

# Cotton Australia Report

With Phillip Russell, CEO

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## Crunch Time for Water

The water reform process in NSW and Queensland has reached a critical time, particularly in NSW where the Water Management Plans are about to be released for a 40 day public consultation process.

This period will be a critical time for local water user groups and cotton growers to draft their responses. Cotton Australia is preparing to monitor and support local irrigators' positions, as well as put an overarching case to the state government. Some of the issues to be raised will include the lack of socio-economic data, the flawed process and the lack of more clearly defined water property rights.

Timing is also crucial at the federal level, with the next round of Council of Australian Government (CoAG) meetings to discuss water property rights scheduled for the middle of the year.

This is where all of the state governments come together to determine how federal/state agreements are to be implemented at state level.

Cotton Australia has been working very hard behind the scenes at both state and federal government and agency levels to secure the best deal for cotton growers. At the centre of the lobbying effort is the attempt to have a property right better defined by governments.

An encouraging sign came about at the recent Outlook Conference in Canberra, with a statement by Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson that in part said, "We will be holding discussions with the states about the security of the (water) rights. The National Competition



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Council has warned that the water rights system is fragmented.

“There are still too many different types of water property rights within the Murray-Darling basin, which restricts trading and prevents farm enterprises from making the best use of their assets.

“We believe that a national approach to water property rights is needed, particularly in the Murray-Darling basin, and will be proposing that the basic features of the rights should be standardised.”

These comments follow Cotton Australia’s intense lobbying in the lead up to the last federal election where a commitment to address property rights and compensation was extracted from the Coalition.

These breakthroughs have been achieved through Cotton Australia's interaction with the State Irrigators’ Councils and the National Farmers Federation, where Cotton Australia has been a driving force in the debate.

Cotton Australia is doing everything it can to fight for asset security at all levels, is driving the debate at state and federal level and is supporting local water user groups along the way. With the Federal Government now talking our language, now is a critical time for getting real commitments on asset security.

## Cotton Australia Scholarship Winners

Cotton Australia Chairman Christine Campbell has announced the winners of the inaugural Cotton Australia scholarships for Dalby and Emerald Agricultural Colleges.

Speaking just before the Four on the Floor event at Dalby Cotton Week, Christine announced that Ian Balsillie from Toowoomba and Daniel Robinson from Mount Mee were the winners of the \$5000 scholarships, to be taken over two years.

“Encouraging skilled and motivated young people is a necessity if the cotton industry is to prosper into the future,” Christine said.

“Dalby and Emerald Agricultural Colleges offer the only full time hands-on cotton production courses available in Australia so they were the obvious choices for these scholarships.

“Cotton Australia is very excited to be welcoming two extremely talented young people into the cotton industry and wish them all the best for their studies over the next two years,” she said.

Students applied in writing and were judged by a panel made up of representatives from Cotton Australia, the Agricultural Colleges and a local cotton grower.

The scholarships are for one student studying cotton production in the Diploma or Certificate IV at each college to the value of \$5000 (\$2500 for each year of study).

The announcement was attended by representatives of the Darling Downs Cotton Growers Association, Cotton Australia staff, and students and staff from the Dalby and Emerald Agricultural Colleges.

### The winners

- Daniel Robinson, an 18 year old student at Emerald Agricultural College. Daniel has worked as a farm hand on many properties since 1999, and has experience with dairy, beef cattle and horticulture.
- Ian Balsillie, an 18 year old from Toowoomba, attends Dalby Agricultural College. Ian has a range of work experience, from mustering cattle, machinery operation, irrigation, fencing, weed control and the manufacture of large-scale spray coupes.