



AUSTRALIAN
COTTON

COTTON WITH A CONSCIENCE

AUSTRALIAN COTTON'S STORY OF SOCIAL IMPACT





CONTENTS

Introduction	4	Rural and Mental Health	30
Executive Summary	5	Wincott	30
Major Cotton-Producing Regions	8	Stuart and Maxine Armitage	30
The Average Australian Cotton Farmer	9	Are You Boggled, Mate?	31
The Australian Cotton Workforce	10	Undergraduate Medical Scholarship	31
Safety a Priority	10	Barwon Group CWA / Walgett CGA Medical Grant	31
A Skilled Workforce	11	Education	32
Women in Cotton	12	Federation Farm	32
Wincott	12	Auscott scholarships	33
Case study: Janelle Montgomery	13	Wee Waa High School Robotics	33
Diversity pledge	16	Peter Cullen Trust Science to Policy Leadership Program	33
Socio-economic contribution	17	Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia	33
What happens when drought strikes?	18	Grow Your Own	34
Helping other cotton producing countries – the Better Cotton Pakistan Project	19	Emerald Agricultural College Scholarships	35
Social Impact Projects	20	Marcus Oldham Scholarships	35
Case studies	23	RYCOTT camps	35
Our communities	23	Leadership	36
Tarps for Vanuatu	23	Young Farming Champions	36
Grassroots Grants	23	Australian Rural Leadership Program	36
Aussie Cotton Growers		Nuffield Scholarships	36
Growing Communities	23	The Future: Social Sustainability Targets	38
Native fish release	24		
Coleambally Community Farm	25		
Australian Cotton Donates to WIRES	26		
Charity Fun Day	26		
Charities	27		
Australian Cotton Conference Fundraising	27		
McGrath Foundation – pink bales	27		
Employment	28		
Clontarf Foundation	28		
Warren Youth Foundation	28		
Aboriginal Employment Strategy	29		

INTRODUCTION

Back in 1991, cotton was the first agricultural industry in Australia to benchmark its environmental performance. From the understanding gleaned from these early baseline figures, the industry set forth on a journey of continuous improvement, dramatically cutting pesticide use, improving water use efficiency, actively protecting riparian areas and beneficial insect populations, and transitioning to renewables and increasingly automated and more water-efficient irrigation systems.

The story of Australian cotton's journey to world-leading environmental sustainability is one we are proud to tell, but we have another great story as well, that of the people that drive the industry in Australia and their connection to communities, both local and global.

The Australian cotton industry is a dynamic and engaged agricultural industry. This includes nurturing the educational aspirations of young people from rural and remote regions, encouraging and rewarding diversity, providing financial support to a range of community endeavours and ensuring our employees are well-trained, safe and generously remunerated.

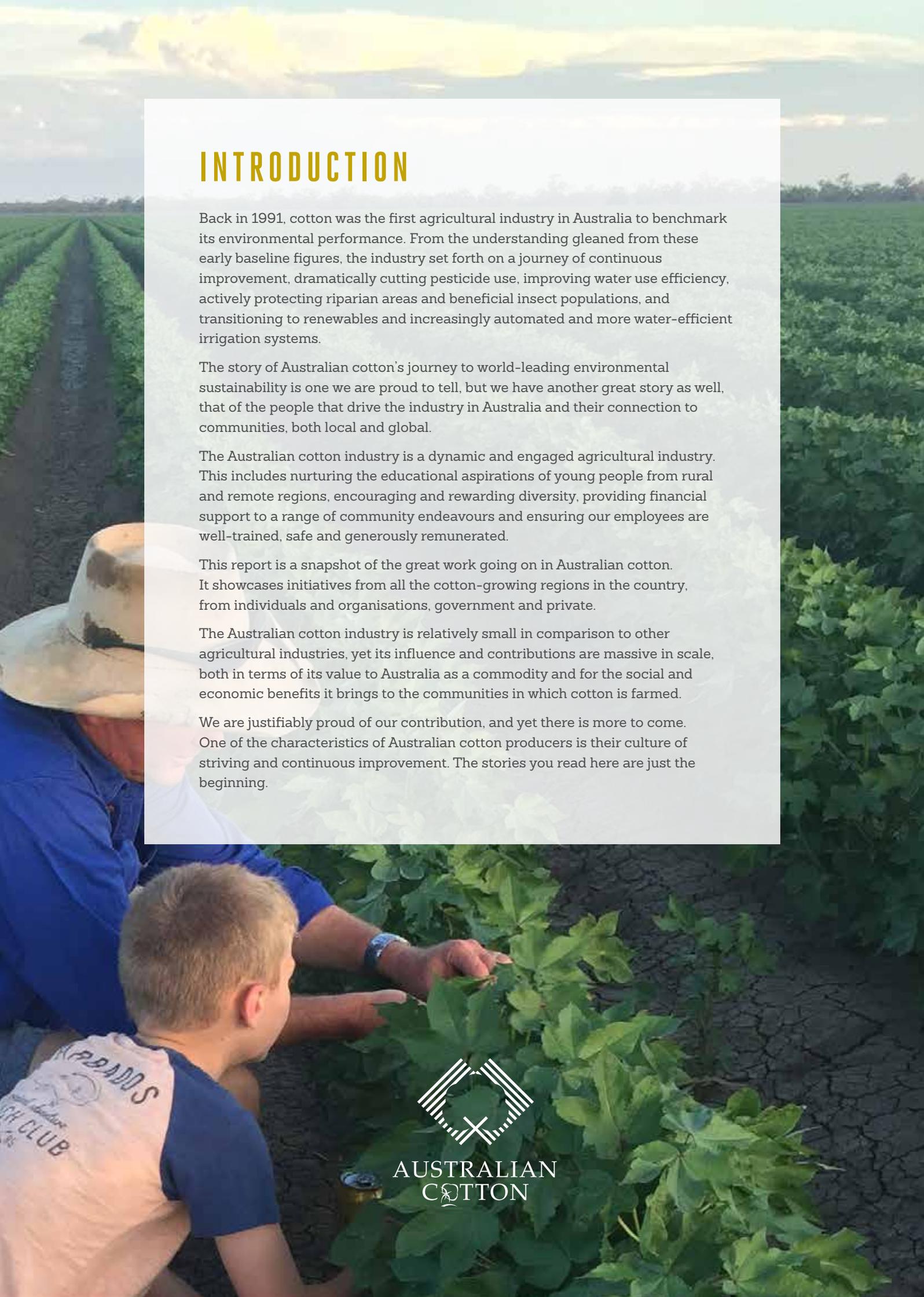
This report is a snapshot of the great work going on in Australian cotton. It showcases initiatives from all the cotton-growing regions in the country, from individuals and organisations, government and private.

The Australian cotton industry is relatively small in comparison to other agricultural industries, yet its influence and contributions are massive in scale, both in terms of its value to Australia as a commodity and for the social and economic benefits it brings to the communities in which cotton is farmed.

