of leaders, and influencing Federal and state government policies to secure well-targeted funding and projects for growers. Cotton Australia achieves this through a range of initiatives.

### WORKFORCE TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

**//** Cotton Australia is delivering training projects, including the Cotton Industry Skills Development Project. The project is delivering subsidised, tailored training to 54 cotton workers based on their specific workplace needs

**//** Mobilising funding for the Certified myBMP Farm Manager Accreditation program, a pathway to recognise the valuable skills growers and farm managers have developed by achieving (or working to achieve) myBMP certification with Tocal College. Growers accredited in the program can then be issued with a Diploma of Agriculture (specialising in Cotton Production)

**//** Cotton Australia, in partnership with registered training organisation Environment Training Australia, launched a Queensland Government fully-funded pilot course in Certificate III Rural Operations on the Darling Downs

**//** Improving the links between training content and the modern industry workforce needs by inputting cotton industry expertise and advice to AgriFood Skills Australia's Rural and Related Industries Standing Committee

**//** Creating real employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers through projects such as the St George Agriculture Employment Project, jointly funded by Cotton Australia and the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (South West Region)

**//** Developing a Cotton Industry Workforce Development Strategy with the Cotton Research Development Corporation (CRDC) and industry stakeholders



## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Reduce costs for growers by influencing government to recognise economic and production conditions and keep labour costs under control
- Improve effectiveness by ensuring that government training programs reflect the needs of growers and their staff
- Secure the future of the industry by continuing to invest in scholarship, education and leadership programs



COTTON INDUSTRY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

## INVESTING IN LEADERSHIP

Cotton Australia delivers the industry's premier leadership development program – the Australian Future Cotton Leaders program – to develop the leadership knowledge, skills and experience of our current and future workforce to drive to the Australian cotton industry's future growth and prosperity.

Cotton Australia also sponsors programs that support the development of our best and brightest leaders, innovators and pioneers beyond the farm gate, including:

- // Australian Rural Leadership Program
- // Nuffield Australia scholarships
- // Peter Cullen Water and Environmental Trust 'Science to Policy' leadership program

## INFLUENCING WORKFORCE POLICIES

Cotton Australia acts a conduit between farm and industry level information and the Australian Government and Queensland and NSW state governments to convey labour shortages and skills, and to secure well-targeted funding opportunities for cotton growers.

Cotton Australia and a cotton grower have a representative position at the 'coalface' of agriculture's national workforce policy working group via the National Farmers' Federation People and Workforce Committee. The Committee works to close the demand and skills gap in agricultural industries, including cotton.

Participation in the NFF Committee gives Cotton Australia the ability oversee national education and workforce policies affecting growers and cotton businesses, and provides a united voice to influence ongoing workplace relations policy reform in a number of areas, including seasonal workers, 457 Visas, and workplace health and safety. The Committee also works to ensure agriculture is represented in the national school curriculum.

At the farm level, Cotton Australia assists cotton businesses by demystifying constantly evolving workplace obligations for employers and employees, and provides full levy-paying growers with the opportunity to seek workforce relations advice by consulting industrial relations expert, Bob Kellow (Industrial Mediation Services).

# COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

## PROMOTING THE POSITIVE IMAGE OF OUR INDUSTRY, BOOSTING OUR REACH

### // Doubling of Cotton Australia's media hits in the past twelve months

### // Overwhelmingly positive sentiment in rural, regional and urban media

### // Social media followers grew by 195% to more than 4,500 people over the past twelve months, with a reach of more than 258,000 people

The reach of Cotton Australia's positive news stories about our industry continues to increase in quantity and audience reach following concerted efforts to double media 'hits' in the past 12 months alone. Cotton Australia's communications team and regional managers have elevated our engagement with regional journalists operating in local print, radio and television news outlets.

Cotton Australia has also boosted engagement with national and metropolitan news platforms across the country to reinforce positive sentiment about the industry in the views of the broader Australian community, politicians, government and policymakers.

We've tracked more than 960 media hits over the past year. Crucially, traditional media sentiment towards the Australian cotton industry remains high, with 75% of stories representing positive reporting, and 24% neutral reporting.

The organisation has proactively responded to the changing nature of news consumption and the rise of digital news. We're lifting engagement with online news agencies and e-magazines focussing on Australian agriculture and increasing our social media activities to boost the reach of the industry's positive story.

