

Cotton Australia sharpens its focus

By Adam Kay, Cotton Australia CEO

In response to the ongoing drought and subsequent impacts on its operating budget, Cotton Australia has significantly reduced costs and restructured the organisation to create a smaller, focussed team located in two state hubs. Cotton Australia Grower Services and Policy staff together with the R&D extension team will work to ensure growers continue to receive the highest quality service.

All Queensland growers will now be served by a team based in Toowoomba, including Chaseley Ross, Tyson Hosie and Dan Hickey. The NSW team based in Narrabri is made up of Peter Cone, Gus Macrae and Polly Gibbons.

Unfortunately, like many growers, Cotton Australia has not escaped the devastating impacts of the drought. We must have a smaller, cost effective organisation until conditions in the industry and therefore, our income improves. It is very difficult to have to tell growers they are losing a person in their area, but the Cotton Grower Associations have been very supportive of the tough decisions we've had to make.



The cotton extension and Cotton Australia staff at a recent strategy meeting in Mudgee.

A number of Cotton Australia staff members have also decided to pursue other opportunities within the industry and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for their dedication and support through Cotton Australia's most difficult period. After

almost eight years as Policy and Advocacy Manager, Ralph Leutton is moving on, along with receptionist Livia Ingham and Grower Services Managers Michael Beeston (Goondiwindi), Peter Hollingworth (Macquarie) and Rachel McDowall (Central Queensland).

The adjustment of staffing levels at Cotton Australia is unfortunately a reflection of what is occurring in the wider industry as growers grapple with the financial implications of the drought.

To ensure grower services are maintained as much as possible, Cotton Australia will be working closely with National Extension Team Officers in each region to maintain a broad presence across these areas. The extension team has agreed to help by letting Grower Services Managers know about growers who require assistance, especially in the implementation of BMP. The two teams will work much more closely together, furthering efficiencies, reducing duplication and providing valuable support to each other.

In line with this, Cotton Australia staff, along with the extension team, recently gathered in Mudgee to discuss desired outcomes for the next 12 months. It was a great opportunity for the two groups to interact and work together to develop strategies that will benefit the whole industry. The group developed regional plans to integrate BMP across the extension effort, so that resources can be focussed in areas of most need.

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