We are justifiably proud of our contribution, and yet there is more to come. One of the characteristics of Australian cotton producers is their culture of striving and continuous improvement. The stories you read here are just the beginning.



AUSTRALIAN
COTTON



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a snapshot of many ways in which the Australian cotton industry is contributing to the communities in which it operates. It examines the contribution that cotton makes to the Australian economy, the investment the industry is making in the health, safety, education and prosperity of its workforce, and the many ways in which businesses and individuals from the cotton community give back to their own communities through financial, time and in-kind contributions.

The findings across a range of metrics demonstrate an industry that is healthy and growing, and investing in lifting its performance. The cotton industry boasts a skilled and highly educated workforce, where women are well represented across all facets of the industry, and where individuals and organisations are making substantial contributions to the communities in which they operate and beyond.

The industry is not content to rest on its laurels. It is setting industry-wide social targets designed to further improve quality of work life and make cotton farms safer, more inclusive places to work. The industry also aims to further improve the wellbeing and social capital of its people, increasing both their contribution to our regional communities, and their engagement within the industry.

Our vision is for Australia to be a “global leader in sustainable cotton production”, providing consumers and other stakeholders with evidence of our sustainability practices, both in the way that fibre is grown and the way in which we look after the people who produce it.

We will continue to support our people to invest locally, build capacity and social capital, and ensure the ongoing prosperity of our important regional communities.

AUSTRALIAN COTTON



Cotton is a major Australian agricultural commodity.



Australia's cotton farmers produce enough cotton to clothe 375 million people each year.



Compared to 1992 it now takes 97% less pesticides, 48% less water and 34% less land to grow a bale of Australian cotton.



The Australian cotton industry has 33 best management practice standards covering worker health and safety.

COTTON COMMUNITIES



There are up to 1,500 cotton farms across 150 regional communities.



The cotton industry employs around 12,500 people in non-drought years.

Source: 2019 Australian Cotton Sustainability Report



During the growing season, each farm provides employment for 9.6 people.

Source: 2018 CRDC Grower Survey



90% of cotton growers are involved in at least one community based activity, with 6 in 10 involved in some way on a monthly basis.

Source: 2019 CRDC Grower Survey

OUR PEOPLE



Cotton growers have a high level of educational attainment with nearly half of cotton farmers and ginners holding post-school qualifications.

Source: 2019 Australian Cotton Sustainability Report



23% of cotton growers are female.

Source: ABS Census data 2016



The number of cotton growers with a qualification of diploma level or above was 30% in 2016.

Source: ABS Census Data 2016



The proportion of women working in key industry organisations is 60%.

RESILIENT FARMERS



Cotton growers must continually innovate and adapt in the context of a global economy, technological advances and a more variable climate.



The industry invests in the adaptability of its people to mobilise resources, manage risk and uncertainty, improve their skills in planning, learning and reorganising, and practice financial and emotional flexibility in the face of change.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION



Cotton represents 30-60% of the gross value of total agricultural production in regions where it is grown.
Source: CRDC Designing a Future for Australian Cotton 2014

In the five years to 2018 average profitability of growing irrigated cotton grew by 76% due to high prices and yields and favourable exchange rates.
Source: 2019 Australian Cotton Sustainability Report



The average annual gross value of seed and lint production between 2014-2019 was \$1.8 billion.
Source: 2019 Australian Cotton Sustainability Report



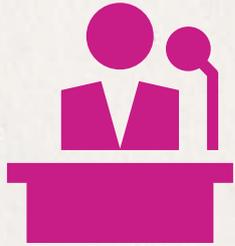
Cotton growers contribute to the economic viability of their communities and reported spending 93% of their business expenses in the local area and/or nearest regional centre.
Source: 2019 CRDC Grower Survey

Value (\$/bale):
2018 - \$541/bale
Cost of production:
\$299/bale

Source: Boyce Australian Cotton Comparative Analysis 2018

SOCIAL CAPITAL

The Australian Cotton Conference is one of the largest conferences of any agricultural industry with almost 2,500 delegates attending in 2018.



Of the Australian cotton growers surveyed by CRDC in 2019:

- 74% regularly attended local events**
- 71% made regular donations or sponsored local charities or activities**
- 65% were involved in a local community group**
- 52% were actively involved in local sport**
- 36% were actively involved in local schools**

MAJOR COTTON PRODUCING REGIONS

QUEENSLAND

- Clermont
- Emerald
- Biloela
- Theodore

NEW SOUTH WALES

- Dalby
- St George
- Toowoomba
- Cecil Plains
- Dirranbandi
- Goondiwindi
- Bourke
- Walgett
- Mungindi
- Moree
- Wee Waa
- Narrabri
- Boggabri
- Gunnedah
- Warren
- Trangie
- Narromine

VICTORIA

- Hillston
- Condobolin
- Hay
- Griffith
- Jerilderie
- Narrandera
- SYDNEY
- CANBERRA
- MELBOURNE

THE AVERAGE AUSTRALIAN COTTON FARMER



Has a business owned by an Australian family. 90% of Australia's cotton farms are family-owned



Spends 93% of their business expenditure in their local community or nearest regional centre
Source: 2019 CRDC Grower Survey



Is almost certainly participating in the industry's myBMP (best management practices) sustainability program (80%)



Is heavily involved in their communities, attending local events, making donations and supporting local organisations and sporting clubs



Is more likely to be male, although 23% identified as female farmers in the 2016 Census



Is likely to come from one or more generations of family farmers



Lives in a rural or regional community

-50-

Is below the age of 50



Employs 9.6 people
Source: 2018 CRDC Grower Survey

THE AUSTRALIAN COTTON WORKFORCE

There are up to 1,500 cotton farms across more than 150 communities in NSW, Queensland, Victoria and commercial trials in Far North Queensland, the Ord in WA and the NT. Although relatively small in comparison to other primary industries in Australia, cotton reaches across a range of disciplines and employs thousands of people both directly and indirectly. People are the cotton industry's most valuable asset and they are employed as growers, agronomists, rural suppliers, ginners, shippers and in the sectors of research, policy, technology, advocacy, supply chain, communications and marketing.

Cotton farms are among the leading employers in most places where it is grown, however it is difficult to estimate the exact number of people employed by the industry. This is because most farms are mixed farming systems involving other crops and livestock. Cotton Australia estimates the number of people employed by the cotton industry in a non-drought year is around 12,500 people not including those employed in agronomy, rural supplies or inputs.

Cotton is a high-input annual crop for products and services, and generates many permanent and casual jobs. It is also a knowledge-intensive industry, so there are a high number of service businesses in cotton regions. Employment includes on-farm jobs such as irrigating and machinery operation, fertiliser, fuel and chemical sales, aerial and ground spraying services, machinery and spare parts sales and service, engineering services, transport companies, oil seed crushers, cotton gins, marketers, agronomists and scientists.

Nearly all farms also use contractors for tasks such as picking, spray application, and round bale transport after picking.