Cotton Australia's primary social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and the newest addition – LinkedIn) have amassed 4,500 followers, an increase of 195% in twelve months. Impressive for an organisation and industry our size, our posts and Tweets fetched a 'reach' of more than 258,000 people. Cotton Australia's YouTube page has received more than 20,000 video views, reaching thousands more. The mobile and tablet accessibility of these social media platforms takes the story straight from the farm and into the hands of growers in other valleys and everyday Australians, as well as reaching politicians and policymakers.

An enormous amount of people (both in Australia and overseas) have accessed Cotton Australia's website, which received more than 460,000 unique page views from 205,000 unique users. Predominantly, Cotton Australia's website users are accessing the online Cotton Classroom, Australian cotton industry fact sheets and statistics, and news and media content generated by Cotton Australia.

The organisation's fortnightly e-newsletter – Cotton Matters – has remained popular, with email open and click rates at 34% respectively per distribution (which is high for not-for-profit and agricultural organisations). Open and click rates are up from an average of 30% in the previous year.

Cotton Australia continues to engage with growers and the industry by convening events including the Cotton Collective 2015, the Australian Cotton Industry Awards, the 18th Australian Cotton Conference 2016, and participating in cotton industry events including the Australian Cotton Trade Show.

# COMMUNITY SERVICE

## GROWERS SUPPORT AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES & REGIONAL NEIGHBOURS

**// Growers proudly supported the McGrath Foundation's Breast Care Nurses initiative**

**// Cotton Australia rallied growers behind 'tarps for Vanuatu' campaign**

**// More than 1600 tarps donated by Australian growers to Vanuatu**

The Australian cotton industry has a long, proud history of supporting Australia's rural and regional communities through local events, scholarships, fundraising activities, community health initiatives and environmental projects. The 2014-15 season was no exception.

The 17th Australian Cotton Conference – organised by Cotton Australia alongside the Australian Cotton Shippers Association and held in August, 2014 – was the first to adopt a charity. Growers and conference delegates generously supported the McGrath Foundation's mission to raise money to fund McGrath Breast Care Nurses in Australian communities by wearing pink on the third and final day of the Conference, and by making a donation to the cause.

In March 2015, growers and industry turned their attention to our regional neighbours – Vanuatu's survivors of Cyclone Pam.

A number of growers came up with the idea of donating the tarpaulins and knew the Australian cotton industry would rally quickly in support of our regional neighbours.

Cotton Australia Regional Manager for the Darling Downs, Mary O'Brien, put the call out for the tarpaulins in mid-March 2015, and collected more than 1600 tarpaulins generously donated by growers in the space of a fortnight.

A huge number of growers who have embraced new technology round module technology and no longer use rectangular modules, as well as businesses in cotton-growing valleys, were quick to offer their time and support.

Tarpaulins were donated from the Darling Downs, St George, Dirranbandi, the MacIntyre Valley, the Upper Namoi region and from the Macquarie Valley.

Growers were asked to remove broken ropes, cotton residue and dirt from the tarpaulins before shipment from Brisbane to ensure they arrived at Vanuatu in a good and immediately usable condition.

Cotton Australia thanks the growers, businesses, transport companies and individuals who kindly donated tarps and their time to help with the campaign.



1 & 2. TARPS USED AT AMBRYM MORU. CREDIT JULIA LOERSCH, ACT FOR PEACE  
3. ACT FOR PEACE DELIVERING TARPS IN PORT VILA. CREDIT JULIA LOERSCH, ACT FOR PEACE





# REGIONAL REPORT

## CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

**Regional Manager: Renee Anderson**

**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 10,948**

**Bales produced in 2014-15: 104,006 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Promoted the cotton industry at the Emerald Show, the central theme for which was cotton and irrigation. The event was a huge success, promoting positive sentiment about the industry to attendees
- Organised and attended community events to encourage positive sentiment towards the cotton industry, including an ag industry display at Clermont
- Educated teachers and students about cotton and the local industry by running a successful Teach The Teacher event, which attracted 43 teachers and 10 industry representatives. The event was enormously successful and attracted flow-on media attention, further promoting the industry. Also developed a field-to-fabric program which educated more than 700 local students about cotton
- Organised practical skills courses and workshops to assist farm staff and educate growers, including highly valued first aid courses, forklift training and a farm biosecurity planning workshop
- In conjunction with event partners, assisted growers in working through the soil module of the myBMP best management practice system, featuring a soil and nutrition expert to speak at local meetings. Also worked one-on-one to register growers in myBMP and assist them in completing level 1, through one-on-one guidance
- Bolstered the industry's ability to boost and retain skills by assisting Emerald Agricultural College to redesign its curriculum to include cropping. Future students will now have more skills that benefit cotton growers and the industry
- Participated in the reference group for the Cross-Industry Training Project, which helps to secure the workforce for the agricultural sector

