



ANNUAL REPORT

2015-16

*Our industry.  
Our passion.*



# ADVANCING AUSTRALIAN COTTON



Cover image by: Carly Donnelly  
Inside front cover image by: Korske Ara

## CONTENTS

Chairman's Report	04
CEO's Report	05
About Cotton Australia	08
Thank You To Levy Payers	09
Water Security	10
Electricity	14
myBMP	18
Essential Services	22
Tackling Off-Target Spray Drift	24
Research Direction & Stewardship	26
Cotton to Market	31
Transport	34
Education	36
Workforce & Capacity	38
Communications Update	40
Celebrating Our Industry	41
Mining & CSG	42
Disaster Assistance	46
Regional Report	47
Cotton Australia Board	52
Cotton Australia Staff	53
Financial Summary	54



# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Weather conditions have once again tested our industry.

Just as the weather has challenged growers, Cotton Australia has been challenged in its core area of business – advocacy – but I am pleased to report a year of significant achievements in this arena.

Cotton Australia is in the third 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.

This year, I'd like to draw your attention to the many important achievements of our policy & advocacy team. Significant gains have been made in the important areas of water security, market access and trade, and workforce & capacity.

Our education program also continues to achieve great things, promoting our industry by directly engaging students, teachers and other stakeholders.

Cotton Australia remains committed to helping growers reduce the cost of production while increasing the efficiency and profitability of cotton growers, and you will find detail on our achievements in these areas elsewhere in this document.

The Cotton To Market initiative has also made great strides in the past 12 months, linking the Better Cotton Initiative, Cotton LEADS (TM) and direct promotion in order to secure cotton in global markets – all underpinned by myBMP.

As more growers have engaged with BCI through myBMP, many have been able to achieve a small premium for their fibre, which is a huge step forward and a great advantage to those participating growers. If you have not already engaged with myBMP and BCI, I strongly encourage you to do so.

Also important is the suite of grower services Cotton Australia delivers to growers each year. However, none of this work, nor the achievements made in the past year, would be possible without the support of growers through the voluntary levy. So, on behalf of the Board and staff, I thank those growers that contribute their levy.

Without your contribution, Cotton Australia would not be able to deliver essential services, nor represent growers and the rest of the industry to important stakeholders such as politicians, regulators and the Australian community.

As is demonstrated in this Annual Report, Cotton Australia's financial position is sound, prompting the Board to maintain the voluntary levy at \$1.50 per bale for this season.

I am also pleased to report that the Boards of Cotton Australia, Cotton Research & Development Corporation (CRDC) and Cotton Seed Distributors (CSD) have agreed to re-commit to the CottonInfo joint venture program. This is yet another example of the benefit and strength of Cotton Australia's ongoing collaboration with key organisations in our industry.

I also take this opportunity to thank those member representatives of Cotton Australia and the other growers who attend our General Meetings. Your important feedback gives the Board crucial direction.

In reflecting on Cotton Australia's achievements in the past 12 months, I must thank the hard work of my fellow Board members, our CEO Adam Kay and General Manager Michael Murray, and the dedicated Cotton Australia team.

We have achieved a lot on behalf of growers in this past year, and I look forward to working with you all to accomplish even more.

Best wishes for the coming season.

**Simon Corish**  
Chairman, Cotton Australia



# CEO'S REPORT

The 2015-16 season has been a year of mixed blessings for our industry.

While some regions have felt the sting of difficult, dry weather, we are also a sector in expansion as our industry grows in the south.

Cotton Australia's core business is policy & advocacy, and it gives me pride to reflect on our efforts in this area over the past 12 months and see significant achievements have been made representing the interests of growers.

Undoubtedly the most important achievements made over the year have been in the realm of water security. We have successfully overturned water embargoes, ensured the voice of growers was heard by regulators from the Murray Darling Basin Authority, and locked in water buyback caps.

We also had a win with the review of the Water Act, and progressed local water management in Queensland. Water is the most precious resource of our growers, and to be able to achieve so much in this arena in just 12 months is testament to the effectiveness of Cotton Australia's policy team.

Strong gains have also been made in other important areas, such as protecting growers' rights against the resource industry. I am pleased to report that Cotton Australia's efforts have strengthened grower rights when dealing with mining and gas companies conducting exploration and operations.

We also grew engagement with myBMP and BCI, progressed the Bollgard III Resistance Management Plan, and increased biosecurity preparedness and responsiveness.

However, while we have achieved a great deal, we have also experienced mixed results in areas like electricity pricing, and frustrations with issues such as off-target spray drift. Rest assured, Cotton Australia remains committed to achieving good outcomes for cotton growers in both of these important arenas.

Cotton Australia continued its activities in markets here in Australia and around the world, which are designed

to build demand for our excellent fibre. The Cotton To Market program told the world about our modern cotton industry, and continues to convince more and more international brands, retailers, manufacturers and designers to specify Australian cotton in their products.

As always, Cotton Australia continued to provide crucial on-farm services to growers and others in our industry.

Elsewhere in this Annual Report you will find comprehensive detail on the challenges and our wins for the past year.

As you know, Cotton Australia is funded by a voluntary levy which growers contribute for every bale they produce. Unfortunately, not all growers contribute the voluntary levy, despite the fact that all growers share in the advocacy gains that the levy funds.

To those voluntary levy contributors, I take this opportunity to thank you. It is true that, without your crucial support, we at Cotton Australia could not achieve all that we do on behalf of growers and the industry.

If you have chosen not to pay the levy, please reconsider – talk to your ginning representative about contributing your share. If all growers paid the voluntary levy, we could achieve so much more on behalf of the industry, and the levy could be reduced even more than it has in recent years.

I'd like to close by thanking the dedicated staff at Cotton Australia – you have all worked extremely hard for growers and the industry over the past year, and your efforts are valued by myself, the Board and our industry.



**Adam Kay**  
Chief Executive Officer

# 2015-16

## A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENTS FOR COTTON AUSTRALIA



### SPRAY DRIFT

Acted swiftly to halt spray drift damage and assist affected growers.



### MEDIA PRESENCE LIFTED

Reached hundreds of thousands across Australia via our media channels, and achieved a 20% increase in media coverage.



### MYBMP GROWTH

Significantly boosted the number of growers using myBMP.



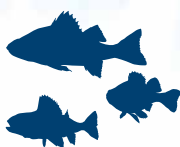
### PROTECTED GROWER RIGHTS

Persistent lobbying secured stronger land access rights and compensation benchmarking for growers.



### SECURED CRUCIAL R&D FUNDING

Helped steward \$2.4 million in additional R&D investment for 2016-17 across 23 new projects.



### MURRAY DARLING BASIN PLAN SUCCESS

Successfully argued to introduce carp control, a win for both the environment and growers.



### SECURED GREATER ACCESS TO WATER

Overturned water embargoes in northern NSW; Secured water byback caps; Progressed Local Management Arrangements in Qld.



### KEPT TRANSPORT COSTS DOWN

Lobbied to abolish the RSRT, avoiding significant transport pricing hikes.



### RESISTANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN WIN

Helped secure another extension to the season's cotton planting window.



### AWARDS A HIT

Celebrated excellence, innovation and leadership through the annual Cotton Industry Awards program.



### BOOSTED THE INDUSTRY'S BRAND TO CONSUMERS

Promoted the cotton industry to 100,000+ students and teachers through our education program.



### INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION SUCCESS

Worked to secure foreign markets for Australian cotton growers through the Cotton To Market, Cotton LEADS(TM) and BCI programs.



### BETTER COTTON INITIATIVE

Helped growers achieve premiums for BCI cotton.



### NATURAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Acted swiftly to assist growers struck by superstorms.



# ABOUT COTTON AUSTRALIA

Cotton Australia is the peak body for Australia's cotton producers, supporting about 1200 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 more than 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 ginners, 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.

# THANK YOU TO OUR LEVY PAYERS

Cotton Australia's success and effectiveness is only possible with the support of our levy payers.

To those growers that contributed the full Cotton Australia levy for the 2014-15 year, we 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)



It has been a year of wins for cotton growers on one of the most important issues facing our industry – water security.

# WATER SECURITY

## PROGRESS AT FEDERAL & STATE LEVELS

- **Overtaking water embargoes a significant win for Cotton Australia and growers**
- **Report into the Murray Darling Basin Plan Senate Inquiry welcomed, acknowledges grower concerns**
- **Review of the Water Act a win for growers, but continued vigilance required**
- **Local Management Arrangements (LMA) progress in Queensland an achievement**
- **Water buyback caps a win**

### MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN: PROGRESS TOWARDS A FAIRER SYSTEM

The past year has seen steady progress towards the industry's goal of a fairer Murray-Darling Basin Plan (MDBP).

In June 2015 the Federal Government introduced amendments to the Water Act 2007, which legislated a 1500GL cap on the MDBP.

Cotton Australia had worked with organisations including the National Irrigators' Council and the National Farmers' Federation to accelerate the bill's introduction, and in September 2015 the bill was passed.

The 1500GL cap imposed by the Australian Government was designed to act as a ceiling, not a target, and focused further water acquisition on on-farm and off-farm efficiency projects, plus other works and measures, rather than straight buyback which often has significant negative impacts on local communities.

The legislation gives cotton growers and other irrigators

greater certainty, allowing them to make decisions about farm operations with more confidence.

More recently, growers had cause to celebrate again following a meeting of Water Ministers from Federal and State jurisdictions, who in April 2016 signed off on a package of supply, efficiency and constraints measures that will result in changes to the sustainable diversion limits (SDL) of the MDBP.

The Ministerial Council agreed on principles to guide the implementation of the SDL adjustment package and requested the Commonwealth amend the Basin Plan to provide for a second SDL adjustment step by 30 June, 2017. It also asked the Government to consider opportunities for a wider range of complementary projects, such as carp control.

Cotton Australia will continue to call on all governments to commit to the full delivery of 650GL in SDL offset projects.

The meeting of ministers also noted progress on the Northern Basin Review, which offers a genuine opportunity for lower levels of water recovery combined with better environmental outcomes.

It has long been Cotton Australia's stance that the Northern Review has the real capacity to deliver lower water recovery targets, particularly if non-flow complementary environmental projects such as carp control and fish habitat improvement, among others, are included. (*See break-out box*)

Cotton Australia had played a key role in briefing NSW and Queensland ministers ahead of the meeting.