Australian cotton industry organisations work together on programs to attract and retain skilled and unskilled people, develop leadership talent and encourage the younger generation to become active and engaged participants.

According to CRDC's 2017 Grower Survey, the breakdown of employees was as follows:



SAFETY A PRIORITY

The Australian cotton industry is very serious about the wellbeing and safety of its workforce. In the period 2014 - 2019 the number of serious on farm injuries decreased by 13%, although the number of deaths tragically slightly increased. Further investment in workplace health and safety, training and systems are being made to improve in this area. The cotton industry's on-farm cotton certification standard, myBMP (Best Management Practices) includes 33 standards specifically related to workplace health and safety in 2020.





A SKILLED WORKFORCE

Skilled and capable people are one of the Australian cotton industry's keys to success. The Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) and Cotton Australia make major annual investments in training, education, scholarships and professional development in order to attract and retain a skilled workforce. Key to this success is a culture of information sharing within the industry. In the 2017 CRDC Grower Survey, growers reported a strong willingness to share information both locally and with other growers across Australia, and 80% indicated they are members of a local Cotton Grower Association.

The same survey found 61% of growers or their staff attended accredited training in the past 12 months. Around six in 10 of those were confident to report they had seen an impact on their efficiency and effectiveness as a result of the training.

Establishing a Cotton Industry Workforce Strategy led to the creation of AgSkilled, an industry-led vocational training partnership between the NSW Government, and the grains and cotton industries. To date 3,000 grains and cotton growers have participated in 700 training courses across NSW including cotton pest management, soil health, precision agronomy and workplace health and safety.

Cotton Australia works to secure funded and low-cost accredited and non-accredited training opportunities for cotton farmers and other industry personnel, in particular in the areas of:

- > Business
- > Safety
- > Production
- > Technology

61% of growers or their staff attended accredited training in the past 12 months. Around six in 10 of those were confident to report they had seen an impact on their efficiency and effectiveness as a result of the training.

Source: 2017 CRDC Grower Survey

WOMEN IN COTTON

While most cotton farmers are traditionally male, there is a substantial number of female farmers running their own cotton farming enterprises in Australia and, more often than not, women form an integral part of the family farming team. According to ABS 2016 Census data, 23 per cent of cotton growers are female. However, this figure does not accurately represent the true engagement of women in cotton growing, as the Census only includes people who report their primary occupation as cotton growing.

The cotton industry has actively encouraged women to participate at all levels of the industry.

There are high proportions of women in industry roles such as research, extension, agronomy and marketing. Across the industry bodies of Cotton Australia, CRDC and CottonInfo, approximately 60 per cent of employees are women.

Research shows 88 per cent of women in an industry role and 86 per cent of women on cotton farms have a post-school qualification.



Macquarie Valley cotton grower Sue McCutcheon is a Cotton Australia Director - pictured here visiting a factory in China making 100% Australian cotton garments.

WINCOTT

Wincott (Women in Cotton) was established in 2000 to help develop knowledge, opportunities and learning for women involved in any aspect of the Australian cotton industry. Wincott is a group of volunteers geographically spread across Australia's cotton-growing regions who are passionate about the industry. They assist other women to achieve personal growth, develop business skills, have influence as community members and support the environment.

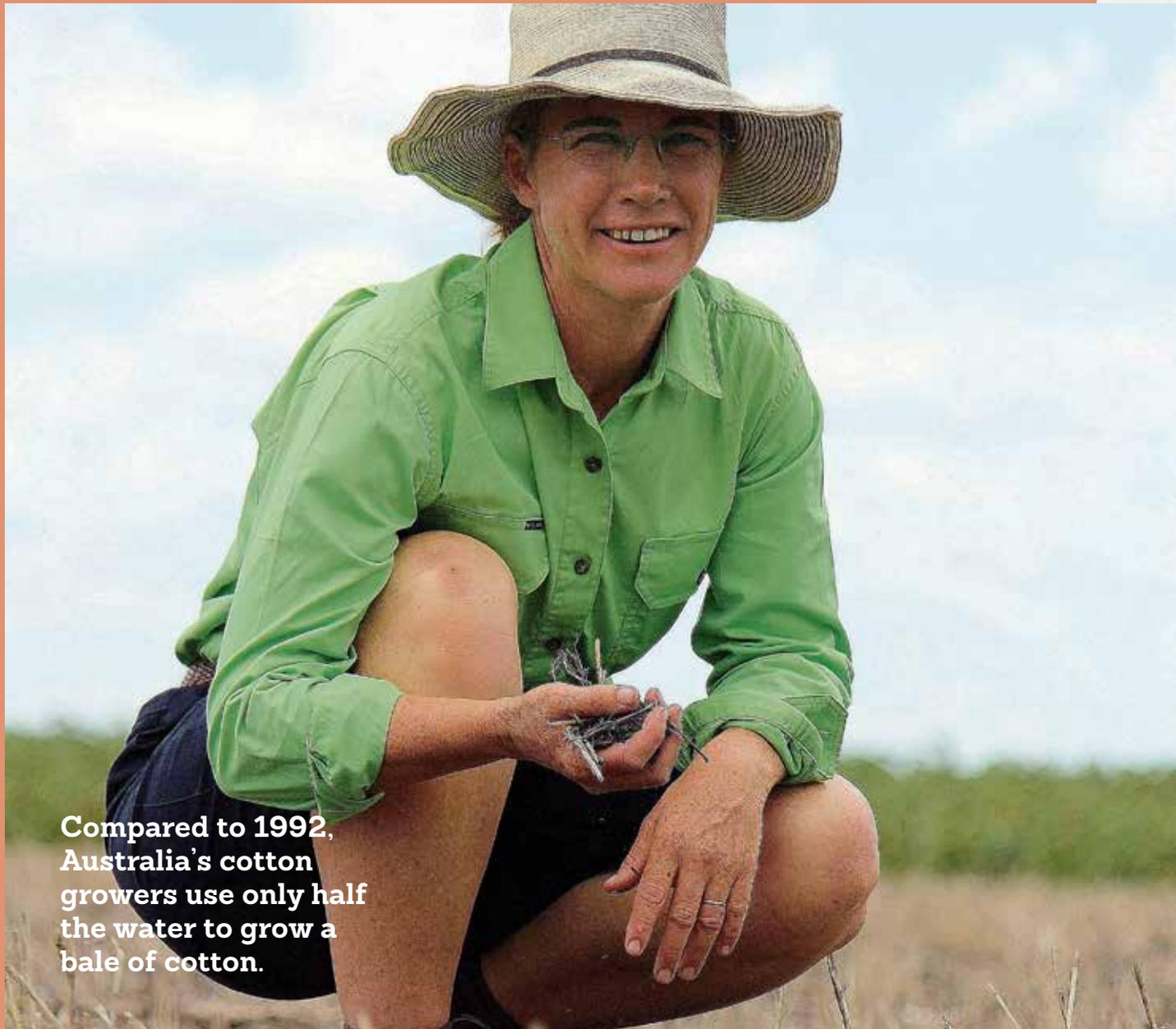
From small beginnings focused primarily on cotton farmers, Wincott has grown and expanded to provide professional and personal development for all women living in rural communities.