*Image: Cotton Australia Central Highlands Regional Manager Renee Anderson in the cotton fields of Emerald*

## DAWSON VALLEY

**Regional Manager: Bronwyn Christensen**  
**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 3091**  
**Bales produced in 2014-15: 27,819 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Developed an engagement program with schools to educate students about the industry and encourage them to consider a career in cotton. Staff of Theodore and Moura schools participated in a Teach the Teacher farm and gin visit and Theodore State School is will commence a two term learning activity including the establishment of trial plots, farm and gin visits. These activities assist to promote bonds between industry and the local education community
- In the wake of the damage caused by flooding associated with Cyclone Pam, Cotton Australia helped growers in Biloela access government assistance. Flooding affected the crop, sheds, machinery and houses, but growers were able to begin recovery by utilising Government assistance
- Improved biosecurity measures by organising the Reniform Nematode Field Walk. Growers heard directly from visiting expert scientists about Nematode risks and efforts to combat them
- Worked to register growers in the myBMP best management practice system and assist them in completing level 1, through one-on-one guidance
- Assisted growers in mapping fields on CottonMap, a crucial program which has successfully reduced damage from off-target spray drift
- Promoted the industry by running stands at local events, including the Theodore Show, and assisting regional information centres to educate visitors about the industry
- Worked with growers to seek community funds via Monsanto's Aussie Farmers Grow Communities program from which one community organisation was successful in securing funds to complete a historic building to be utilised for local tourism

*Image: Cotton Australia Dawson Valley Regional Manager Bronwyn Christensen and Theodore grower Peter French*

## DARLING DOWNS

**Regional Manager: Mary O'Brien**  
**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 20,378**  
**Bales produced in 2014-15: 230,473 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Worked with the Cotton Australia policy team to successfully resolve outstanding transport issues that had been preventing the efficient movement of machinery at harvest time, and also organised transport forums to update growers and contractors about new requirements
- Darling Downs Regional Manager Mary O'Brien was instrumental in running Cotton Australia's annual Spray Drift and CottonMap campaign this season, applying her knowledge and skills to help minimise the risk of off-target spray damage to cotton crops throughout Australia's cotton-growing regions. This year's campaign was very successful, with only minimal damage reported (see page x for more details)
- Mary O'Brien worked hard this season responding to natural disasters, not just at home but abroad. After assisting growers to prepare for the impact of Cyclone Marcia, Mary worked closely with authorities following the storms to assist farmers get back on their feet. When Cyclone Pam devastated the island nation of Vanuatu, Mary rallied the industry to donate unused module tarpaulins for use as shelter (see page x for more details)
- Helped the Darling Downs Cotton Growers association organise several events, including the annual Awards dinner, field days
- Responded to grower enquiries about ChemClear and the disposal of unwanted and prohibited chemicals
- Helped to build capacity by promoting the cotton industry as a career path for students at the University of Qld Careers Fair at Gatton

*Image: Mary O'Brien working to donate tarps for Vanuatu's cyclone victims*

## ST GEORGE & DIRRANBANDI

**Regional Manager: Jane Hill**  
**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 21,585**  
**Bales produced in 2014-15: 264,200 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Improved on-farm safety by running first aid courses in St George and Dirranbandi. The courses also helped growers meet legal requirements and contributed to myBMP checklists
- Worked with local schools to encourage students to consider careers in the cotton industry, through initiatives such as gin tours
- Organised and attended community events to promote positive sentiment towards the cotton industry and Cotton Australia, including the Women In Cotton Picnic, the Cubbie Gin Meet 'n Greet
- Worked to register growers in the myBMP best management practice system and assist them in completing level 1, through one-on-one guidance
- Assisted local production by organising transport forums to update growers and contractors on the latest developments and new regulations, which helped improve compliance and prevent over-zealous law enforcement
- Raised awareness of the ChemClear program with local growers, which helped improve safety and health by removing unwanted chemicals from farms
- Promoted the BeeConnected program to growers and apiarists, improving communications between the industries and ensuring continued access by growers to essential materials
- Worked to successfully combat spray drift damage by promoting mapping on CottonMap, conducting a communications campaign through local media, visiting re-sellers and suppliers, and liaising with the CottonInfo team to coordinate messaging to key stakeholders