The package announced by the Ministerial Council followed the launch of the Report and Recommendations of the Senate Select Committee Inquiry into the Murray Darling Basin Plan in March 2016. ►

## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Seek a finalisation of the Basin Plan, that minimises further water entitlement acquisition and social and economic impacts, while optimising environmental outcomes
- Push ahead with a long-term solution for Broken Hill's water supply to guarantee water access for irrigators
- Complete the roll-out of Local Management Arrangements in Queensland





The report – tabled in Federal Parliament – clearly shows the Inquiry listened to the concerns raised by Cotton Australia and other representative organisations, and carries 31 recommendations.

Importantly, the Report recommends no further reductions in water entitlements occur until the Northern Basin Review is completed, which is encouraging. Also welcomed was the recommendation that the social and economic impacts of the implementation of the MDBP be assessed and inform future Murray-Darling Basin policy.

While the Government will take time to digest the report, Cotton Australia has urged it to declare its intentions about adopting its recommendations before the Federal Election.

## WINS IN NSW: WATER EMBARGOES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITMENTS

In May 2015 the cotton industry welcomed the lifting of temporary water restrictions above Louth, west of Bourke.

The embargo had been imposed by the NSW Government earlier in the year, preventing growers from accessing water for irrigation. Its removal was brought about by swift lobbying from Cotton Australia and allied irrigator groups.

While only a small number of irrigators were able to undertake limited pumping following the embargo's removal, Cotton Australia sees the action as a win for sensible water policy and swift advocacy work on behalf of growers.

Cotton Australia continues to work with the NSW Government, and in particular with Minister for Water, Niall Blair, to secure long-term solutions for water flows in the region.

More good news on this situation followed the next month, when the NSW Government announced the allocation of nearly \$620 million in the State Budget for infrastructure to help secure the water supply of rural towns in the state, including Broken Hill.

Cotton Australia and other irrigator groups had called for a long-term solution to the issue for years, and is looking forward to a detailed announcement that will bring about a result to help the citizens of Broken Hill as well as the irrigating growers operating upstream of the city.

## WIN IN QUEENSLAND: LOCAL MANAGEMENT A REALITY

In October 2015 Cotton Australia welcomed the announcement that four Queensland water management schemes had been approved to continue the journey towards Local Management Arrangement (LMA).

Three of the four schemes – which are located in St George, Emerald, Theodore and Eton – are located in major cotton-growing regions.

Since the October announcement Cotton Australia has shared the frustration of its growers on the slow progress towards implementing the next stage. However, it has continued to engage with the government on this issue, and is confident that the government remains committed to the process.

The LMA will shift management of water assets from SunWater's irrigation channel scheme to locals. This next stage will see the irrigation communities in these schemes enter into negotiation with the State Government on final terms, and then commence the transition process.

Cotton Australia worked with growers in St George, Emerald and Theodore for more than two years to bring about change to local water management, which was backed by overwhelming support from local growers.



Image by: Alexandra Ramsay

The organisation will continue to work with both our growers and the Queensland Government to ensure a smooth transition to local management in the cotton-growing districts.

## CARP PLAN A BOOST TO MANAGEMENT OF RIVERS IN MURRAY DARLING BASIN

In early May 2016 the cotton industry achieved a significant win with the announcement of a nationally coordinated approach to eliminating the European carp from inland rivers.

A total of \$15 million has been allocated to the National Carp Control Plan as part of the 2016-17 Federal Budget, with a Ministerial task force to be established to coordinate efforts over federal and state jurisdictions.

Cotton Australia has long argued to politicians and regulators that the removal of carp would be the single biggest positive towards improving the environmental health of Murray Darling Basin river systems.

The release of a virus that targets carp is a great example of a complementary measure with good environmental, social and economic outcomes, taking an important step towards improving the health of inland river systems in the Murray Darling Basin and working well with other measures already planned.

Cotton Australia called on the Federal Government to significantly reduce the amount of water recovery required to achieve environmental outcomes of the Murray Darling Basin Plan. It argued that, in the past, a credit to the Sustainable Diversion Limit of 200GL had been proposed, and this would be an appropriate outcome once the Carp Control Plan is in effect.

Cotton Australia and irrigator groups will continue working with federal and state legislators and regulators to improve the balance of environmental and agricultural water flows to the Murray Darling Basin.

Reducing input costs and enhancing efficiency for growers.

# ELECTRICITY

## THE STRUGGLE FOR REFORM CONTINUES



- **Regulatory authorities ‘tennis game’ a frustrating contest with some real wins for NSW growers, but the fight continues**
- **Cotton Australia perseveres tirelessly behind the scenes with Agricultural Electricity Taskforce to implement reform**
- **Cotton Australia works hard to identify on-the-ground efficiency and cost savings**

As one of the major input cost areas for growers, Cotton Australia is acutely aware of the need to reduce the impact of electricity pricing.

The organisation has worked hard in the past 12 months to identify on-the-ground efficiencies and other methods to implement savings. With its partners, including the NSW Irrigators Council, Queensland Farmers’ Federation and the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage, Cotton Australia in coming months will distribute the results of its energy efficiency audits. The results will include practice changes growers can apply on-farm to reduce energy usage, proven through the experiences of fellow cotton growers.

Cotton Australia has also been extremely active in the past year in the fight to introduce electricity tariff reform. The struggle has been extremely frustrating, made worse by the complex nature of the regulatory arena.

While Cotton Australia was able to secure some wins for growers, the fight continues.

### UPSET IN THE REGULATORY ARENA

Over the past 12 months, energy regulators have played a frustrating game of regulatory tennis that has left representative groups and cotton growers exasperated.

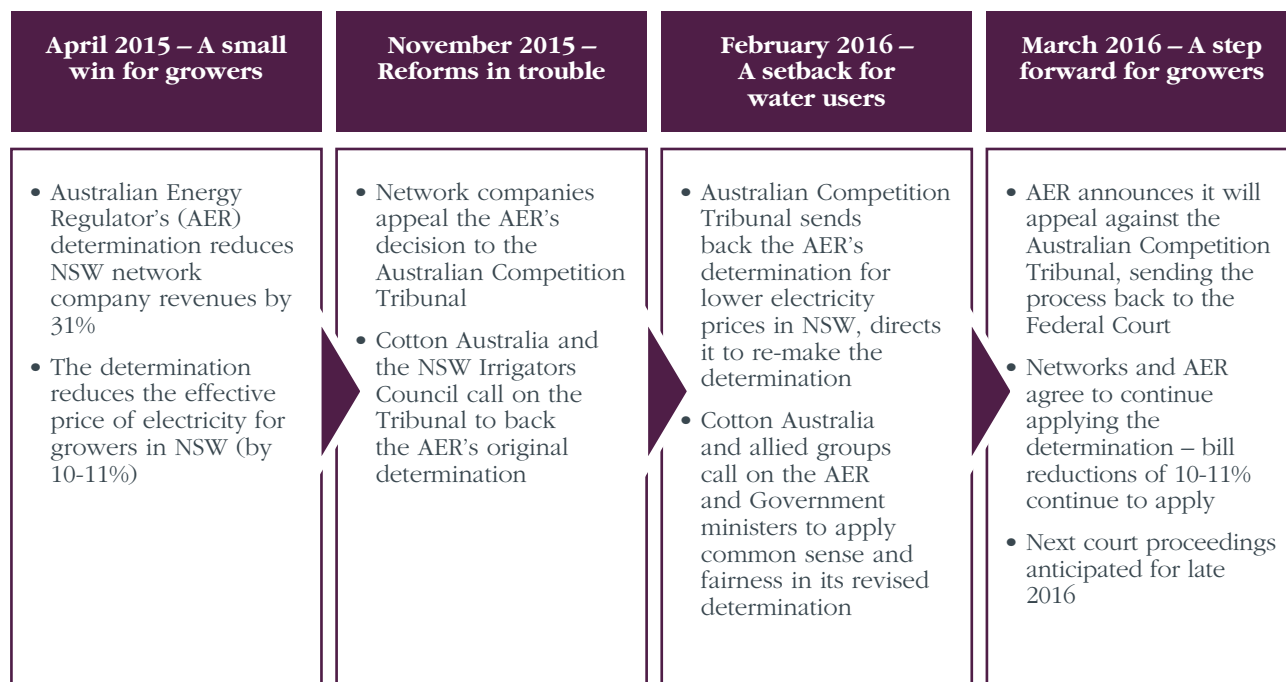
Sadly, cotton growers have been left in the middle of the court, as regulators and network companies fought it out.

The fraught and confusing struggle is complex enough to require graphical explanation. ►

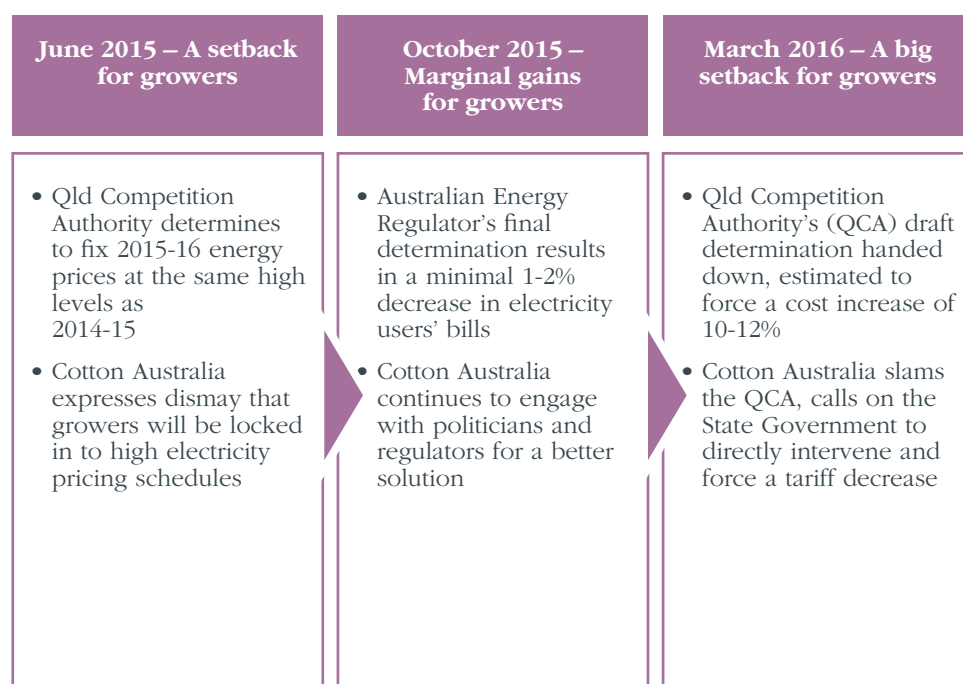
## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Building on the wins achieved in the past year to continue pressuring regulators and legislators to restore balance and fairness in electricity pricing
- Further exploring and promoting methods for growers to reduce electricity costs directly through higher efficiency and reducing reliance on grid-supplied electricity, and leveraging options via State and Federal Government funding mechanisms
- Continuing to work with government and network companies to reform tariff pricing structures that are more appropriate for irrigators

## THE PROCESS IN NSW:



## THE PROCESS IN QLD:



The issue of ‘regulatory tennis’ was still in play as this document went to press, but growers can rest assured that Cotton Australia will continue to fight for important and necessary resolutions in this arena. One area open to us is pressuring legislators to introduce reform measures to the rules that govern the energy pricing regulation system.