CASE STUDY: JANELLE MONTGOMERY

Australian-grown cotton is considered to be some of the world's most water efficient. Large amounts of research, the practice of planting optimal varieties, implementation of technology and new on-farm practices have resulted in a 48% decrease in the water required to grow a bale of cotton compared to 1992. Researcher Janelle Montgomery has been at the forefront of these developments, championing water use efficiency and improving the awareness and understanding of growers, researchers and consultants.

Based in Moree, New South Wales, Janelle's involvement in the industry spans over 20 years in a number of roles. As a Research Fellow with UNE, she led a water quality, soil salinity and birdlife study on 16 farms of the Gwydir Valley, in which 42,000 birds from 45 species were observed, indicating the abundance of wildlife on cotton farms.



**Compared to 1992,
Australia's cotton
growers use only half
the water to grow a
bale of cotton.**





DIVERSITY PLEDGE

In May 2018, Cotton Australia joined with 11 leading government, corporate and farm representative bodies pledging to enact change that will see more women in leadership roles within their organisations. The pledges are part of the *Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program*, led by National Farmers' Federation President Fiona Simson.

The practical steps Cotton Australia has committed to take range from setting gender targets, developing gender equality and inclusion policies and providing more flexible working conditions for men and women.

As part of their involvement in the *Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program*, Cotton Australia has committed to continually measure progress towards increased gender diversity.



31 May 2018

PLEDGE TO MAKE MEANINGFUL CHANGE TOWARDS GENDER DIVERSITY

Women play a vital role in the operation and management of Australia's cotton farms.

However, Cotton Australia acknowledges more work needs to be done to ensure women have a voice in leadership forums that influence our industry.

To this end, today, we make a commitment to work towards achieving meaningful change towards greater gender diversity within the leadership of our organisation.

This includes at a Board and General Meeting level.

We are proud, that within our staff team, women and men are represented equally. We commit to putting processes in place to ensure this balance continues.

Practically, at a Board and General Meeting level, we pledge to:

- Actively assess our gender diversity when recruiting for new positions.
- Provide leadership pathways for the female representatives within our membership.
- Seek advice and guidance, at a Board level, on strategies to achieve increased gender diversity.
- Explore the development of a Gender Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Cotton Australia is proud to be a founding partner of the *Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program* and its vision to achieve transformational change in the representation of women in leadership position within Australian agriculture.

Mr Adam Kay
Chief Executive Officer

Above: Cotton Australia's Diversity Pledge



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

The Australian cotton industry has been contributing to rural and regional Australia since it began in the 1960s and continues to invest in its people and communities. It is a profitable and innovative industry with a relatively young, dynamic demographic. Cotton employs approximately 12,500 people across 150 communities and 60% of positions in industry organisations are filled by women. A dynamic, profitable and innovative cotton industry makes an important contribution to the wellbeing and resilience of communities where it is grown.

Each year, Australia's Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) conducts an annual survey of the nation's cotton growers to gather information about farming practices and their views on a range of topics.

A number of positive themes emerged from the 2019 survey, with the overwhelming majority of respondents – 80% – feeling confident about the future of the industry. While this percentage is down from the 2018 survey (largely due to the impact of drought), this strong level of optimism is consistent across all geographies and all farm sizes.

The optimism of cotton growers is driven by the strongly held view that the industry is innovative, and that it continually challenges the way business is done to achieve better outcomes. The sense of a 'cotton community' was often cited as key driver for the industry's optimism.

At a glance

Cotton represents 30-60% of the gross value of total agricultural production in regions where it is grown. (Source: CRDC Designing a Future for Australian cotton 2014)

\$1.8 billion was the average annual average gross value of cotton lint and seed production 2014–2019.

In 2018 the average value of a bale of cotton was \$541, with the cost of production \$299 per bale. (Source: Boyce Australian Cotton Comparative Analysis 2018)

Australia's cotton growers increased profitability by 76% between 2015–2019. (Source: 2019 Australian Cotton Sustainability Report)

Cotton growers support regional communities, spending 93% of business expenses in their local community or closest regional centre. (Source: 2019 CRDC Grower Survey)

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DROUGHT STRIKES?



Like all agricultural industries, the size of the cotton crop is dependent on water availability. The overall production of cotton each year rises and falls according to climatic conditions. In dry years, cotton growers scale down the area planted to cotton to accommodate the reduction in their water allocations. In wetter years, growers are able to take advantage of a plentiful supply of water to plant more cotton. This has a substantial impact on the value of the cotton crop in a given year.

For example, in 2009-10, the final year of the Millennium drought, the gross value of Australian cotton production (both lint and seed) fell to \$876.1 million. Two years later in 2010-11, when rainfall and water allocations had returned to healthy levels, this jumped to \$2.58 billion.

When cotton crops contract during times of drought, this has an adverse flow-on effect in regional communities. There are fewer full and part-time jobs available and less money is spent locally.

Due to ongoing drought conditions the 2019-20 cotton crop was the smallest in 40 years.

Cotton communities suffer from the flow-on effects of drought. During the 2007 Millennium drought in Wee Waa, NSW:

-  Gross turnover of small businesses fell by 52% from 2001 levels.
-  Permanent staff numbers fell 60% between 2004 and 2007.
-  Casual employment fell 40%.
-  Of the terminated employees – 66% had left the region.
-  Other impacts: falling school numbers, less business donations, doubling of people accessing health services.

For further information on cotton's use of water and water use efficiency, please visit www.cottonaustralia.com.au

HELPING OTHER COTTON PRODUCING COUNTRIES – THE BETTER COTTON PAKISTAN PROJECT

The Australian cotton industry's social impact reached beyond our shores in 2017 when Australian growers participated in a Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) project to deliver vital environmental training to improve production practices in Pakistan. The project was a partnership between the Australian Government, Cotton Australia and the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), a global organisation working towards making Better Cotton a sustainable mainstream commodity.

The \$500,000 aid initiative was delivered as part of the Australian Government's Business Partnerships Platform, with funds matched by global brands, then invested in training for Pakistan's cotton farmers.

Once trained and a licence issued, these farmers can sell their fibre as Better Cotton into the world market, with demand for BCI cotton growing thanks to the commitments of its brand members.

Australia's cotton growers apply world-leading best practices, skills and experience to their farms in Australia, and Cotton Australia shared this information with fellow cotton producers in Pakistan in a bid to improve the overall standards of global cotton production and increase the world's sustainable cotton supply.

BCI accelerates the adoption of better crop production practices to achieve measurable positive change around issues such as pesticides, water and child labour, while improving the social and economic benefits for cotton farmers.