*Image: Cotton Australia St George & Dirranbandi Regional Manager, Jane Hill, presents at the Queensland Cotton gin at St George*

## BORDER RIVERS

**Regional Manager: Rebecca Fing**  
**MACINTYRE**  
**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 10,989**  
**Bales produced in 2014-15: 131,216 (forecast)**

**MUNGINDI**  
**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 2371**  
**Bales produced in 2014-15: 28,365 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Worked with the Cotton Australia policy team to inform growers about the impacts of Government water embargo policy. Grower feedback helped guide Cotton Australia's policy response to the embargo
- Organised the Cotton Womens Picnic, which attracted 100 attendees and helped promote community spirit in the industry
- Successfully stewarded the Cotton Industry Skills Development program, which helps deliver much-needed skills upgrades to staff on cotton farms
- Worked with local schools to encourage students to consider careers in the cotton industry, through initiatives such as Teach The Teacher and the Pushing The Boundaries campaign
- Helped place much-needed funding in local community programs via the Grassroots grants program
- Organised community events to promote positive sentiment towards the cotton industry, including tours by schools and emergency services staff to cotton farms
- Assisted growers in mapping fields on CottonMap, a crucial program which has successfully reduced damage from off-target spray drift
- Worked to register growers in the myBMP best management practice system and assist them in completing level 1, through one-on-one guidance
- Assisted the local CGA to deliver the very successful MacIntyre Valley Field Day

*Image: Cotton Australia Border Rivers Regional Manager Rebecca Fing with Goondiwindi grower Andrew Newell*



## GWYDIR

**Regional Manager: Paul Sloman**

**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 22,934**

**Bales produced in 2014-15: 265,356 (forecast)**



Cotton Australia highlights:

- Assisted local production by organising transport forums to update growers and contractors on the latest developments and new regulations, which helped overcome confusion and prevent over-zealous law enforcement
- Assisted the Cotton Australia policy team to overturn the temporary water embargo imposed by the NSW Government, which had prevented cotton growers from accessing water for irrigation. The removal of the embargo was a significant win for growers in the region
- Improved legislator understanding of the cotton industry and its challenges by escorting State MP Adam Marshall on a tour of irrigated farms in the Gwydir region
- Promoted the industry by helping the Gwydir CGA organise the successful 'Evening With Cotton' event, which involved non-industry guests touring a farm during picking and a gin during operations
- Worked to successfully combat spray drift damage by promoting mapping on CottonMap, conducting a communications campaign through local media, visiting re-sellers and suppliers, and liaising with the CottonInfo team to coordinate messaging to key stakeholders
- Worked to register growers in the myBMP best management practice system and assist them in completing level 1, through one-on-one guidance
- Worked with growers to seek community funds via Monsanto's Aussie Farmers Grow Communities program
- Promoted inter-industry links by escorting representatives from the Maryborough Sugar Factory on tours of cotton farms around Moree

*Image: Cotton Australia Gwydir Regional Manager Paul Sloman*

## NAMOI

**Regional Manager: Paul Sloman**

**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 39,163**

**Bales produced in 2014-15: 431,150 (forecast)**



Cotton Australia highlights:

- Worked to protect the rights of growers from resources exploration and extraction operations locally, including visiting Shenhua and Santos projects in the district to make the case for land and water protection directly to resource company executives
- Assisted local production by organising transport forums to update growers and contractors on the latest developments and new regulations, which helped improve compliance and prevent over-zealous law enforcement
- Worked to improve links between myBMP, the CottonInfo team, local land services agencies, researchers and representative bodies by presenting at the myBMP natural resource management workshop at Narrabri
- Worked to successfully combat spray drift damage by promoting mapping on CottonMap, conducting a communications campaign through local media, visiting re-sellers and suppliers, and liaising with the CottonInfo team to coordinate messaging to key stakeholders
- Liaised with local apiarists to improve communications between cotton growers and bee keepers in order to ensure continued access by growers to essential materials and prevent friction between the industries
- Assisted in organising the highly successful Cotton to Market farm tour at Narrabri. The tour linked the cotton industry directly with fashion designers and retailers to promote Australian cotton
- Worked to register growers in the myBMP best management practice system and assist them in completing various levels in the system, through one-on-one guidance
- Assisted growers in mapping fields on CottonMap

*Image: Cotton Australia Namoi Regional Manager Paul Sloman with Narrabri growers, the Norries*