Cotton Australia and its allies did just that in February 2016, when the Agricultural Electricity Taskforce – of which Cotton Australia is a member – met with representatives of the Australian Government, key political leaders and regulators in Canberra.

Topics on the agenda included reforms to the way that power networks are allowed to use over-inflated ‘poles and wires’ network asset values as the basis for their cost recovery. These costs represent the single greatest contributing factor in the rapid rise in power bills experienced by growers and irrigators in the last 5 years, with the network charges representing over 50% of power bills for irrigators.

The Taskforce met with Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce, Government Senate energy spokesman Senator Matthew Canavan, Shadow Ministers Mark Butler and Joel Fitzgibbon, plus advisors and leaders from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA).

The Taskforce pressed home the urgent requirement to reduce the impact of electricity prices on producers through network tariffs that reduce the challenges facing irrigated agriculture, plus policy and funding mechanisms to transition to renewable energy solutions.

## QUEENSLAND: MORE WORK AHEAD TO CHALLENGE REGULATORS

As this document went to press, Cotton Australia was awaiting direction from the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), which had announced in March that it was challenging the Australian Competition Tribunal’s decision to set aside its determination for NSW network revenues. Cotton Australia supports the AER’s fight, and is doing what it can to guide the process to a positive result for growers. The good news is that while the end result is still up in the air, NSW cotton growing electricity users should now be enjoying prices 10-15% below what they were a year ago.

Unfortunately there is no such good news in Queensland, where the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) has just announced price increases for irrigators and other farm businesses of between 11% and 16%. The organisation is pressing hard for direct intervention by the State Government in the short term, and a commitment to the introduction of long-lasting reform. Cotton Australia is also seeking long-term reform via the Queensland Productivity Commission Inquiry into Electricity, which was due to be handed to the Government in May. The organisation was heavily involved in the process, making submissions and taking the Commissioner on a tour of St George and Dirranbandi to see how the issues are translating to effects on the ground.

Grower engagement with myBMP – the industry’s best management practice system – has risen considerably in the past year.

# myBMP

## IMPROVING EFFICIENCY, PRODUCTIVITY AND PROFITABILITY FOR GROWERS

- **Cotton Australia is committed to promoting myBMP as a tool for growers to improve efficiency, engage with BCI, and protect the industry from social licence threats**
- **An increasing number of growers are choosing to sell their myBMP-certified cotton through the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), and many growers have received premiums for BCI cotton**
- **More than 75% of cotton farms are now registered in the myBMP program**

Cotton Australia’s efforts to promote grower engagement with myBMP are paying dividends.

More than 75% of cotton farms are now registered in myBMP, and 112 farms have completed certification.



myBMP assists growers to meet regulatory requirements, reduce risk, improve business management, implement industry best practice, and provides a pathway for innovation by connecting growers with the latest research.

The system’s 11 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.

In the past year, Cotton Australia regional managers have worked hard to lift grower engagement with myBMP, lifting engagement in the system from 40% 12 months ago to more than 50% at the time this document went to press. Cotton Australia worked alongside CGAs and the CottonInfo team to achieve this result, working one-on-one with growers and farm managers to sign up to the system and start using it.

Importantly, growers that complete myBMP certification can choose to sell their cotton through the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) system, with 44 cotton farms choosing to do this in the 2015-16 season. The number of participating farms has doubled in two years, from 22 farms in the 2013-14 season.

This year the myBMP team focused on improving farm safety and delivered WHS workshops for growers, managers and staff in every cotton region.



(BCI is an international not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the responsible and sustainable production of cotton globally).

Cotton Australia manages the ongoing relationship with BCI on behalf of the industry, provides feedback on proposed changes to the BCI criteria, and will ensure the myBMP system remains harmonised with any future changes to BCI’s systems.

Feedback from growers about their experience with BCI has been overwhelmingly positive, with some achieving healthy premiums for cotton they have sold into the BCI system. ►

## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Continue to lift grower engagement with myBMP in order to benefit growers directly and protect the industry from threats
- Continue to simplify the myBMP platform for growers
- Continue to support grower engagement with BCI, providing the opportunity for increased market access and premiums





## MYBMP SYSTEMS REFRESH UNDERWAY

The myBMP team works hard constantly to upgrade the system and content, including reducing the number of checklist items and allowing growers to sign up with a paper form.

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 continues to work through the roll-out of the myBMP website and system to a new digital platform. The new service provider is committed to maintaining the robustness of the system while delivering long-term benefits.

## VIDEO HELPS SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT MYBMP

In order to help growers engage with the system, the myBMP team produced two videos.

The videos inform growers about the benefits of participating in myBMP, and also detail case studies about how growers have used myBMP to their advantage – including enhancing their farms' efficiency and profitability.

The videos were produced through farm visits to growers in northern NSW and southern Queensland, and are available on Cotton Australia's website and YouTube Channels. Assistance for funding for the videos came from the National Landcare Programme Innovation Grant, and Cotton Australia thanks the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture for its support in producing this valuable digital resource.

## MYBMP RECOGNISED IN LANDMARK SUPPLY CHAIN REPORT

In December 2015 the myBMP program was showcased in a report that maps human rights issues in supply chains.

The report – *Human rights in supply chains: Promoting positive practice* – is a joint collaboration between the Australian Human Rights Commission, Australian Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility and the United Nations (UN) Global Compact Network Australia.

myBMP Manager Rick Kowitz represented the Australian cotton industry and myBMP program at the launch of the report in Melbourne.

The report brings together insights from a three-stage research project that aims to understand the current state of practice in Australian businesses addressing human rights in their supply chains, and shed light on the challenges and potential solutions for improving practices where required.

The research showcases the positive, pro-active steps taken by the industry to ensure human rights are respected in Australian cotton businesses and the demands from major international brands and retailers seeking responsibly produced and certified cotton.

"The report's launch event played host to a productive discussion about Australia's myBMP program and its human resources (HR) and work health safety (WHS) module in the context of managing human rights in the farm level of the global cotton supply chain," Mr Kowitz says.

"The myBMP module provides guidance to help growers in meeting legal obligations around employing staff, and secondly, to put in place procedures to help growers optimise employee productivity in a safe environment."



“The Australian cotton industry is making sure that workers are treated fairly and their rights are considered. That’s the direction the cotton industry is heading, because it’s important to the sale of the product and market access.”

myBMP standards are in addition to Australia’s strict legal requirements to protect workers, and these high standards are increasingly demanded by Australian and global players in the global textile and fabric supply chain.

“As businesses and consumers around the world continue to shift their demand towards responsible production and product provenance, the assurances provided by the myBMP program help to future-proof Australian cotton’s global market access,” Mr Kowitz says.

“Australia’s certified myBMP growers are able to participate in these global markets through programs like the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI). myBMP is directly aligned with BCI’s certification standards.”

One of the major findings of the report demonstrates that addressing human rights issues has become more important within Australian businesses’ sustainability agendas and businesses are increasingly linking human rights issues to their supply chains.

“Big companies like H&M, Ikea, Levi’s and companies aligned with BCI, have targets for sustainability and human rights. Australia is well-placed to help these major international brands and retailers in meeting their targets,” Mr Kowitz says.

## GRANTS PROGRAM CONTINUES TO REWARD SUSTAINABLE COTTON FARMING

Cotton growers who achieve myBMP certification in 2016 will again be eligible for a \$2000 (ex GST) grant under the Better Farming Brighter Future sustainable cotton farming initiative.

This is the third consecutive year the grants have been offered by Monsanto in order to help farmers continue to produce high quality crops with fewer resources – a key goal of the myBMP program.

Supported by Cotton Australia, the Better Farming Brighter Future grants are available to all cotton farmers who undertake an audit and complete myBMP certification of their operation by 31 December, 2016.

The Better Farming Brighter Future grants acknowledge the hard work of farmers that complete myBMP certification, and recognise the contribution certified growers make to the improvement of the industry’s sustainability credentials.

Cotton Australia encourages all cotton growers considering undertaking myBMP certification to take up the offer of this valuable grant.

For more information about the grant, go to:  
[www.betterfarmingbrighterfuture.com.au](http://www.betterfarmingbrighterfuture.com.au)

Vital information and services delivered by Cotton Australia to assist growers with the safe, compliant, profitable and efficient operation of their farm.

# ESSENTIAL SERVICES FOR GROWERS

- **Growers assisted with securing harvest contractors and preparing for busy harvest period**
- **Critical safety resources supplied to growers and farm staff**
- **'Look up and Live' information provided to growers**

Each season, Cotton Australia plays a critical role to deliver unique services of benefit to the industry's experienced and newer growers.

The information assists growers to ensure their cotton operations remain safe, compliant, profitable and efficient all-year-round.

Importantly, the information assists growers in managing one of the most valuable assets of a farm enterprise – its people.

## COTTONSAFE: PRACTICAL WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY (WHS) RESOURCES

Safety is an important component of every grower's farming operation. To assist growers to keep themselves, their families, staff, contractors and visitors safe, Cotton Australia delivered its annual CottonSafe campaign.

The campaign's safety resources and templates engage with workers and contractors to identify and assess hazards on cotton farms and to develop and implement plans and procedures to minimise safety risks.

Cotton Australia's resources are directly linked to the industry's myBMP program. myBMP modules on human resources and WHS, pesticide management and petrochemical storage and handling continue to provide growers with practical safety tools to implement best practice on farm.



Image by: Allyse Morris

## PICK N MATCH: SECURING A CONTRACTOR

Cotton Australia's annual Pick N Match campaign assists grower with securing picking and transport contractors, which remains a challenge for growers in some valleys, despite a smaller national crop.

The Pick N Match service helps bring growers and picking contractors together to make the harvest more efficient. Early in the season, Cotton Australia reaches out to contractors to determine their availability, areas of operation and machinery types, and makes this information available to growers.