This project was the first time a government outside Europe had contributed to BCI, and is a great example of a global partnership to help meet a complex challenge, with benefits for all involved.

Key facts

BCI's target is for 5 million farmers to be producing Better Cotton by 2020, equivalent to 30% of the world's cotton production.

Cotton Australia is a member of BCI, with Australian farmers leading the world in sustainable cotton production.

More than 25 million tonnes of cotton is produced every year in more than 80 countries, supporting approximately 250 million people's livelihoods in the production stages alone.



Photo courtesy: Asim Hafeez, WWF UK

Australia's cotton growers shared their skills and experience with fellow cotton producers in Pakistan in a bid to improve the overall standards of global cotton production and increase the world's sustainable cotton supply.

SOCIAL IMPACT PROJECTS IN COTTON REGIONS





Fundraising at the Australian Cotton Conference



OUR COMMUNITIES

TARPS FOR VANUATU

When Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu in 2015, it was the worst natural disaster in the island's history. In response, Southern Queensland cotton growers launched a campaign to collect tarpaulins to provide short-term shelter options for Vanuatu's residents.

With many growers having moved to round bales, there were hundreds of unused tarps around the region. Cotton Australia Regional Manager Mary O'Brien worked with local resellers to collect the tarps, which were transported to Brisbane then shipped to Vanuatu, all free of charge.

Thanks to the donors, and the companies and individuals who assisted with logistics, more than 1600 tarps were delivered to Vanuatu to help in its recovery efforts. The tarps were used for homes, school rooms and other essential structures.



GRASSROOTS GRANTS

Since the Grassroots Grants program started in 2011, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) has invested more than \$660,000 in 77 projects throughout Australia's cotton-growing regions. The program encourages Cotton Grower Associations (CGAs) to apply for funding to support capacity building programs of up to \$10,000. The grants help fund projects aimed at increasing grower engagement in the industry, solving specific regional issues and improving skills, knowledge base and networks.

AUSSIE COTTON FARMERS GROWING COMMUNITIES

The Aussie Cotton Farmers Grow Communities (ACFGC) grants program is sponsored by the Monsanto Fund, a philanthropic arm of Bayer Crop Science in partnership with the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR). Each year it supports local communities in 14 cotton-growing regions with 30 grants of \$5000 each. Cotton growers have the opportunity to nominate not-for-profit groups and projects in their communities that most need support. Since the program started in 2013, \$750,000 has been distributed to more than 100 community groups. Recipients have included early childhood centres, kindergartens, schools, meals on wheels, neighbourhood houses, agricultural societies, community halls and other local organisations.

CASE STUDIES

NATIVE FISH RELEASE

Twenty years ago, the Macquarie Cotton Growers' Association, with the Narromine and Warren Shire Councils and NSW DPI Fisheries, began the annual release of native fish fingerlings (baby fish) into the Macquarie River to help build the population of native fish. Now every year, around 20,000 Murray Cod and Golden Perch fingerlings are released in three locations along the river. The fun and educational program has seen a substantial improvement in native fish numbers, and enlists young people to scout the rivers in canoes and spread the fingerlings around to give them the best chance of survival. The Macquarie CGA has restocked more than 200,000 native fish, helping the natural environment in the region and teaching young people – including members of the Warren Youth Foundation (see page 28) – the importance of caring for the river systems.



Cotton Info Regional Extension Officer Amanda Thomas, Cotton Australia Regional Manager Julie Wise and Shire Engineer Dirk McCloskey with some local children preparing to release some native fingerlings.



Each year, local kids get involved in the release of native fish fingerlings into the Macquarie River, with the support of the Macquarie Cotton Growers' Association.

COLEAMBALLY COMMUNITY FARM

Back in the early 1990s, a group of determined and dedicated Coleambally locals acquired land and an allocation of water for the purpose of a community farm. The Coleambally Lions Club's vision was for a place to give all community groups within the council area the opportunity to grow crops for fundraising purposes. Each year many individuals and businesses volunteer their expertise, time, machinery, merchandise and services to produce crops. Since 1996-97, the farm has provided a financial return to the community through the proceeds of cropping in excess of \$2 million, aiding the local service clubs, schools and sporting clubs. The farm also facilitates funds flowing back into the community through payments to contractors and the purchase of farm inputs.



Photo courtesy: Cara Jeffrey ABC

Chris Hardy inspects the cotton crop that will help keep the Coleambally Community Club afloat.



Larry Walsh and his family donated two of their cotton pickers to strip the cotton crops.

CASE STUDIES

AUSTRALIAN COTTON DONATES TO WILDLIFE RESCUE ORGANISATION WIRES

On behalf of the Australian cotton industry, Cotton Australia was proud to donate hundreds of premium Australian cotton towels to wildlife rescue organisation WIRES, to support their work in bushfire-affected areas of NSW during January 2020. The towels were an invaluable resource for caring for the injured wildlife and greatly appreciated by the volunteers. Towels were sent to the bushfire-affected Southern Highlands and Hawkesbury areas in NSW.

“Thank you for thinking of our beautiful wildlife, it is very much appreciated. I’m juggling the in-care wildlife, rescues coming in, and helping my mother since she lost her home in fires on New Years Eve. Thank you for caring and supporting.” **WIRES volunteer**



CHARITY FUN DAY

Every year the Upper Namoi Cotton Growers’ Association holds a Charity Fun Day, allowing members to spend time together, with funds raised donated to important community causes. Recipients have included the Westpac Rescue Helicopter, Arts Gunnedah, Meals on Wheels and Gunnedah Special Services. The group also donates prizes to all local schools for their annual presentation days, often also sending a member to present the prizes. Junior sports clubs also benefit, with donations of uniforms and prizes.



CHARITIES

AUSTRALIAN COTTON CONFERENCE

In response to the growing popularity of the Australian Cotton Conference and a desire to give back to the community, the industry set a goal to raise \$30,000 for Ozharvest, its nominated charity for the 2018 event. OzHarvest rescues excess food to nourish people in need across Australia. Previously, delegates raised \$15,000 for the McGrath Foundation (2014) and \$23,000 donation for the Royal Flying Doctor Service (2016). Due to the record number of delegates, the Conference was able to smash through its target, raising in excess of \$50,000.



OzHarvest Queensland State Manager Amy Cobb was on hand at the 2018 Australian Cotton Conference to collect the cheque for \$50,000.

MCGRATH FOUNDATION – PINK BALES

Tapex Agri is the major supplier of round module bale wraps in Australia. They saw an opportunity – in partnership with John Deere – to support the McGrath Foundation through the production of pink round bale wraps, with 50c from the sale of each module donated to the Foundation. McGrath Breast Care Nurses provide physical, psychological and emotional support to breast cancer patients and their families and the Foundation has 117 breast care nurses working in regional centres across Australia. Through their crop packaging sales, Tapex Agri has to date donated more than \$160,000 to the McGrath Foundation.



Pink module bales in a paddock in Emerald, central Queensland. Each module represents a 50c donation to the McGrath Foundation. To date, more than \$160,000 has been donated.