## MACQUARIE

**Regional Manager: Julie Wise**

**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 10,007**

**Bales produced in 2014-15: 118,294 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Assisted local production by organising transport forums to update growers and contractors on the latest developments and new regulations, which helped overcome confusion and prevent over-zealous law enforcement
- Developed an engagement program with schools to educate students about the industry and encourage them to consider a career in cotton. The program included a Teach The Teacher event, which was very well received and helped promote bonds between the industry and local education community, plus a tour of Trangie's gin by the Dubbo Christian School
- Promoted excellence in the industry by engaging with the Australian Cotton Industry Awards program, which was followed by the nomination of several local growers for the Awards program
- Worked to successfully combat spray drift damage by promoting mapping on CottonMap, conducting a communications campaign through local media, visiting re-sellers and suppliers, and liaising with the CottonInfo team to coordinate messaging to key stakeholders
- Assisted growers in mapping fields on CottonMap, a crucial program which has successfully reduced damage from off-target spray drift
- Worked to register growers in the myBMP best management practice system and assist them in completing level 1, through one-on-one guidance

*Image: Cotton Australia Macquarie Valley Regional Manager Julie Wise (centre) with staff from the Auscott gin at Trangie*

## SOUTHERN VALLEYS

**Regional Manager: Honi Anderson**

**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 49,101**

**Bales produced in 2014-15: 566,062 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Promoted positive messages about cotton industry expansion in the southern valleys through media campaigns, including interviews with ABC Landline, RM Williams' Outback magazine and local newspapers and radio stations
- Assisted local production by advocating on crucial transport issues, including meeting with local council and other regulatory authorities, and organising transport forums to update growers and contractors on the latest developments and new regulations
- Promoted positive sentiment about southern valley cotton expansion by assisting the CGA to run the National Cotton Grower of the Year event at Hillston. The event was an enormous success, attracting more than 350 attendees
- Worked with growers on the myBMP best management practice system, including registering growers new to the system and assisting others through various levels of completion, including some to the auditing stage
- Organised or addressed community events to promote positive sentiment towards the cotton industry, including the Riverina Field Days and Tuppal Food & Fibre Festival
- Worked with schools and education organisations to encourage students to consider careers in the cotton industry, through school tours of local farms and gins, and initiatives such as Rural Skills Australia's Ag Inspirations event, MIA Young Professionals event and the Junee High School's Ag Education Day
- Worked to successfully combat spray drift damage by promoting mapping on CottonMap, conducting a communications campaign through local media and establishing working relations with local agribusiness

*Image: Cotton Australian Riverina Regional Manager Honi Anderson*

## WALGETT & BOURKE

**Regional Manager: Paul Sloman**

**Walgett**

**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 895**

**Bales produced in 2014-15: 9845 (forecast)**

**Bourke**

**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 1627**

**Bales produced in 2014-15: 17,897 (forecast)**



Cotton Australia's work in the north-western NSW regions of Walgett and Bourke has concentrated on water security, a critical issue for growers in the region, with the most pressing matter being water embargoes.

Citing the lack of water supply for the city of Broken Hill, the NSW Government in Easter imposed a water flow embargo, preventing cotton growers and other irrigators from carrying out much-needed irrigation. The cost to farmers in northern NSW was estimated at \$30 million, with the flow-on negative effect to northern NSW communities at \$90 million.

Soon after the embargo was imposed, Cotton Australia and other representative groups met with NSW Minister for Lands and Water, Niall Blair to put forward the industry's case.

Subsequently, the Government removed the temporary embargo, which allowed limited pumping for some growers. In a further win for the cotton industry, the NSW Government announced allocations of nearly \$620 million in the NSW Budget for infrastructure to help secure the water supply of rural towns in the state. Of that, \$53 million was allocated to fix the water supply for Broken Hill, which will positively impact growers in the state's north. Cotton Australia will continue to work on behalf of growers in Walgett and Bourke to secure water supplies.

Over the year, Cotton Australia also worked with growers in the districts on myBMP, helping them register in myBMP and working one-on-one with them to advance through the myBMP system.

*Image: Cotton Australia Regional Manager for Walgett and Bourke, Paul Sloman*

## MENINDEE & LOWER DARLING

**Regional Manager: Honi Anderson**

**Hectares grown in 2014-15: 3600**

**Bales produced in 2014-15: 40,000 (forecast)**



Cotton Australia's focus for far-western NSW over the past year has been on water issues, and in particular policy concentrating on the management of the Menindee Lakes.

Cotton Australia is acutely aware that policy changes in the Barwon-Darling and Menindee Lakes systems have impacts for farmers down the line, including growers in the Lower Darling such as Tandou.