## FARM HYGIENE

The Come Clean – Go Clean program assists growers to produce higher yields by preventing the spread of pests and diseases between fields, farms and regions. The campaign disseminates information about the major principles of Come Clean – Go Clean, including:

- inspecting machinery including pickers, boll buggies, module builders, mulchers, laser buckets, cultivators, chain beds and headers for contamination, and
- clearly communicating the need for farm hygiene to staff, contractors and others.

## LOOK UP AND LIVE

Cotton Australia again liaised with energy companies in Queensland and NSW to help deliver critical 'look up and live' safety resources.

The campaign urges cotton growers, farm staff, contractors and visitors operating near overhead powerlines, particularly during the busy harvest period, to consider their safety. Resources provided to growers include fact sheets, posters, brochures and videos.

When off-target chemical drift affected many cotton growers this season, Cotton Australia reacted quickly to assist growers and help prevent additional damage.

# TACKLING OFF-TARGET SPRAY DRIFT

- **Cotton Australia acted swiftly to address the worst spray drift on record**
- **We worked with other ag groups and regulators to increase awareness and reduce incidences**
- **Cotton Australia supported the development of a best practice guide for farmers across multiple industries**
- **On-the-ground action to assist growers, coupled with an intense media campaign**

The cotton industry was hit with the worst off-target spray drift damage in recent memory in the 2015-16 season.

Incidents – in most cases from fallow sprays – were recorded in most regions, causing tens of millions of dollars in damage and threatening farm businesses. Growers in northern NSW and southern Queensland were hit particularly hard.

It is estimated that 60,000ha of cotton was damaged over the course of the season, representing more than 20% of the total crop. The financial impact of the damage was estimated to be more than \$20 million.

In the vast majority of incidents, the damage was caused by Phenoxy (including 2,4 D) spray that travelled during temperature inversions – in some instances, moving tens of kilometres from the intended target fields.

Cotton Australia worked quickly with regulators and representatives of other agricultural industries to tackle the problem.

The damage was unfortunately timed, as the federal regulator – the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) – is reviewing 2,4-D pesticide use and conducting an assessment of environmental risks.

With this in mind, and understanding that additional scrutiny would be brought to bear on the misuse of the products, Cotton Australia worked to resolve the issue quickly.

The organisation contacted state regulators in NSW and Queensland and urged them to put inspectors into the field to investigate the cause of the spray drift incidents. The findings were shared with the APVMA for assessment and regulatory action.

Cotton Australia doubled its annual spray drift communications campaign, with a greater media presence, additional radio advertisements, and also supported the creation and distribution of a *'Summer Weed Control Best Practice Guide'* brochure.

The organisation also convened urgent meetings with other agricultural representative groups – including GrainGrowers, Crop Consultants Australia and spray applicator representatives – to marshal their resources to combat the problem. These groups joined Cotton

## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Work with regulators, farming groups, consultants, re-sellers and applicators to better educate growers and applicators across all industries about the risk of spray drift
- Push legislators and regulators to adopt chemical labelling reform in order to promote better practice
- Guide research and development towards solutions that protect cotton growers, inform industry and secure long-term solutions

Phenoxy symptoms expressing in new growth of cotton plant at Warra, Qld. (Image by: Mary O'Brien)

Australia's supercharged communications campaign, spreading our key messages through their own channels to alert farmers, consultants, agronomists and spray applicators to the dangers of off-target spray drift.

The joint promotion campaign directed farmers to utilise key tools such as CottonMap, SprayWise Decisions and the *Best Practice Guide*, as well as encouraging them to report incidents swiftly to state regulatory authorities so that incidents could be investigated.

Cotton Australia regional managers worked hard to highlight the dangers of inversion drift and assist growers affected by spray drift, helping them liaise with regulators and other farming groups in local areas to minimise risks. They also visited chemical resellers to ensure they advised their clients on safe application techniques, and make them aware of the location of susceptible crops (via tools like CottonMap).

While prosecutions are notoriously hard to achieve, Cotton Australia worked with regulators to collate statistics on field damage, and was able to report that incidents of spray drift declined in the weeks after the enhanced campaign was put in place.

In addition to the campaign, Cotton Australia Regional Manager Mary O'Brien was able to guide senior APVMA and Biosecurity Queensland staff around Darling Downs cotton farms affected by spray drift damage, showing them first-hand the extent of the issues growers face.

The tour strengthened our arguments for labelling reform and reinforced the importance of working collaboratively with regulators.

## THE WORK CONTINUES

Following up on its expanded communications and liaison campaign, Cotton Australia conducted a survey of CGAs to determine direction for a renewed spray drift campaign in the 2016-17 season.

Cotton Australia has resolved to review and improve its annual spray drift plan, incorporating feedback from growers and Crop Consultants Australia. We will also investigate the potential for spray drift to be incorporated into the 2017-18 RD&E project priorities line-up, and pursue collaborative opportunities for training, incentives, research and communications improvements.

Driving best practice by supporting growers to increase efficiency profitability, while stewarding valuable technology.

# RESEARCH DIRECTION & STEWARDSHIP

- **Ensuring grower priorities are reflected in CRDC research investments**
- **Advocating for preservation of matching government contributions for industry research & development funding**
- **Cotton Australia-facilitated TIMS Committee & Bt Technical Panel continues to evaluate the Bollgard® 3 resistance management plan**
- **Working to improve biosecurity preparedness and responsiveness**

## GROWER-DETERMINED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PRIORITISED

Again this season, Cotton Australia concentrated its efforts on ensuring the industry's future research and development projects represent the priorities of and value for Australian cotton growers. Providing grower advice to the CRDC is one Cotton Australia's responsibilities designated under the Primary Industries Research and Development Act 1989.

The CRDC's process for prioritising and investing in cotton industry RD&E underwent a change in preparation for the 2016-17 investment round. In May 2015, a Strategic R&D Forum was held with the Cotton Australia grower advisory panels to identify the research

needs and gaps under each of the CRDC 2013-18 R&D Strategic Plan themes: farmers, industry, customers, people and performance.

Following this Forum, CRDC released guidelines through a competitive Expression of Interest (EOI) call, inviting researchers to submit Full Research Proposals. A total of 13 EOIs were issued through this call, with an additional six developed through the Federal Government's Rural R&D for Profit programme (round two).

In total, the CRDC Board approved investment of \$2.4 million in 2016-17 for 23 new projects. CRDC's total RD&E spend for 2016-17 is approximately \$20.4 million.

To ensure each grower has a say on where grower research money is spent, Cotton Australia ran a series of Research Priority Workshops in conjunction with each Cotton Grower Association (CGA), from February to May, 2016. These discussions fed into CRDC's Strategy Forum, held in Brisbane at the end of May 2016. The Forum sets the direction for CRDC's research investment for 2017-18.

Growers have another mechanism to influence research priorities, the Cotton Innovation Network (CIN). The CIN improves the coordination of all research and direction activity to ensure the industry receives the best value for its investment and drives the industry's research program by mapping investment in research and planning future research requirements. It is co-chaired by growers Cleave Rogan (St George) and Barb Grey (Mungindi). ►

## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Ensure efforts to review and improve biosecurity preparedness and responsiveness continue
- Deliver ongoing support to growers in light of new biosecurity regulations in Queensland and NSW
- TIMS Herbicide Transgenic Crops Technical Panel will continue to investigate more effective methods to monitor and address herbicide resistance
- Advocate for access to existing and new pesticides via the Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) review of agricultural chemicals regulation





Cotton Australia Regional Manager (Darling Downs) Mary O'Brien, DDCGA President Adam McVeigh, Deputy PM and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Barnaby Joyce and Cotton Australia Board members Stuart Armitage and Bob Dall'Alba at a nitrogen funding announcement in Dalby.

## RETAINING ADEQUATE R&D FUNDING

Cotton Australia continued to brief key politicians about the industry's success and improvements driven by significant grower investment into research and direction. Cotton Australia urged the Australian Government to guarantee of continued co-contributions and a recommitment to the PIRD Act (1989), as well as a commitment to the planned six investment rounds of the \$100 million Rural R&D for Profit programme.

## TECHNOLOGY AND DRIVING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

In September 2015, Cotton Australia participated in the Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources' inquiry into the role of technology in increasing agricultural productivity in Australia. Cotton Australia put the case for the Australian Government to support the cotton industry in a number of areas, including:

- support and funding for best management practice programs and consideration of provision of incentives for myBMP certified growers, including reduced regulatory burden around biotechnology and agricultural chemicals
- investment in autonomous farming, agri-intelligence and big data, digital and telecommunications infrastructure, soils research and biosecurity preparedness
- driving down energy costs through change and innovation within the energy market and investment in alternative energy sources and energy efficiency solutions

## TIMS COMMITTEE AND BOLLGARD® 3

Representing an important win for growers, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) again extended this season's planting window based on advice from the Cotton Australia-facilitated Transgenic and Insect Management Strategies (TIMS) Committee Bt Technical Panel and Monsanto.

A mid-season Bt resistance report released in February 2016 indicated that the Bollgard® II resistance management plan (RMP) and insecticide resistance management strategy has worked well for the commercial life of Bollgard® II.

TIMS has also contributed to the development of the Bollgard® 3 RMP and establishing frameworks to provide ongoing and responsiveness stewardship of the RMP.

## BIOSECURITY PREPAREDNESS

In January 2016, Cotton Australia convened biosecurity experts from industry and government to improve biosecurity incident response coordination between all parties involved. Attendees included biosecurity experts and representatives from Cotton Australia, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC), CottonInfo, Plant Health Australia (PHA), the NSW Department of Primary Industries and the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The workshop reviewed the industry's defoliating verticillium biosecurity incident handled under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed – of which Cotton Australia is a signatory – between September 2014 and December 2015.



Cotton Australia's biosecurity workshop underway in the Riverina.

Image by: Karrar Abdulhussein Alhajiya

The workshop focussed on enhancing the cotton industry's management of future biosecurity incidents through a range of mechanisms, including:

- improving preparedness for future biosecurity incursions
- improving response capabilities
- improving coordination between government and industry groups
- better prepared channels for communication with industry
- identifying investment and research gaps

In September 2015, growers and industry representatives in the Southern Valleys of NSW were provided with biosecurity training. Sessions held at Carrathool and Hillston were well-received by the large number of growers and farm workers in attendance. Cotton Australia rallied a number of biosecurity experts to provide practical, hands-on advice for growers to take back to their farm and help keep their operations and the environment safe from biosecurity risks.