EMPLOYMENT

CLONTARF FOUNDATION

Primary producers often struggle to find employees willing to work in regional Australia, and young indigenous Australians sometimes struggle to find meaningful employment. Recognising a potential solution, Cotton Australia has partnered with the Clontarf Foundation to help provide employment opportunities within the cotton industry for young indigenous men. Since opening its first Academy for 25 boys in 2000 the Clontarf Foundation has grown to cater for more than 5,600 boys in 96 schools across Australia. Cotton Australia provides support in the form of a financial contribution and, more importantly, pathways into employment. By facilitating introductions to growers looking for reliable and hardworking employees, Cotton Australia has helped Clontarf place a small number of graduates into careers within the cotton industry, and hopes to do more in future.



Clontarf graduate Tyson Collins has recently commenced working on Wesley Back's property, 'Condamine Park', west of Dalby. The experience has been a positive one for both men, and Wesley has commented on how impressed he is with Tyson's work ethic.

WARREN YOUTH FOUNDATION

When Tony McAlary retired from cotton farming in 2014, he saw an opportunity to create pathways into work for the young unemployed people in his town. He established the Warren Youth Foundation, using his own money as seed funding. The Foundation has since received assistance from Council and State Government, and private sector grants. Via sports and work-related projects, Tony aims to improve his young members' reliability and employability. Warren Youth Foundation members undertake a range of paid jobs around the town such as painting, labouring and tree planting. They are teamed with a mentor/supervisor who oversee the jobs, explain the requirements of employers and counsel them on good work habits. Tony says that in addition to employment, a large part of the program's success lies in the improved relationships that are evident between young people and others in the town.

ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

In the early 1990s, cotton farmer Dick Estens saw that Aboriginal people were being excluded from the flourishing local economy in Moree due to racism and unemployment. He enlisted the support of the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers' Association and local Aboriginal elders to encourage the Federal Government to support Aboriginal employment in the local cotton industry. With a founding grant of \$100,000, the Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES) opened its doors in February 1997. Within a year, the AES was making a positive impact, and mainstream media were paying attention. By the early 2000s, corporate Australia began working with the AES to create employment opportunities for Aboriginal school leavers, such as student-based banking traineeships. The Gwydir Valley CGA contributed \$30,000 per year for the first 10 years of the organisation's operation.

From a small local employment project in Moree with the support of the local cotton community, the AES has grown to become a leader in indigenous employment in Australia, having assisted more than 20,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people transition into work.

"The key to this strategy was simple – it was about building self-esteem in the Aboriginal community. People had been disenfranchised and disempowered in this for too long – AES was here to make an impact," says founder Dick Estens.

Dick Estens was awarded the Human Rights Medal in 2004 for his work and the current AES CEO Kristy Masella has been named one of Australia's Top 100 Most Influential Women by the Australian Financial Review and Westpac.

Former Wee Waa High School student Montana Jones completed Year 12 and along with it a two-year school-based traineeship, a Certificate II in Agriculture. It is a dream come true for this indigenous student, who has been part of a CRDC and Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES) school-based traineeship program. It's seen her realise her potential through working over the past two years with the Kahl family's Merced Farming at 'Glencoe' near Wee Waa in North West NSW.



From left: Natalie Tighe of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy with Year 12 graduate Montana Jones, cotton grower Daniel Kahl and CRDC's Sally Knight.

RURAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

WINCOTT WORKSHOPS

Wincott runs a number of initiatives designed to address mental health in rural communities. These include workshops on suicide prevention and capacity-building that allow women to identify their strengths and build communication skills. Informally, Wincott's get-togethers, supported by Cotton Australia, are an opportunity for women to get off the farm and network with other women. Recognising the importance of resilient and healthy communities, they are open to all rural women in cotton-growing valleys, not just those working in the cotton industry.

AWARD WINNING COTTON GROWERS, STUART AND MAXINE ARMITAGE

When floods hit Queensland's cotton-growing regions in 2010, Cecil Plains growers Stuart and Maxine Armitage knew that many in their communities would need access to support services. They organised a mental health night at Cecil Plains with a psychologist and a GP, followed by a Relax and Revive night at Warra hosted by bush poet Murray Hartin. Both events were extremely well attended. Stuart and Maxine then partnered with Cotton Australia to arrange for financial counsellors to speak with every farmer on Cotton Australia's books. In subsequent years, and in his capacity as President of the Queensland Farmers Federation, Stuart continued to advocate for the mental health of growers in his communities. For their services to mental health, Stuart and Maxine were awarded the AgriRisk Innovative Grower of the Year Award.



Women working in cotton: Amy Billsborough and Hannah Stott.

ARE YOU BOGGED, MATE?

Following the suicide of a farmer on the Darling Downs in Queensland, cotton industry consultant Mary O'Brien was compelled to put pen to paper to dispel some of the pervasive myths about rural men and to call for more effective support. The resulting post, *Are you bogged, mate?* drew the analogy between the experience of depression and having been bogged, encouraging men who are feeling overwhelmed to set aside their hesitation and seek help. The article struck a chord with readers who shared it thousands of times. Such was the need identified by the article that Mary created a men's mental health foundation, *Are You Bogged Mate?* The Foundation helps by engaging directly with rural men, breaking down the stigma around mental health, connecting rural men to available resources and support, and advocacy.



Founder of Are You Bogged Mate, Mary O'Brien wins the 2020 National Women Working in Men's Health Award

SUPPORT FOR HEALTH IN THE GWYDIR VALLEY

For many years, the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers' Association allocated a \$5,000-per-year scholarship to help fund the final three years of a medical student's degree. The scholarship provided financial assistance and facilitated work experience placements for scholarship holders in rural regions. The intention was to assist with the training of doctors, introduce them to a rural centre and ultimately encourage medical graduates to practice within rural Australia. This scholarship was administered by the NSW Rural Doctor's Network (www.nswrdn.com.au). In 2016 it was merged with the Gwydir Valley cotton industry's Allied Health Scholarship, that had been running simultaneously to assist local health professionals finalise their studies or up-skill their qualifications.



Moree Cotton Grower Lee Estens (left) with with Allied Health Scholarship recipient Alexandra Downes

BARWON GROUP CWA / WALGETT COTTON GROWER ASSOCIATION MEDICAL GRANT

This grant, established 18 years ago, was designed to help students into medical and health-related degrees, such as medicine, nursing, dentistry and physiotherapy. Representatives from the cotton industry contribute funds to the grant and sit on the selection committee.

The grants are worth around \$15,000 per year and the money is split among recipients. The goal of the grant is to encourage recipients, on the completion of their studies, to consider practising their profession in a rural or remote area.

