



# WINNER

**BULLAMON PLAINS PASTORAL COMPANY, ED WILLIS AND VON WARNER, THALLON, QLD**



## IN BRIEF

<b>FARM NAME:</b>	Bullamon Plains Pastoral Company
<b>OWNED/MANAGED BY:</b>	The Willis Family, irrigated cropping managed by Von Warner
<b>Location:</b>	Thallon, QLD
<b>Total area:</b>	20,000 hectares
<b>Cotton area:</b>	1,783 hectares
<b>2010/11 Yield:</b>	Provisional 11.4 bales/ha
<b>2010/11 Water:</b>	7.9 ML/ha
<b>Consultant:</b>	Jamie Street
<b>Marketed by:</b>	Queensland Cotton
<b>Ginned by:</b>	Queensland Cotton

**BULLAMON PLAINS IS AN OUTSTANDING FARM ENTERPRISE INCLUDING 20,000 HECTARES OF GRAZING, DRYLAND AND IRRIGATED CROPPING LOCATED AT THALLON, ABOUT 65KM SOUTH OF ST GEORGE IN QUEENSLAND. OWNED BY THE WILLIS', THE FARM HAS BEEN IN THE FAMILY SINCE 1928, WITH FOUR GENERATIONS OF THE FAMILY CURRENTLY LIVING ON THE PROPERTY.**

The three tenets of the business are managed by three dedicated and passionate people: Bill Willis (grazing), Ed Willis (dryland cropping) and Von Warner (irrigated cropping). Local agronomist Jamie Street provides in-season advice and is a respected and key part of the group. Communication and teamwork is critical, something that has been mastered over many years to create an integrated, successful business contributing to the local community and the wider industry.

In the 2010-11 season, Bullamon Plains grew its largest ever cotton crop of 1,432 hectares, with an average yield of 11.4 bales per ha, taking out the local cotton crop competition for the last three years.

The farm is fully BMP accredited and in 2011, Bullamon Plains also won the district Tidy Farm Award, evidenced by an immaculate property with literally no apparent weeds and all machinery kept in top working order. Not only does this look good, it means that weeds and diseases are under control, there's nowhere for pests to harbour and there's a safe working environment for the farm's 10 full and part time employees.

Bullamon Plains is at the leading edge of water use efficiency, with water budgets and timing of irrigations critical to success. Most of the property is under bankless channels of 750m – 800m runs, with four different watering systems being trialled; bankless rooftop, bankless one way rooftop, one way GL bay and the traditional siphon system. The whole farm can now be irrigated in four days, with soil moisture precisely measured using c-probes, push probes and the "soil scratch" test. Each watering is precisely

timed, with all water data entered into the system and used in future decision making. The bankless channel system has seen a labour cost saving of over 90% with equal or better WUE results.

Cotton production at Bullamon Plains is highly scientific. Data is collected for every aspect of the farming operation and overlaid in order to make evidence-based decisions and forward plans. This includes yield mapping, water use efficiency, electro-magnetic surveys and picking data. There is plenty of flexibility in the system to allow changes in-season, and an annual comparative analysis provided by Street Ag Services allows the team to benchmark and monitor progress against others in the district.

The Bullamon Plains team are great industry collaborators and strong believers in sharing their knowledge. CSD variety trials and Incitec trials have been conducted on the property, and the team is hungry for any research or knowledge that will help them improve the operation. More recently, the irrigation systems on Bullamon Plains have had a continual flow visitors, inspecting the bankless channel irrigation, and the farm gate is never closed to anyone wanting to come in and discover more about Bankless Irrigation systems.

The business model strikes a great balance between external advisors (financial advisors, agronomists, water consultants, bank manager, accountant, succession planners) and giving the workers a say in formulating the season's plans. OH&S is well managed, with every worker given a safety kit and regular meetings to identify any potential hazards.

Von's enthusiasm for the cotton industry is contagious. He is thoroughly knowledgeable, committed and a passionate grower who knows every square inch of the farm, every field's attributes and limitations. This passion, combined with extensive experience and great management skills has seen Bullamon Plains become a showcase cotton property in the district, and for the whole industry.