The training covered a range of topics, including:

- pest and disease risks for the NSW Southern Valleys
- identifying on-farm biosecurity risks
- minimising the spread of diseases through farm machinery and people
- quarantine of new and second-hand or imported machinery

Throughout the season, Cotton Australia also worked to keep abreast of new biosecurity regulations coming into force in Queensland from July 2016 and in NSW from mid-2017. The new regulations mean farmers have

a legal responsibility to ensure biosecurity risks are prevented, eliminated or minimised. Cotton Australia will continue to assist growers in meeting their new obligations.

A large warehouse filled with stacks of white cotton bales. The bales are arranged in neat rows, creating a strong sense of depth and repetition. The lighting is warm, highlighting the texture of the cotton. The ceiling of the warehouse is visible in the background, showing a series of parallel beams.

## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Consolidating relationships with iconic Australian brands
- Determining engagement opportunities with supply chain influencers such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition and Forum for the Future
- Examining opportunities for streamlining Australian cotton traceability processes

Promoting Australian cotton domestically and globally,  
securing our markets and understanding customer needs.

# COTTON TO MARKET

- **Australian and international brands, retailers and manufacturers influenced to preference Australian cotton in their supply chain**
- **Better Cotton Initiative and Cotton LEADS™ programs gain traction**
- **Australian cotton promoted at the Shanghai Intertextile Fabric Fair, 75,000 delegates attend**

Increasingly, the world's designers, brands and retailers are paying attention to sustainable supply chain management and product provenance. There is strong global interest and growing demand for responsibly produced, ethical natural fibres that help brands meet their sustainability goals and commitments.

Australian cotton offers a raw material that meets the needs of brands and retailers, and Cotton Australia continued its efforts over the past 12 months to promote the fibre in domestic and international markets.

Cotton Australia's efforts to promote Australian cotton are aimed at safeguarding existing markets and securing future market access via the Cotton to Market program. This includes a range of strategic approaches to position Australian cotton in the world textile market.

In 2015/16, Cotton Australia received a rebate from the Australian Government covering more than 40% of the organisation's 'Cotton to Market' program costs, via an Austrade Export Market Development Grant.

## AUSTRALIAN COTTON STORY: INFLUENCING THE INFLUENCERS

Cotton Australia has worked hard to pitch the modern Australian cotton industry's story of responsible and sustainable production directly to key political leaders and fashion and textile influencers via a number of activities over the past 12 months.

Major national retailer Target Australia attached the Australian Cotton Mark swing tags to hundreds of thousands of garments available in store and online during the year. The Australian Cotton Mark and Narrabri grower, Matt Norrie, also featured in Target Australia's 2015 Father's Day catalogue alongside the 100% Australian cotton menswear range, connecting with millions of Australians and sharing our industry's positive story with domestic consumers.

In November 2015, representatives of Target Australia's menswear team joined Cotton Australia representatives at the 'Australian Parliament Farmers Market' in Canberra to promote Australia's high-quality fibre to politicians and other key decision makers. The event was hosted by the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), of which Cotton Australia is a member, and attracted more than 150 politicians, media representatives and stakeholders. The event allowed Cotton Australia to place a 100% Aussie cotton clothing product directly into the hands of decision makers, which demonstrates the link between our growers and the final product. ►



Narrabri cotton growers, researchers and ginners hosted leading Australian fashion and textile figures at an exclusive cotton industry tour in April 2016.



In March 2016, Cotton Australia's Cotton to Market Project Lead, Brooke Summers, presented at and participated in the 'sustainable resource management makes business sense' session at the ABARES Outlook event held in Canberra. The event provided an opportunity to connect with politicians, regulators, agriculture sector influencers and producers from a range of sectors.

The second annual Fashion Industry Farm Tour was held in Narrabri in April 2016 to create a strong connection between both ends of the cotton supply chain – growers and end-users. Narrabri cotton growers, researchers and ginners hosted leading Australian fashion and retail figures at an exclusive cotton industry tour that incorporated a visit to Auscott's Narrabri farm and gin during processing and the Australian Cotton Research Institute (ACRI) to meet some of Australia's world-class cotton scientists.

## TAKING OUR STORY TO THE WORLD

Cotton Australia continued to engage with organisations on the global stage to secure international markets for Australian cotton growers.

In June 2015, Cotton Australia hosted a function at the Australian Consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, to present the Australian cotton story to a number of the world's major brands and their decision-makers including Nike, H&M, Tommy Hilfiger, C&A, VF (brands include Lee, Wrangler, Timberland, The North Face, Vans, Nautica), Adidas, IKEA and Levi Strauss and Co. Together, these companies consume more than five times the volume of the average Australian cotton crop, every year.

Our own cotton growers telling their story directly to the end users of their product has proved a hugely powerful strategy for promoting understanding and dialogue with our industry.

## COTTON LEADS™ PARTNERSHIP GROWS

Since its inception in October 2013, more than 360 global brand, retailer and manufacturer partners have pledged their commitment to the Cotton LEADS™ program, a joint initiative between the U.S. and Australian cotton industries. The program offers partners a reliable cotton supply chain solution, and confidence that their cotton fibre is responsibly produced and identified.

Cotton Australia and Cotton Incorporated collaborated in October 2015 to promote the Cotton LEADS™ program at the Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics trade show which attracts over 4000 exhibitors and 75,000 visitors from more than 30 countries each year.

Our presence at these events reinforces the importance of cotton and offers a natural, sustainable alternative in a global market crowded by factory-produced synthetic fibres.

In April 2016, the organisations joined forces again in Hong Kong to brief more than 130 of the program's partners. Australian growers attended as part of the delegation and presented the Australian cotton industry's country report, focusing on the cotton myBMP (Best Management Practices) program and some of the new innovations being trialled in robotics, precision agriculture and big data. The event provided a forum for the Australian cotton industry to better understand how brands and retailers make raw material choices in the product design process. Importantly, the event gave Australian cotton a voice to influence the decision-making of end-users.



Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay, Target Australia head of menswear Victoria Smith, Target Australia menswear designer Luke Morrison and Cotton Australia Chair Simon Corish at the Australian Parliament House Farmers Market in November 2015.

Fashion industry figures at Auscott Narrabri.

## AUSTRALIAN GROWERS SEIZE BETTER COTTON OPPORTUNITIES

Again this season, a number of Australia's myBMP-certified cotton growers have opted-in to the global Better Cotton Initiative given the global recognition and financial incentives available through the program. In the 2014-15 season, a number of Australian growers attracted \$3 – \$8 extra per bale sold as 'BCI cotton'.

Cotton Australia continues to participate in the BCI Council (its global overseeing Board), represented by Cotton Australia Chair, Simon Corish. The organisation participated in BCI Members' Meetings which bring together participants from all sectors of the cotton supply chain – producing countries, brands and retailers, spinners and manufacturers as well as civil society groups.

Last season, almost 11% of the world's cotton was sold as Better Cotton, and the organisation is on track to make BCI cotton a mainstream commodity – representing 30% of world production by 2020.

Cotton Australia's participation in BCI ensures that these signals of increased demand for responsibly produced cotton are heard back through the supply chain to the farm and grower level in Australia.

Australia is now a part of a global network working towards improving cotton's reputation globally. Our growers are an important part of that story and leveraging Cotton Australia's membership of BCI provides a great opportunity to further promote the Australian cotton story – both overseas and at home.

# TRANSPORT

## ENABLING SAFE AND EFFICIENT HARVEST PROCESSING



- **Cotton Australia and its allies successfully lobbied the Australian Government to abolish the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal (RSRT) and avoid significant transport price hikes**
- **Growers and transport contractors given access to fair compliance conditions and exemptions to assist in the efficient movement of machinery and harvested and ginned cotton**
- **Transport forums deliver timely information to the logistics supply chain ahead of the harvest period**

### TRANSPORT CONDITIONS AND INFORMATION

Again this season Cotton Australia has progressed negotiations with federal and state regulators in Queensland and NSW to ensure growers and transport operators can operate efficiently and safely on public roads.

Cotton Australia secured fair compliance conditions and exemptions for growers ahead of the Easter long weekend (25-28 March, 2016). Additionally, Cotton Australia secured compliance information for NSW

growers in the lead-up to the ANZAC Day (22-25 April, 2016) long weekend.

The exemptions ensured over-dimension loads and machinery could be practicably operated and transported on public roads during the critical harvest period. Cotton Australia worked with local police and regulators to ensure growers received transport notices much earlier in the season.

Cotton Australia provides plain English best practice transport guidelines covering issues related to 'chain of responsibility' (COR) requirements, resources for the safe movement of cotton picking equipment, load restraints for cotton modules and ginned bales and conditional registration for agricultural vehicles.

### PRE-HARVEST TRANSPORT FORUMS FOR GROWERS AND CONTRACTORS

A series of transport forums held by Cotton Australia were well attended by growers, contractors and regulators ahead of the busy harvest period. The forums provided attendees with timely information about the strict legal requirements for all parties involved in the

## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Continue to negotiate fair and timely Easter long weekend conditions for growers and transport contractors
- Engaging with key local governments to regularise the movement of oversize farming equipment on local roads
- Put the case for harmonised transport regulations and enforcement between Queensland and NSW
- Increase efforts to brief regulators in Northern Victoria



transport logistics supply chain. Forums were held at Goondiwindi, Mungindi, Moree, Wee Waa, Breeza, Hay and Darlington Point.

### ROAD SAFETY REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL ABOLISHED

Cotton Australia welcomed legislation passed by the Federal Parliament in April 2016 to abolish the Road Safety Remuneration Act 2012. In doing so, the Australian Government scrapped the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal (RSRT) and invalidated the RSRT's 2014 and 2016 Orders. The 2016 Order risked skyrocketing transport costs, or fines for transport contractors, just as the harvest period got underway.

By invalidating the 2016 Order:

- minimum pay rates were no longer imposed on owner-driver transport operators, which would have potentially rendered them uncompetitive against larger transport companies
- Longstanding arrangements for movement of stock and feed were restored
- Rural businesses servicing the agriculture and transport sectors can keep their doors open

The abolition of the RSRT and its Orders followed determined efforts by Cotton Australia, the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) and others. Cotton Australia's policy team successfully lobbied key politicians to call for the scrapping of the RSRT.

The NFF, of which Cotton Australia is a member, will continue to engage with the Government and transport sector to promote a safer, more competitive freight sector.

# EDUCATION

## INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF OUR COTTON WORKFORCE



Theodore grower Trevor Brownlie with students from Theodore State School.



Cotton Australia Regional Manager (Central Highlands) Renee Anderson with Tieri State School students on-farm with Emerald growers.

