

# An atmospheric Cotton Trade Show

By Brian O'Connell

The weather was perfect, picking was all over and the majority of cotton irrigators (those who had water) had grown record yields. It all made for a great relaxed atmosphere at the eighth National Australian Cotton Trade Show at the end of May.

The general comment was that the crowd was down slightly, and this was true. While the number of grower tickets collected at the gate was actually more than the previous year, this was outweighed by fewer 'outside' visitors.

From an organiser's point of view, that's not a bad thing, because the target audience are the growers, consultants, farm staff and their families — the ones with the tickets. But some of the statistics are a bit hard to understand.

Why, for instance, would the number of growers from the Macquarie valley more than double from the previous year given the serious water shortages in that region? Perhaps they know something about the weather this winter that the rest of us don't.

Among the many highlights of the Trade Show this year was the presence of National Australia Bank CEO John Stewart. This was a terrific vote of confidence by the NAB in the cotton industry and coincided with the renewal of the NAB naming rights sponsorship of the Trade Show for another three years.



The Case Cotton Club provided a great networking opportunity.

This year we set out to extend the information delivery aspects of the event. The Trade Show provided a great forum for researchers and extension people to present the latest information in their various fields — much of which relates to, and often underpins, the commercial products and services offered by exhibitors.

*Innovation in irrigation* and *Spray drift management* are both significant industry issues and growers were keen to see them addressed in industry forums and workshops. On both days there were

capacity crowds at the forums and each workshop attracted 70 to 80 very interested growers.

The irrigation focus actually started on the Tuesday before the Trade Show with an associated *Innovation in Irrigation* field day. This was organised by the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association and sponsored by the Natural Heritage Trust.

Some 150 growers were bussed out to 'Keytah', west of Moree. Manager Andrew Parkes is recognised as one of the leading innovators in all aspects of cotton production and 'Keytah' has become synonymous with efficient, high yielding cot-

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The Spray Drift Management workshops were a big hit.



The finalists in the 2005 Cotton Industry Awards were announced.

## ◀ 20...COTTON TRADE SHOW

ton farming with high levels of water use efficiency.

The Trade Show is well recognised as a great networking opportunity — this year was no exception. It drew over 1500 cottongrowers, their staff, and consultants from all cotton producing areas to meet with more than 1000 staff representing 230 cotton specific exhibitors.

And this year the networking was made

significantly more comfortable with the introduction of the Case Cotton Club Pavilion. Visitors met and talked in comfort in the Cotton Club lounge with coffee and bar service facilities. And when they got hungry there was the traditional — now in its second year — 'barra' and beef.

Each year the trade show organisers are faced with the task of maintaining the unique industry focus that underpins the success of this event.



The Ellis Equipment site was busy for two days.

If you have any ideas that you think will enhance the event, please feel free to tell us. If you have any reservations about any aspect of the event, please feel free to tell us. Why not just give us a call anyway and have a yarn about it.

The 2006 National Australian Cotton Trade Show will be held at the Moree TAFE Agricultural Centre site on Wednesday, May 24 and Thursday, May 25.

For more information, call Brian O'Connell (02 6778 3255) or David Dowling (07 46593555).



Drawing the Ultimate Fertilizers' prize.