Cotton Australia has welcomed the NSW Government's decision to allocate nearly \$620 million in the 2015 NSW Budget for infrastructure to help secure the water supply of rural towns in the state, with \$53 million allocated to fix the water supply for Broken Hill alone.

Cotton Australia believes that the provision of a permanent, alternate water supply for Broken Hill removes one impediment to managing the Menindee Lakes in a manner that improves efficiency, while minimising or mitigating third-party impacts.

Cotton Australia acknowledges that much can be done to improve the situation for Menindee, and our strategy is to assess impacts on all growers and try to broker an acceptable solution for all parties.

*Image: Cotton Australia Regional Manager for Menindee & Lower Darling, Honi Anderson*



# COTTON AUSTRALIA BOARD



**Lyndon Mulligan**  
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Moree, NSW



**Simon Corish**  
Deputy Chairman

Cotton Grower,  
Goondiwindi, Qld



**Fleur Anderson**  
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**Bob Dall'Alba**  
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**Barb Grey**  
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Mungindi, NSW



**Chris Hogendyk**  
Cotton Grower

Warren, NSW



**Hamish McIntyre**  
Cotton Grower

St George &  
Dirranbandi, Qld

# COTTON AUSTRALIA STAFF



**Adam Kay**  
Chief Executive  
Officer



**Michael Murray**  
General Manager



**Honi Anderson**  
Regional Manager –  
Riverina



**Renee Anderson**  
Regional Manager  
– Central Highlands  
(part time)



**Angela  
Bradburn**  
Policy Officer



**Bronwyn  
Christensen**  
Regional Manager –  
Dawson Valley (part time)



**Dr Nicola Cottee**  
Policy Officer  
(Research Direction  
& Stewardship)



**Sophie Davidson**  
Education  
Coordinator



**Samuel  
Evangelinos**  
Communications  
Officer



**Rebecca Fing**  
Regional Manager  
– Macintyre Valley  
(part time)



**Jane Hill**  
Regional Manager –  
St George,  
Dirranbandi (part time)



**Rick Kowitz**  
myBMP Manager



**Mary O'Brien**  
Regional Manager –  
Darling Downs (part  
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**Chris O'Hare**  
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**Chris Larsen**  
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**Nicole Scott**  
myBMP Customer  
Service Officer



**Paul Sloman**  
Regional Manager  
– Namoi, Gwydir,  
Walgett, Bourke



**Brooke  
Summers**  
Project Lead – Cotton  
To Market & Cotton  
LEADS™ (part time)



**Julie Wise**  
Regional Manager  
– Macquarie Valley  
(part time)



**Therese Wooden**  
Finance Manager



**Rochelle Zakher**  
Executive Assistant  
(part time)

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2014-15

## INCOME

YEAR	LEVY	OTHER INCOME
2010/2011	\$2,513,893	\$124,593
2011/2012	\$5,706,234	\$182,635
2012/2013	\$6,993,814	\$306,460
2013/2014	\$4,992,797	\$423,538
2014/2015	\$3,473,309	\$507,722

## OPERATING EXPENDITURE INCLUDING CAPITAL

	OPERATING	CAPITAL
2010/2011	\$2,187,757	\$3,220
2011/2012	\$2,948,431	\$79,202
2012/2013	\$3,503,139	\$99,973
2013/2014	\$3,379,617	\$7,267
2014/2015	\$3,694,123	\$62,456

## OPERATING EXPENDITURE BY PROGRAM

	2014/2015	2013/2014
Board and Executive	\$611,981	\$558,225
Policy and Advocacy	\$503,389	\$528,489
Affiliations	\$133,742	\$140,667
Public Affairs	\$757,417	\$491,437
Grower Services	\$492,412	\$337,619
myBMP	\$207,852	\$262,277
Office Overheads	\$550,140	\$573,010
Administration	\$203,932	\$183,170
Research	\$101,160	\$203,745
Education	\$132,098	\$100,978
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,694,123</b>	<b>\$3,379,617</b>

Levy Contribution (by bales)	59%	59%
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COTTON  
AUSTRALIA

03-0615011



Suite 4.01, 247 Coward Street, Mascot NSW 2020, Australia

P: +61 2 9669 5222

F: +61 2 9669 5511

[talktous@cottonaustralia.com.au](mailto:talktous@cottonaustralia.com.au)

[www.cottonaustralia.com.au](http://www.cottonaustralia.com.au)

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