- **Cotton Australia's education resources reach over 100,000 students and 20,000 educators throughout the year**
- **The online Cotton Classroom was uniquely accessed more than 154,000 times, up from 134,000 during the year prior, representing an increase of more than 15%**
- **Scholarship programs invest in our future workforce**

### EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Cotton Australia's suite of online educational resources and tools – available in the online 'Cotton Classroom' – reach more than 10,000 unique visitors a month. The Cotton Classroom hosts resources including our Education Kit, lesson and unit plans, videos and much more. The Education Kit alone was downloaded more than 3500 times per month, on average.

The primary and secondary school resources directly link to the Australian Curriculum, ensuring that teachers are supported to provide positive learning experiences about the industry and outcomes for their students.

In addition to Cotton Classroom, Cotton Australia also works with organisations such as the Primary Industries

Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA) to produce and distribute materials. In 2015 Cotton Australia contributed to the development of 17 units through PIEFA, which were endorsed by 100% of teachers who trialled them.

### DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Cotton Australia staff, including our hard-working regional managers, directly engage with teachers and students in metro, rural and regional areas. In the year to date, 6600 students and 1400 teachers have participated in face-to-face learning experiences with, or supported by, Cotton Australia.

Teachers gain professional development through industry engagement events. In cotton regions they visit cotton farms and gins and learn directly from growers about how we grow our cotton, our industry's high standards, and how students can benefit from a career in cotton. In cities they learn about the resources we produce about the industry to support their teaching through conferences and professional development events.

Students at all levels, many of whom have never visited a farm before, also learn first-hand what it means to be a farmer, encouraging them to consider a career



Theodore grower Trevor Brownlie with students from Theodore State School.

in the cotton industry through farm visits, incursions, excursions and school and university talks.

## AGRICULTURE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Cotton Australia supports a number of programs to promote the Australian cotton industry as an attractive career for future graduates. These include:

- Art4Agriculture's annual Archibull Prize. In 2015, 1395 students from 30 schools participated in the Archibull competition, with the finals dominated by quality entrants with cotton themes. Beyond the artworks, the program resulted in significant attitudinal change from students, with a 100% increase in students preferring clothes made from natural fibres and recognising the personal importance of understanding the production processes behind their clothing. There was also significant attitudinal shifts in the belief that farmers use water carefully (85%) and farmers care for the environment (70%)
- Art4Agriculture's Young Farming Champions program cotton participants, James Kanaley and Andrea Crothers
- Cotton2Couture Award delivered through the Apex Australia Teenage Fashion & Arts Youth Festival (AATFA), which aims to influence the uptake of cotton fibre

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. In 2015 and 2016 Cotton Australia made available the following scholarships to promising undergraduate students, some of whom have already gone onto roles within the industry:

- Final Year Undergraduate Project Sponsorship
- Australian Agronomy Conference Scholarship
- Cotton Conference or Collective Scholarship
- Scholarship to the Emerald Agricultural College (with the CHCG&IA)

These scholarships have been enabled by the Cotton Catchments Communities Co-operative Research Centre's Legacy Fund, and promote cotton as a career choice to students.

# WORKFORCE & CAPACITY BUILDING

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE LEADERS, PROTECTING  
OUR WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

- **Cotton Australia and industry sponsors support leadership courses for future and established leaders**
- **Cotton Australia and its allies commanded significant attention of the Australian Government against the proposed Backpacker Tax**
- **Working with industry to cement a cotton workforce plan to benefit growers on-farm**

## INVESTING IN LEADERSHIP

Cotton Australia supports leadership programs in order to future-proof our industry by helping talented young people acquire the skills, knowledge and experience they need to become future leaders.

Cotton Australia (with support from the CRDC) continues to invest in:

- The Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program for 15 emerging cotton industry leaders to develop leadership knowledge, skills and experience
- Peter Cullen Water and Environment Trust's Science-to-Policy Leadership Program for individuals currently working in the science, policy or management of water. Lowbidgee irrigator Adam Harris represented cotton in the 2015 program
- Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarships for

exemplary cotton growers or farm managers between the ages of 28-40 with a research interest. Growers Matt McVeigh (Dalby) and Thomas Quigley (Trangie) were funded for the 2015 program

Cotton Australia, the CRDC and Auscott Ltd also co-sponsor the Australian Rural Leadership Program for established leaders currently working in or for the cotton industry.

## INVESTING IN SAFE FARMS

Every cotton-growing region in Australia played host to one or more Cotton Australia workshops to help more than 180 growers understand their legal and industry obligations in terms of work health and safety (WHS) and linked directly to the myBMP WHS and HR module. 100% of attendees suggested they would change practice in this area as a result of the workshop, and 100% of attendees would recommend the workshop to their colleagues.

## BACKPACKER TAX AND INFLUENCING WORKFORCE POLICIES

Cotton Australia Board member and Mungindi grower Barb Grey and Policy Officer Angela Bradburn again represented the industry on the National Farmers'



## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Ensuring changes to migration policies do not negatively impact the industry, and where possible, working with the Australian Government to safeguard the industry's access to overseas workers to supplement their workforce
- Ensuring Federal and State governments recognise and deliver initiatives that support agricultural education programs and workforce needs

Justin Yarrow and Sarah Mulligan, Norwin. Image by: Justin Yarrow

Federation (NFF) People and Workforce Committee. One of the major issues tackled this year was the Australian Government's proposed Backpacker Tax. Cotton Australia worked closely with the NFF, QFF and others to seek a review of the Government's proposal, which if implemented will tax backpackers as non-residents from July 1, 2016, removing access to the tax-free threshold and requiring working holiday visa holders to pay 32.5 cents for every dollar earned.

The campaign involved significant lobbying of key politicians, working with political leaders on alternative solutions, an online petition that attracted more than 47,000 signatures, a coordinated social media campaign, and substantial traditional media attention. The campaign pressured the Government to review the proposed tax and commit to resolving the issue. Cotton Australia continued to be involved in every step of the campaign – at the time of publication, the Government had pushed the implementation of the Backpacker Tax to early 2017, pending a review.

## TIMELY ADVICE TO GROWERS

Throughout the year, Cotton Australia provided timely information to help growers better understand workplace compliance issues and employer obligations via workplace relations specialist, Bob Kellow (Industrial Mediation Services). Full levy paying growers were also provided access to Mr Kellow's services for workplace relations consultations.

## A CLEAR INDUSTRY WORKFORCE PLAN

The Australian cotton industry's on-farm workforce strategy was endorsed in 2016, setting a clear plan for delivering on priority industry on-farm workforce needs. The strategy has positioned the industry well to attract government and other funding partnership opportunities.

Cotton Australia Regional Manager Rebecca Fing was appointed to drive key workforce activities alongside the Cotton Australia team in all regions given her expertise in this area. Rebecca was charged with the task of building on the successes of the recent projects including the WHS training series and the Cotton Industry Skills Development Project.

myBMP is also in the process of launching a major upgrade to the WHS/HR module, as a result of a collaborative agriculture project funded by the CRDC.

# COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

SHARING THE POSITIVE STORY OF THE MODERN  
AUSTRALIAN COTTON INDUSTRY, PROMOTING  
KEY ISSUES ON BEHALF OF GROWERS

- **More than 1100 media hits in the past 12 months**
- **Almost three-quarters of a million people reached via Cotton Australia's social media channels**
- **More than half a million people access Cotton Australia's website as a source of information about our industry**

Cotton Australia's communications and media team worked alongside the policy team and network of Regional Managers to significantly boost the industry's profile in the media and social media spheres this season.

In the past 12 months, Cotton Australia's activities attracted 1151 media clips with regional and metropolitan newspapers, radio and television outlets, representing a 20% increase on the previous period. 66.5% of the stories represented positive sentiment and 33% neutral reporting.

Cotton Australia's efforts in the media considerably lifted the profile of issues important to growers – such as water security, spray drift and the 'Backpacker Tax' – and commanded the attention of political leaders, policymakers and regulators, business leaders and the community.

The organisation's social media profile and reach also ramped up over the past 12 months, helping to expand the reach of our industry's positive story with new audiences, galvanise our industry and its allies around critical policy issues, and better engage with

the next generation of growers. Cotton Australia has amassed more than 7200 total social media followers across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+. More than 742,000 people were reached through our posts and 'tweets', representing a 187% increase in our reach compared to the previous 12 month period. An additional 35,000 have watched Cotton Australia's YouTube videos on topics ranging from information for growers and industry, education and promotional content for end-users.

Cotton Australia's website attracted more than 565,000 page views from more than 213,000 unique users over the past 12 months. While 60% of users accessed the site from Australia, the remaining 40% of users over this period were overseas in some of Australian cotton's key markets and partner countries.

Additionally, Cotton Australia's fortnightly Cotton Matters e-newsletter, regional e-news updates and newly introduced monthly myBMP Matters e-newsletter, were widely read, with email open rates remaining above 33% on average (considered high for not-for-profit and agricultural organisations).

# CELEBRATING OUR INDUSTRY

## COTTON COLLECTIVE, AWARDS AND CONFERENCE

- **Cotton Collective updates the industry on issues of importance and allows its participants to share views and ideas**
- **Australian Cotton Industry Awards celebrate excellence, innovation and leadership throughout the industry's supply chain**

### COTTON COLLECTIVE: A HUGE SUCCESS IN NARRABRI

Cotton Australia convened the Cotton Collective industry forum at Narrabri on August 5, 2015.

Agenda highlights included Australian cotton promotion, research and development, biosecurity, as well as on-farm issues such as water efficiency and yield maximisation. Growers and industry personnel attended the event at no cost.

### AUSTRALIAN COTTON INDUSTRY AWARDS: CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

In its 12th year, the annual Awards program recognises high achievement in, and valuable contribution to, Australia's cotton industry – from growers and ginners to product suppliers, consultants, agronomists, researchers and extension teams.

2015 recipients include:

- Monsanto Cotton Grower of the Year, Robert & Jennie Reardon, and Tristram Hertslet, Reardon Operations (Talwood, Qld)
- AgriRisk High Achiever of the Year, Peter & Caroline Tuohey, Daisy Lodge Pty Ltd (Carrathool, NSW)
- Chris Lehmann Trust Young Achiever of the Year, sponsored by Bayer CropScience, Ross Burnett, "Barkool" (Emerald, Qld)
- Cotton Seed Distributors Researcher of the Year, Dr Geoff Baker & Colin Tann (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation [CSIRO] Agriculture Flagship, Narrabri, NSW)
- Incitec Pivot Fertilisers Service to Industry Award, Cleave Rogan, "Bookamerrie" (St George, Qld)

Nearly 500 people gathered to celebrate the recipients of the 2015 Australian Cotton Industry Awards at a ceremony held at Narrabri.