EDUCATION

FEDERATION FARM

In the late 1990s, NSW Government campaigned to remove some of the phosphorus in rivers that resulted from treated effluent releases. Narrabri Council saw an opportunity to turn some dryland country outside the town into a small irrigation farm, using treated waste water for irrigation. The Narrabri Education Trust – a group made up of cotton growers, community members and school representatives – tendered to operate the farm. The not-for-profit model they envisaged would grow commercial crops, but distribute the income among local schools. The Narrabri Education Trust was awarded the tender and Federation Farm harvested its first crop in 2000.

Farm Manager Gary Coulton came on board shortly after it commenced operations and has been with Federation Farm ever since. In addition to being an optimal solution for the problem of treated effluent in the Shire, the farm has been a commercial success. In its 18 years of operation it has delivered more than \$600,000 in funds to local schools after covering its costs. It has additional value as a curriculum resource for the students, and over the years Agriculture, Geography and Environmental Studies students have visited the farm to augment their studies, taking part in tree planting, field days and case studies.



Former Narrabri Community Education Trust chairman Mike Bange at a Federation Farm open day with St Francis Xavier's School students Will Ford, Jonty Fowler, Lachie Ford, Jack Smith and Tom Clarke.

WEE WAA HIGH SCHOOL ROBOTICS

The FIRST™ Robotics Competition brings tens of thousands of students from around the world together to solve complex global problems using robotics. When the Wee Waa 'Bush Bots' won the wildcard entry to the competition in 2018, they didn't know how they would raise the money to travel to Houston, Texas, where the tournament was taking place. The cotton-farming community immediately came together to raise the funds.

A local Wee Waa farmer donated \$10,000 to the high school's P&C-run fundraiser, while Namoi Cotton, Auscott and Cotton Seed Distributors, also contributed funds. Namoi Cotton's computer programmer James Tolson mentored the team during the summer holidays and after school and accompanied the team to Texas, along with four of the school's science staff. For the Bush Bot's supporters, encouraging young people in STEM-based subjects is a good investment in a high-tech industry such as cotton, where STEM skills are critical.



The Wee Waa 'Bush Bots' competed in the international FIRST™ Robotics Competition in Houston, Texas. Programmer James Tolson from Namoi Cotton worked with the team both before and during the tournament.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES EDUCATION FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA

Cotton Australia is a member of the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA), which engages students, teachers and the community about the importance of primary industries.

It showcases career opportunities available through primary industries and along the food and fibre supply chain. Cotton Australia's support allows PIEFA to promote food and fibre education, deliver professional development for teachers, develop agricultural curriculum and educational resources, influence government to increase the profile of agricultural education, and support teachers to include food and fibre content across the curriculum. PIEFA also sponsors and supports educational events in regional areas.

AUSCOTT SCHOLARSHIPS

Auscott, one of Australia's leading grower-processors of cotton, provides the Auscott Undergraduate Scholarship Program. Commenced in 1969, just six years after the company itself started in Australia, the program provides for three new undergraduate scholarships to final-year high school student each year – one in each of the company's three rural operating areas. Since its inception, more than 100 rural students have graduated from Australian universities or other higher education institutions as a result of an Auscott scholarship.

PETER CULLEN TRUST SCIENCE TO POLICY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Peter Cullen Trust's mission is to support leaders who are motivated, knowledgeable and skilled in bringing about positive change in Australia's water and catchment management. The Science to Policy leadership program is for those working in science, policy or the management of water whether river, rural or urban.

A cotton industry position is sponsored by Cotton Australia and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC).

CASE STUDIES



For his services to education, Stu Higgins was awarded the Queensland Primary Industries Achievement Award for media and communication.

GROW YOUR OWN ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

When it was suggested way back in 2003 that his cotton farming operations were damaging the environment, Jandowae farmer Stu Higgins decided education was the best response. Stu thought that if people could experience firsthand the decisions that farmers are faced with each season, they may develop a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of modern farming.

So, he came up with the idea of 'Grow Your Own' where he set aside two hectares of his farm operation for the general public to grow a crop of cotton for a season. ABC Radio National listeners were tasked with all the management decisions over the course of a cotton season. They soon learned that growing a successful crop was not as easy as they had imagined, as they faced the farmers' usual challenges of weeds, pests and a lack of water. Stu faithfully implemented the listeners' decisions and reported back regularly as to how the crop was growing.

By the end of the season, the listeners' crop yielded only half of what Stu had achieved in his own cropping program. They came to appreciate the balancing act a farmer performs each season, weighing input costs and risk to grow the highest-yielding crop possible, while looking after the environment in which they operate. For his services to education, Stu was awarded Queensland Primary Industries Achievement Award for media and communication. Proceeds from the sale of the bales produced by the listeners were donated to a number of rural charities.

MARCUS OLDHAM SCHOLARSHIPS

The Upper Namoi Cotton Growers' Association and Cotton Australia support an undergraduate at Marcus Oldham College in their first and third year of study, while the student spends their second year working in the Namoi Valley cotton industry. The program allows the Agriculture or Agribusiness student to support themselves in their study and the CGA benefits by providing a capable and interested student with the opportunity to develop a knowledge and love of cotton and the North West of NSW, with a view to a longer-term future in the industry.

EMERALD AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

For many years the Central Central Highlands Cotton Growers & Irrigators Association (CHCG&IA) and Cotton Australia together with Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges (QATC) provided scholarships to scholarships to students commencing study at Emerald Agricultural College, providing pathways for students into one of the many opportunities available in the cotton sector.

RYCOTT CAMPS

Annual Rotary Youth in Cotton (RYCOTT) camps give agricultural students from around NSW a hands-on insight into the cotton industry, visiting cotton gins, cotton farms and hearing from industry specialists.



Students attending a RYCOTT cotton camp.

LEADERSHIP

YOUNG FARMING CHAMPIONS

The Young Farming Champions (YFC) are identified youth ambassadors and future influencers working within the agriculture sector. The YFC program promotes positive images and perceptions of farming and engages in activities and innovative programs under the Art4Agriculture banner, such as The Archibull Prize, to get these messages across to wider audiences. The YFCs demonstrate passion for their industry, while providing real life examples to young people who may have never considered a career in agriculture. Because they are young they can relate to students and are adept at breaking down stereotypes of farming and agricultural careers.



CRDC Young Farming Champion Jess Lehmann



Young Farming Champion, Martin Murray



CRDC Young Farming Champion Nellie Evans

AUSTRALIAN RURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP) is a 15-month program that takes place across Australia and overseas, immersing rural, regional and remote participants in a series of unique experiences to develop their leadership capabilities. Cotton industry participants are supported by CRDC, Cotton Australia and Auscott Limited. The cotton industry has a long history with ARLP, both in the support of participants and in the many alumni who contribute to the industry.

NUFFIELD SCHOLARSHIPS

Nuffield Australia awards scholarships each year to primary producers in Australia. The objective is to increase practical farming knowledge and management skills and techniques generally. These scholarships give Australian farmers the opportunity to study farming practices in New Zealand, Europe, Asia and the Americas and those countries best suited to the scholar. They also promote a closer understanding between farmers in the countries visited. Each year, Cotton Australia and CRDC support scholars seeking to research innovative ways to improve the efficiency and productivity of the cotton industry. Upon returning to Australia, scholars take what they have learned and share the knowledge and understanding they have gained among their fellow farmers and others.



