

Producing the next crop of industry leaders

By Michael Beeston, Senior Grower Services Manager, Cotton Australia

Planning for the future is a key part of any business or industry. It is especially important in an agricultural industry such as ours where figures show younger growers are dwindling in numbers. We need to encourage these growers to step up and lead the industry.

For many years Cotton Australia has been looking to develop a leadership program for growers. In December 2006, Cotton Australia reached an agreement with the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to commence a project called Cotton Industry Leadership and Succession Planning Workshops. Cotton Australia secured a grant of \$40,000 to run leadership training and development workshops with the support of CRDC in 2007.

In consultation with the industry and wider community, the project steering committee is developing a program designed to equip growers with the leadership skills required to take the cotton industry into the future.



Mike Beeston.

Our industry is very fortunate to have some pretty bright people working in it. We are fortunate there is funding available to identify these people and offer them these interactive workshops where they can meet other equally capable cotton people.

The members of the project steering committee are:

- Chair, Mike Carberry — cotton grower from Narrabri and Board Member of Cotton Australia;
- Ben Stephens — cotton grower from Narrabri and Executive Member of ACGRA;
- Helen Dugdale — Program Manager for CRDC and Chair of Wincott;
- Greg Kauter — Executive Officer ACGRA;
- Richard Wright — cotton grower from Moree and member of the National Council of Young Farmers; and,
- Michael Beeston — Senior Grower Services Manager for Cotton Australia.

The "Cotton, Community and You" programs, which a decade ago greatly assisted our present industry leaders to assume leadership roles within the industry, have been remodelled to bring these skills to a new generation.

Cotton grower associations and other industry bodies will be asked to nominate industry representatives in each valley who have leadership potential and aspirations. It is hoped that the program will attract growers in the under-35 age bracket, as well as women in the cotton industry, but will by no means be restricted to these groups.

The steering committee will engage external program providers to develop a program best suited to the industry's needs.

More information about the workshops and the finalised program will be made available to industry. Any enquiries please phone Michael Beeston on 0408 707867.

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THE WORKSHOP PROGRAM...

There are a number of areas covered in the program, which will be finalised by our industry partners. Here is a list of possible topics to be covered in the workshops:

- Expectations — for yourself and the industry;
- Making positive impressions;
- Personality styles — why people do what they do;
- Conflict resolution;
- Communication styles;
- Negotiation skills;
- Goal setting;
- Networking skills;
- Leadership skills;
- The cotton story — structure of industry and resources;
- Crop production — topical issues and impacts;
- Action planning;
- Problem solving;
- Media skills;
- Mentoring; and,
- Succession planning.