More than 280 cotton growers and industry representatives gathered on March 9, 2016, at the Monsanto National Cotton Grower of the Year Field Day at Reardon Operations (Talwood). The event was organised by the Macintyre Valley Cotton Growers' Association Field Day Committee in conjunction with the Mungindi Cotton Growers' Association, with support from Cotton Australia.

The Southern Valleys Cotton Grower Association hosted a field day with support from Cotton Australia on March 31, 2016, at Daisy Lodge (Carrathool), to highlight the 2015 AgriRisk High Achievers of the Year, Peter and Caroline Tuohey. More than 150 growers and industry representatives attended.

### 18TH AUSTRALIAN COTTON CONFERENCE 2016

At the time of printing, preparations were well underway for the 2016 Australian Cotton Conference to be held at the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre, Broadbeach, from August 2-4, 2016.

The event is organised and managed by Cotton Australia and the Australian Cotton Shippers Association (ACSA) via a volunteer Conference Committee chaired by cotton grower and Cotton Australia Board member, Stuart Armitage (Cecil Plains, Queensland).

The theme for 2016 is 'New Frontiers' and sessions will cover topical issues such as farm performance, the latest in cotton research, water issues, digital agriculture, and opportunities for Australian cotton in the global market.

The bi-annual event unites the industry and attracts large numbers of cotton growers, from every cotton growing valley in Australia.

For more information, visit: [www.australiancottonconference.com.au](http://www.australiancottonconference.com.au)

Persistent advocacy has produced more wins than losses over the past year for growers affected by mining & CSG operations, but Cotton Australia must continue to fight on behalf of farmers.

# MINING & CSG

## VIGILANCE PAYS OFF, BUT LOBBYING CONTINUES

- **Mining & Petroleum Acts strengthen grower rights, the result of consistent lobbying by Cotton Australia**
- **IPART compensation benchmarking a win for growers in NSW, but more work to be done**
- **Shenhua project a disappointment, Cotton Australia to continue monitoring in order to protect grower interests**

The past 12 months has seen significant activity in the area of resources exploration and development in cotton-growing regions.

Activity in Queensland picked up in early 2016 following a post-election lull, while NSW remains very active in the Coal Seam Gas (CSG) and mining space.

### A WIN IN NSW FOR LAND ACCESS, BUT THE FIGHT CONTINUES

Understandably, cotton growers are deeply concerned about coal seam gas development in NSW, and in particular the potential impacts to land and water resources.

Growers were handed a win in late 2015 when amendments to the Mining Act 1992 and Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 passed both houses of the NSW Parliament, strengthening the rights of cotton growers and other landholders in the state.

Significantly, the amendments require resources companies to cover capped costs incurred by

landholders when developing land access agreements.

Additional amendments passed in the legislative package included:

- greater rigour around conflict resolution processes through the appointment of approved independent panel members to carry out mediation and arbitration,
- improved transparency through the harmonisation of the Mining Act 1992 and Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 and the application of standardised conditions placed on mining and petroleum approvals, which aims to deliver improved monitoring and compliance outcomes,
- the provision of a framework for the strategic release of mining and petroleum exploration licences, and
- the appointment of the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) as the lead regulator for compliance and enforcement of gas activity approval conditions.

Following on from the legislative action, in December 2015 the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) handed down its recommendations on compensation benchmarking. IPART had responded to Cotton Australia's advice that a one-size-fits-all approach would not work for compensation payments, and proposed instead a bespoke model that allows landholders to estimate compensation benchmarks using information specific to their circumstances.

Also welcomed was the proposal that gas companies should fund benefit payments to landholders, which recognises the impost on agricultural operations from coal seam gas operations. ►



## CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Build on gains made to date in NSW to further strengthen grower rights
- Convince the NSW Government to introduce reasonable and fair compensation cost recovery caps for growers negotiating with resources companies over land access
- Continue to monitor the Watermark project on the Liverpool Plains to protect local growers
- Engage with the Queensland Government as mining & resources returns to its agenda, and policy & legislative changes are introduced
- Monitor Federal Government reform agendas, including the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act one-stop-shop, Water Trigger Review and Bio-regional Assessment Program



Although IPART's final report also recommends gas companies be allowed to make in-kind and agreed contributions to growers, these would be in addition to compensation payments and rebates of costs incurred through the negotiation process. (Cotton Australia urges growers to seek professional advice when negotiating these benefits and land access agreements).

However, while IPART and the Walker Review highlighted the difficulty in determining appropriate costs to negotiate a land access agreement, the NSW Government has continued to pursue a capped approach. Cotton Australia will work with other landholder groups to ensure that growers receive fair and reasonable costs for the negotiation process.

## COTTON AUSTRALIA DISAPPOINTED LIVERPOOL PLAINS COAL PROJECT APPROVED

In July 2015 Shenhua's Watermark coal project on the Liverpool Plains in northern NSW was approved by the Federal Environment Minister, Greg Hunt.

In response, Cotton Australia expressed disappointment that federal and state approval processes gave the project the green light to proceed.

Cotton Australia's stance on resources projects is that land suitable for agriculture should be protected adequately, and it argued the Watermark coal project should not proceed because of its anticipated impact on water resources.

Although Cotton Australia acknowledged the strict conditions imposed by the Federal Government on the project, the fact an exploration licence was granted for a mine in such a productive agricultural region indicates a failure in the assessment process and state planning policy.

Cotton Australia continues to hold grave concerns the Watermark Coal Project will negatively and permanently impact water resources in the area.

The organisation will continue to watch this project closely, noting that, at the current time, development has stalled with Shenhua failing to apply for a mining licence.

## COTTON AUSTRALIA CALLS FOR GREATER TRANSPARENCY IN NSW MINING OPERATIONS

In a September 2015 submission to the NSW Government Department of Planning and Environment's (DPE) stage two review of the state's integrated mining policy, Cotton Australia called for greater transparency in relation to NSW mining operations, both in the development and post-approval stages.

Stage two of the DPE's review proposed the following changes:

- post-approval guidelines for annual reviews of mining operations, independent audits and web-based reporting to clarify reporting and enhance transparency for government compliance officers and the public
- an overview of water regulation and policy for the benefit of monitoring and compliance activities
- planning agreement guidelines for state significant mining developments

Cotton Australia was largely supportive of the proposed changes that will deliver improved transparency of mining operations, enabling improved monitoring and compliance outcomes as well as allowing those communities affected by mining to engage more directly with companies and government officials.

However, the organisation also made several suggestions within its submission that would further improve reporting transparency and provide clarity for government, landholders and mining companies.

Cotton Australia will continue to work with the NSW Department of Planning & Environment as further reforms to mining policy and legislation are introduced.

# DISASTER ASSISTANCE

## RALLYING BEHIND GROWERS AND COTTON COMMUNITIES



The Darling Downs superstorm caused considerable damage to crops and on-farm infrastructure when it struck in December 2015. Images by: Mary O'Brien

- **Assistance given to Darling Downs growers impacted by December 23, 2015, superstorm**
- **Support offered to St George growers affected by Christmas Eve 2015 hail storm**

### DARLING DOWNS SUPERSTORM

Cotton Australia assisted Darling Downs growers impacted by a superstorm that swept across Milmerran, Cecil Plains and Bowenville on December 23, 2015.

The storm caused up to \$50 million in damage, with around 50 cotton growers affected and cotton crop losses estimated at around 5000ha. Infrastructure – including lateral irrigators, sheds and machinery – and other summer crops grown by farmers were all damaged in the storm.

Cotton Australia's General Manager, Michael Murray, and Darling Downs Regional Manager, Mary O'Brien, joined representatives from the Queensland Farmers' Federation, AgForce, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Toowoomba Regional Council at a meeting and on a tour of farms to review damage.

In January 2016, growers impacted by the superstorm on the Darling Downs gathered for an event at Norwin

on 19 January, 2015. Growers were provided with information about the support available from industry and government.

An initiative of the Darling Downs CGA in conjunction with Cotton Australia and AgForce, the event provided an opportunity for Cotton Australia to gather more detailed information on the impacts of the superstorm to assist the organisation's response and ability to seek additional government support.

Lawrence Springborg, State Member for Southern Downs, attended and met with growers to discuss the help available from government.

### ST GEORGE HAIL STORM

Cotton Australia stood ready to help St George growers impacted by a hail storm that struck the district on Christmas Eve. More than 1000ha of cotton was severely damaged, with reports of a further 500ha of lesser damage.

The organisation communicated the availability of government assistance, low-interest loans and freight subsidies to growers.

# REGIONAL REPORT

## CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

**Regional Manager: Renee Anderson**

**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 14,520**

**Bales produced in 2015-16: 135,036 (forecast)**



Cotton Australia highlights:

- In conjunction with AgForce, organised a stand with AgForce at the Ag Careers Day to engage with school students and promote the concept of a career in agriculture, and in cotton specifically
- Worked to ensure the efficient delivery of cotton to gins by organising transport forums. Importantly, growers and transport contractors heard directly from government agencies
- Worked to register growers in the myBMP best management practice system and assist them in completing level 1, through one-on-one guidance
- Directly assisted growers to apply for Monsanto's myBMP grants program, which rebates growers for costs involved in completing myBMP certification
- Met with growers and chemical re-sellers ahead of the season to promote the annual spray drift campaign, in order to reduce incidences of off-target spray damage
- Promoted the industry by conducting an agricultural industry day in conjunction with Central Queensland University, hosting members of the local community
- Helped improve workforce availability by participating in an agricultural college industry reference panel, which works to implement new education programs, as well as the Cross Industry Training panel
- Organised WHS workshops for local growers and farm staff. A total of 37 people successfully completed the training courses

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

## DAWSON VALLEY

**Regional Manager: Bronwyn Christensen**

**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 3667**

**Bales produced in 2015-16: 35,585 (forecast)**



Cotton Australia highlights:

- Provided one-on-one assistance to growers to engage with the myBMP best management practice system. All Dawson & Callide Valleys growers are now registered for myBMP and on their way to complete level 1, level 2 or certification
- Promoted the cotton industry to students and educators by hosting demonstration tours on-farm and in the cotton gin during growing and harvest. Also developed and implemented a two-term cotton project with the Theodore State School, which involved students growing and picking their own cotton, plus guest speaker presentations from growers and additional information sessions
- Helped growers meet WHS legislative requirements by organising practical WHS workshops
- Assisted growers to participate in the Grass Roots Grant program in order to secure weather stations for the district
- Promoted grower and farm worker health by organising first aid workshops
- Worked to assist in the minimisation of off-target spray drift by promoting and engaging with CottonMap, as well as speaking directly with growers, contractors and re-sellers about the dangers of spray drift
- Helped growers to develop best management practices through farm tours, including a property managing nematodes

