

Finalists announced for 2007 Australian Cotton Industry Awards

The finalists of the 2007 Australian Cotton Industry Awards were announced at the National Australian Cotton Trade Show.

"It gives me great pleasure to announce such a strong field of finalists for this year's awards," Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay said.

"We have 12 finalists in four categories who are at the top of their field, and leading the way for the Australian cotton industry."

The winners of each category will be announced at a gala dinner on August 7, 2007 at The Crossing Theatre Narrabri. Tickets to the dinner are still available.

THE FINALISTS IN EACH CATEGORY ARE

MONSANTO GROWER OF THE YEAR

Jono and David Phelps, 'Havana', Wee Waa.

David Taylor, 'Neilo', Toobeah.
Peter and Trish Cross, 'Brayland', Emerald.

AGRIRISK INNOVATIVE GROWER OF THE YEAR

Barb and Ralph Grey, 'Bindaree', Mungindi.

William Kirkby Jnr, 'Glen Prairie', Moree.
James and Aimee Thomas, 'Bloomfield', St George.

CSD ACGRA RESEARCHER OF THE YEAR

Dr Stephen Allen, Narrabri.
David Larsen, Narrabri.
Nilantha Hulugalle, Narrabri.

ELDERS YOUNG ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR

Jessica Brown, Narromine.
Dr Paul Grundy, Biloela.
Dr Oliver Knox, Narrabri.

TWYNAM SERVICE TO INDUSTRY AWARD

Please note that there are no finalists in this category. A winner will be announced at the Cotton Industry Awards on August 7, 2007 at The Crossing Theatre, Narrabri.

For more information about tickets to the awards dinner, please phone The Crossing Theatre on (02) 6792 4654 or visit www.crossingtheatre.com.au



The 2007 Cotton Industry Awards finalists were announced at the National Australian Cotton Trade Show by Awards sponsors and Cotton Australia: Deidre McCallum of AgriRisk, CEO of Cotton Australia Adam Kay, Bethwyn Todd of Monsanto, Steve Ainsworth of CSD, Rob Long of Elders and Greg Kauter of ACGRA.

The following case studies are a cross section of award nominees

Barb and Ralph Grey 'Bindaree', Mungindi NSW

Like many cotton growers, Barb and Ralph Grey from Mungindi were faced with the problem of filling vacancies on farm.

In an effort to develop an effective and efficient team, with low turnover, Barb and Ralph had a self-described 'light bulb moment'. They decided to base their recruitment on personality and attitude not skills and knowledge as they perceived it was easier to teach a person cotton-growing skills than undertake to change a resolute attitude.

Faced with the worsening labour shortage crisis, Barb and Ralph decided to recruit farm labour from South Africa. So successful was the placement of their first migrant couple, the Grey's subsequently recruited more South Africans and a Zimbabwean.

Although the team of South Africans and Zimbabweans, prior to working with the Grey's, had never grown a cotton plant, their agricultural and a positive 'can-do' attitude, have now embraced all things cotton. Over the past three years,

Barb and Ralph have managed to grow consistently higher yielding crops than previously achieved, improving the whole farm physically, and advancing water-use efficiency and yields with the introduction of technological improvements.

Having addressed the issue of recruitment, attention was then turned to the matter of retention. The Grey's quality workforce created much interest and enquiry from fellow farmers, such that there was a fear of losing this valuable resource.

Consequently, Barb and Ralph are in the process of developing Workforce Partners, a recruitment company focussed specifically on helping farmers and businesses in regional NSW and Queensland to resolve their skill shortages, by recruiting South Africans and Zimbabweans who are looking to migrate



Left to right — Werner Pienaar, Peter Mostert, Barb and Ralph Grey with Jacques Oosthuizen at back.

to the rural sector in Australia. Coupled with the energy and expertise of Peter McCleary, a principal of recruiting company HRM Partners, Workforce Partners has helped Barb and Ralph to capitalise on the principle that good people are the most important asset of a business.



Will Kirby Jr.

**Will Kirkby Jr
'Glen Prairie', Moree NSW**

Will Kirkby Jr has shown a flair for innovation and diversification towards his cotton production on 'Glen Prairie', a cotton farm 10 kilometres out of Moree.

Will is among a small group of Gwydir Valley pioneers of Pima cotton with the 2006-07 season being Glen Prairie's second Pima crop.

While still relative novices with its production, Will believes growing Pima is not that much different to growing upland cotton but importantly, it offers an opportunity to help manage financial risks. This is because the prices of upland and pima cotton to not operate in unison, thereby helping Will spread his risk.

The diversification also includes an integrated olive production business and the more recent development of an 88 hectare drip irrigated citrus orchard to fill demand for fresh juice under a long term contract.

Will is also embracing innovations off farm, through his role as Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association Chairman. Some of these innovations include reworking the meeting schedule of the CGA to better reflect priorities and supporting the "Evening of Cotton" program where the CGA hosts an annual tour showcasing cotton farming to ginning to locals and tourists alike. Under Will's leadership, the CGA also successfully applied for a \$90,000 Federal Government grant to purchase six oil recycling collection tanks to be located in the Gwydir Valley.

**David Larsen
NSW DPI**

David Larsen has been a valuable member of the cotton industry since 1979. He is an experienced agronomist, and is recognised for his extensive knowledge and ability to pass on research results to growers and advisors.

David is in constant contact with growers at the Cotton CRC Technology Resource

Centre, where he provides information to cotton growers and consultants in person and via the CRC website. David's role is crucial in the dissemination of technological information to the cotton industry to help growers adopt new best practices and to increase use of research findings.

During his career, David has assisted with the writing of the SOLpak manual, as well as carrying out on-farm visits to farmers with soil issues. He has also run a series of soil workshops for consultants and agronomists in the major cotton regions.

His contribution to a number of industry publications and manuals, featuring research and extension findings, has been valuable to the industry at large. With practical guides to on-farm applications of research findings such as the *Tractor Drivers Guide to Fusarium*

Wilt, SOLpak — A decision support system for managing the structure of irrigated cotton soils, and Sowing decisions with reduced water supply, among many others, growers have benefitted from the information he has helped to bring together in these publications.



David Larsen.

NORTH WEST GINNING PTY LTD

The Quality & Service Ginning
Company from Field to Bale

North West will handle
and process your cotton
for the best results

Step up to
Quality Assured ginning
by Australia's premier
independent ginning company

Whittaker's Lagoon, PO Box 916, Moree, NSW, 2400
Phone: (02) 6752 3966 — Fax: (02) 6751 1067
If you want quality ginning talk to Andrew Geddes or Wayne Clissold