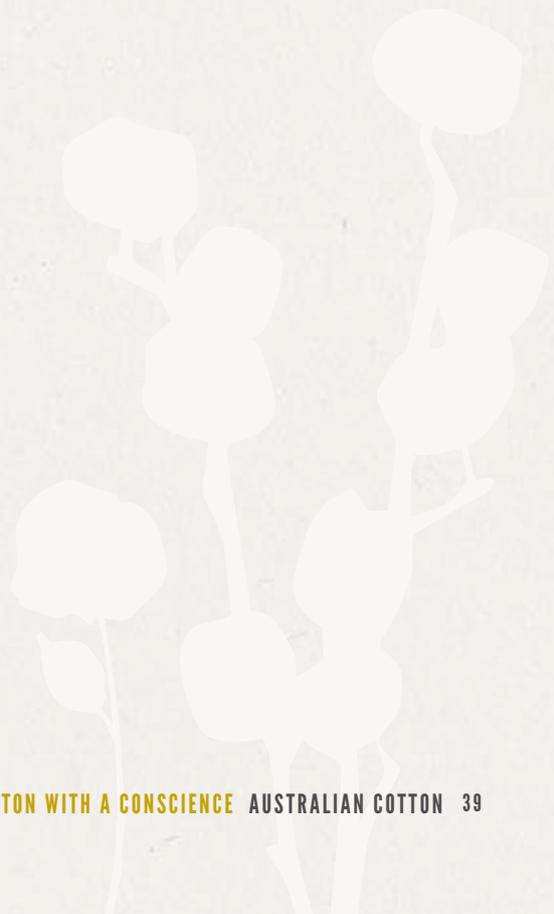


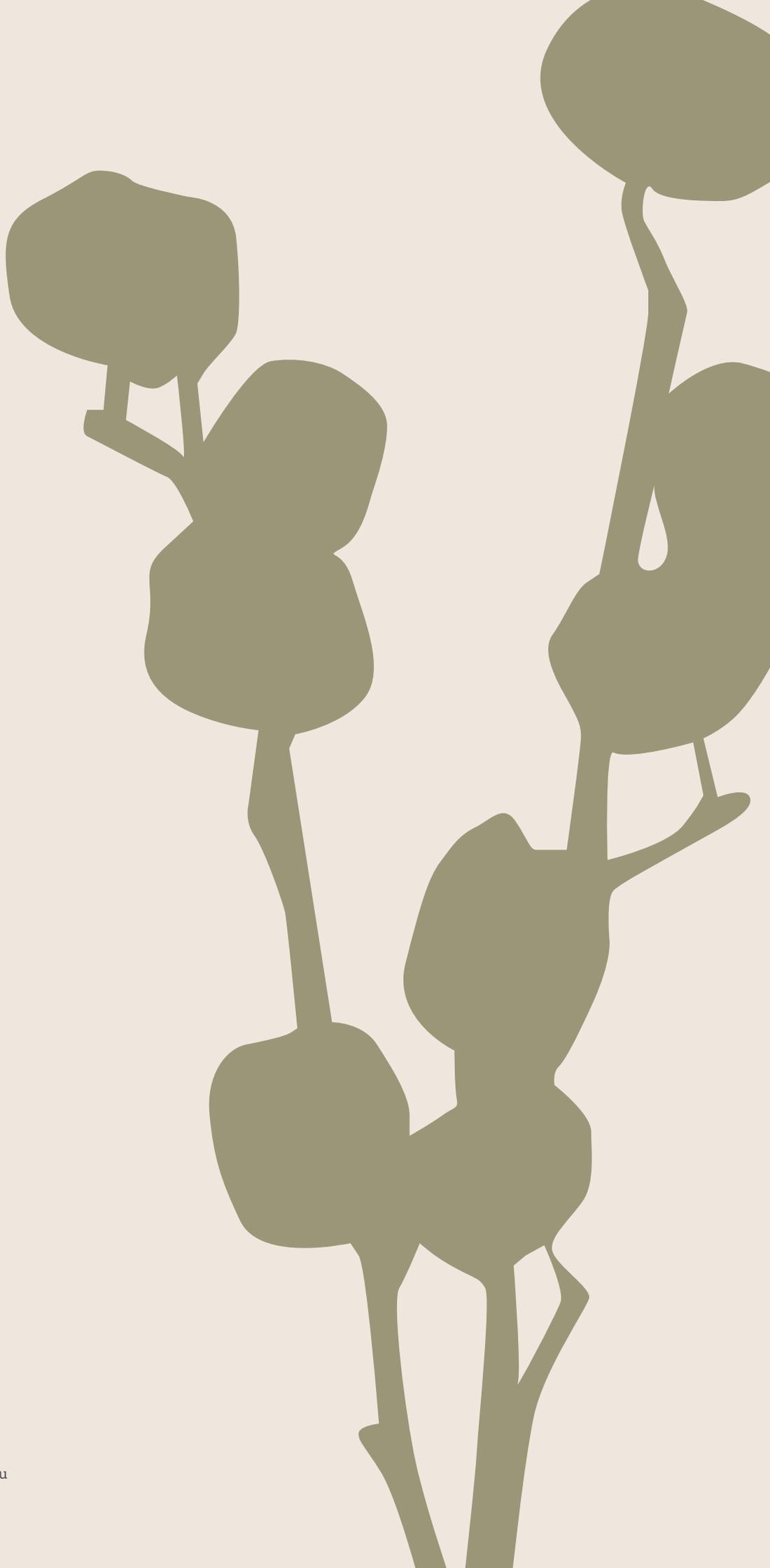
THE FUTURE: SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY TARGETS

Our vision is for Australia to be a global leader in sustainable cotton production. As the first agricultural industry in Australia to benchmark its environmental performance, the cotton industry has a long and positive history of working to be more sustainable.

Sustainability encompasses more than just environmental performance. The Australian cotton industry seeks to provide consumers and other stakeholders with evidence of our sustainability practices, and the confidence that the natural fibre they are buying has been produced in a way that maximises positive impacts. This includes looking after the people who work to produce our cotton crops. We aim for inclusive and safe workplaces with highly skilled and satisfied business owners and employees. As an industry, we want to continue investing in the education and professional development of our people. And we support our people to continue investing in their local communities, building capacity and social capital, and ensuring the ongoing prosperity of those communities in which they operate.

The industry is developing a set of sustainability targets, including for a number of social indicators that will focus investment and attention in the coming years.





AUSTRALIAN
COTTON

Cotton Australia
Ph (02) 9669 5222
Email: talktous@cotton.org.au
www.cottonaustralia.com.au

Supply Chain Enquiries
Email: cotton2market@cotton.org.au
www.australiancotton.com.au