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

## DARLING DOWNS

**Regional Manager: Mary O'Brien**  
**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 42,215**  
**Bales produced in 2015-16: 396,865 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Cotton Australia Darling Downs Regional Manager Mary O'Brien used her expert technical knowledge to combat off-target spray drift. Along with organising workshops and advising Cotton Australia policy staff, Mary wrote a spray drift best practice guide which was then distributed throughout the industry, and worked tirelessly to educate spray contractors and representatives from broadacre industries about the dangers of drift
- Supported growers struck by severe storms, liaising with government agencies to provide direct assistance and following up growers that suffered severe damage
- Promoted the industry to students and educators by organising farm and gin tours, and running a stand at the UQ Careers Fair at Gatton
- Promoted excellence in the industry by assisting in the nomination of growers for the Cotton Industry Awards
- Ensured the voice of growers was heard on research direction by organising research priority workshops
- Helped develop the 'Pesticides Management' module for the industry's myBMP system
- Helped growers participate in the Grassroots Grants program to secure weather stations for the district
- Promoted positive sentiment about the industry by leading educators and students on farm and gin tours. Participants included TAFE fashion and textile teachers, Fairholme ag science students, and students from Griffith University and University of Queensland students

*Image: Cotton Australia Darling Downs Regional Manager Mary O'Brien*

## ST GEORGE & DIRRANBANDI

**Regional Manager: Jane Hill**  
**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 14,024**  
**Bales produced in 2015-16: 167,162 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Ensured the voice of growers was heard on research direction by organising research priority workshops, which were well attended by growers
- Promoted the industry to students and educators by organising farm and gin tours for Dirranbandi students
- Worked to register growers in the myBMP best management practice system and assist them in completing level 1, through one-on-one guidance
- Helped organise and promote the highly successful Cotton Womens Picnic
- Promoted excellence in the industry by assisting in the nomination of growers for the Cotton Industry Awards
- Helped organise the successful 'Spring Clean' event to manage volunteers
- Participated in meetings with the Queensland Productivity Commissioner in order to ensure grower concerns about the industry's business environment, particularly regarding electricity, were understood
- Improved safety for growers and industry workers by organising WHS workshops, which were well attended
- Directly assisted growers to apply for Monsanto's myBMP grants program, which rebates growers for costs involved in completing myBMP certification
- Promoted grower and worker health by organising first aid workshops

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

## BORDER RIVERS

**Regional Manager: Rebecca Fing**  
**MACINTYRE**  
**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 21,541**  
**Bales produced in 2015-16: 234,610 (forecast)**

**MUNGINDI**  
**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 4002**  
**Bales produced in 2015-16: 46,794 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Acted to improve future access to staff by working on workforce development and cotton industry skills development strategies for the cotton industry
- Helped promote excellence in the industry by assisting in the organisation of the National Grower of the Year Field Day, which attracted more than 280 attendees
- Improved safety for growers and industry workers by organising WHS workshops, which were well attended
- Promoted grower and worker health by organising first aid workshops
- Ensured the voice of growers was heard on research direction by organising research priority workshops, which were well attended by growers
- Worked to ensure the efficient delivery of cotton to gins by organising transport forums, at which growers and transport contractors heard directly from government agencies
- Pushed for better training solutions for the industry by working with Tocal to ensure more consistent training expenditure
- Worked to register growers in the myBMP best management practice system and assist them in completing level 1, through one-on-one guidance
- Directly assisted growers to apply for Monsanto's myBMP grants program, which rebates growers for costs involved in completing myBMP certification

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

## GWYDIR

**Regional Manager: Paul Sloman**  
**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 30,927**  
**Bales produced in 2015-16: 250,326 (forecast)**



### Cotton Australia highlights:

- Ensured the voice of growers was heard on research direction by organising research priority workshops, which were well attended
- Following incidents of off-target Phenoxy strikes, briefed growers on Cotton Australia's spray drift strategy future actions, at an emergency meeting at Moree with the Crop Consultants Australia
- Worked to ensure the efficient delivery of cotton to gins by organising transport forums, at which growers and transport contractors heard directly from government agencies
- Assisted growers to register in the myBMP best management practice system and guide them through completing level 1 through one-on-one guidance
- Pursued greater water access for local growers by participating in crucial meetings with Cotton Australia policy staff and key NSW Government politicians and regulators, pushing successfully for the lifting of temporary water embargoes
- Promoted the safety of growers and farm staff by organising first aid and WHS workshops

*Image: Cotton Australia Gwydir Regional Manager Paul Sloman*

## NAMOI

**Regional Manager: Paul Sloman**  
**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 59,198**  
**Bales produced in 2015-16: 433,147 (forecast)**



Cotton Australia highlights:

- Cotton Australia Regional Manager Paul Sloman managed Cotton Australia's engagement with CottonMap, an essential tool that helps minimise the threat of off-target spray drift
- Following incidents of spray drift damage to cotton, briefed growers on Cotton Australia's spray drift strategy and additional actions at a CGS/CottonInfo/CSD event
- Helped promote the industry along the supply chain by assisting in the organisation of the highly successful 'Cotton Fashion Tour' of local farms and a gin
- Organised research priority workshops to ensure the voice of growers was heard on the important issue of research direction
- Organised local transport forums to inform growers and transport contractors, who heard directly from regulators. The forums helped ensure the efficient delivery of cotton to gins
- Organised first aid workshops in order to promote grower and worker health
- Organised WHS workshops for growers and farm staff

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

## WALGETT & BOURKE

**Regional Manager: Paul Sloman**  
**Walgett**  
**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 7488**  
**Bales produced in 2015-16: 58,193 (forecast)**

**Bourke**  
**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 1620**  
**Bales produced in 2015-16: 17,010 (forecast)**



- With water severely restricted, cotton production in the Walgett and Bourke districts has been severely curtailed. However, Cotton Australia has worked hard to support growers in these areas, and was on hand for the first Walgett CGA meeting in two years
- Ensured the voice of growers was heard on research direction by organising a research priority workshop for Walgett, held in conjunction with the Walgett CGA meeting. Receiving feedback from growers on research priorities was particularly important for growers in areas with severely restricted access to water
- Helped organise a water access meeting at Bourke, which was well attended by officials from the Murray Darling Basin Authority and NSW State Government agencies
- Promoted the industry to students and educators in the Walgett district by presenting at the Lightning Ridge state school, discussing the cotton industry, the role of growers and opportunities for careers in cotton

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

## MACQUARIE

**Regional Manager: Julie Wise**

**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 10,927**

**Bales produced in 2015-16: 111,855 (forecast)**



Cotton Australia highlights:

- Ensured the voice of growers was heard on research direction by organising research priority workshops, which were well attended by growers
- Promoted excellence in the industry by assisting in the nomination of growers for the Cotton Industry Awards
- Improved safety for growers and industry workers by organising WHS workshops, which were well attended
- Worked to introduce growers to the myBMP best management practice system, and the Better Cotton Initiative, through meetings and one-on-one guidance

*Image: Cotton Australia Macquarie Valley Regional Manager Julie Wise (centre) with students from Dubbo Christian School, at a visit to Auscott's Trangie gin*

## RIVERINA & SOUTHERN VALLEYS

**Regional Manager: Honi Anderson**

**Hectares grown in 2015-16: 53,210**

**Bales produced in 2015-16: 595,952 (forecast)**



Cotton Australia highlights:

- Helped promote excellence in the industry by assisting in the organisation of the National High Achiever of the Year Field Day, which attracted more than 280 attendees
- Worked to ensure the efficient delivery of cotton to gins by organising transport forums at Darlington Point and Hay. Importantly, growers and transport contractors heard directly from government agencies
- Helped improve communication with the bee industry by meeting with the Riverina Apiarist Society and individual beekeepers to exchange knowledge and work towards cooperative solutions
- Worked to register growers in the myBMP best management practice system and assist them in completing level 1, through one-on-one guidance
- Promoted the industry by presenting at a careers day at Wagga Wagga, addressing more than 300 students to promote careers in cotton
- Helped growers access better finance opportunities by organising an on-farm education day for agribusiness staff from major banks
- Promoted positive sentiment towards the industry by presenting to the Riverina Probus Club, speaking to more than 40 attendees about the positives of Australian cotton
- Assisted in the organisation of local farm and gin visits for northern valleys growers, helping to promote the exchange of valuable ideas and experience between farmers from different regions

*Image: Cotton Australian Riverina Regional Manager Honi Anderson*

# COTTON AUSTRALIA BOARD



**Simon Corish**  
Chairman  
Cotton Grower,  
Goondiwindi, Qld



**Hamish McIntyre**  
Deputy Chairman  
Cotton Grower  
St George &  
Dirranbandi, Qld



**Fleur Anderson**  
Grower &  
Community Relations  
Executive  
Theodore, Qld



**Stuart Armitage**  
Cotton Grower  
Darling Downs, Qld



**Nigel Burnett**  
Cotton Grower  
Emerald, Qld



**Jeremy Callachor**  
Chief Executive  
Officer  
Namoi Cotton



**Bob Dall'Alba**  
Executive Director  
and Country Head  
Olam



**Barb Grey**  
Cotton Grower  
Mungindi, NSW



**Chris Hogendyk**  
Cotton Grower  
Warren, NSW

# 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



**Chris Larsen**  
Communications  
Manager



**Felicity Muller**  
Policy Officer



**Mary O'Brien**  
Regional Manager –  
Darling Downs (part  
time)



**Chris O'Hare**  
Administration  
Assistant



**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

2015-16

## INCOME

YEAR	LEVY	OTHER INCOME
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
2015/2016	2,319,332	299,891

## OPERATING EXPENDITURE INCLUDING CAPITAL

	OPERATING	CAPITAL
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
2015/2016	3,957,444	49,994

## OPERATING EXPENDITURE BY PROGRAM

	2015/2016	2014/2015
Board and Executive	605,042	611,981
Policy and Advocacy	504,094	503,389
Affiliations	138,024	133,742
Public Affairs	884,151	757,417
Grower Services	527,667	492,412
myBMP	268,189	207,852
Office Overheads	561,254	550,140
Administration	203,491	203,932
Research	133,565	101,160
Education	131,967	132,098
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,957,444</b>	<b>3,694,123</b>

Levy Contribution (by bales)	67%	59%
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