

## Water for the Future at Show

One of the keynote speakers at the 2009 National Australian Cotton Trade Show to be held at the Moree TAFE site on May 27 and 28 will be Richard McLoughlin, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts – the department responsible for the *Water for the Future* program. This program is the federal government's national strategy to secure Australia's long term water supply, especially in the Murray Darling Basin.

Richard is responsible for the implementation of the program in the northern cropping zone. The program has a total budget of \$12.9 billion over 10 years, mainly to be used to upgrade irrigation infrastructure and buyback water licences.

"Richard will give a 20 minute address outlining the *Water for the Future* program and its likely impact on cotton growers and other irrigators in the northern cropping zone," according to Trade Show coordinator David Dowling. "He is then willing to answer as many questions as possible."

Richard will be at the Trade Show for two days and is keen to talk to as many farmers and irrigator groups as he can. This is a tremendous opportunity to make your views known to one of the key players in the federal government water plan which has put an unprecedented amount of money on the table to help fix some of Australia's water problems.

The program includes a budget of \$5.8 billion to upgrade irrigation infrastructure and improve efficiency and \$3.1 billion for water buyback. Many of these projects have already been approved and will soon start to be rolled out.

Under the *Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure* part of the program, New South Wales will receive up to \$1.385 billion, including:

- Up to \$137 million for projects that reduce water loss on farms by piping stock and domestic supply systems;
- Up to \$300 million for modernising the infrastructure associated with direct river diverters;
- Up to \$221 million to upgrade the accuracy of water metering;
- \$50 million to improve management of water on the floodplains through modifications to floodplain structures and extractions; and,
- \$650 million to private irrigation corporations to support water saving upgrades of private infrastructure.

Queensland will receive up to \$510 million:

- Up to \$115 million towards community level irrigation planning and infrastructure investment;
- Up to \$40 million to assist SunWater to modernise its delivery system to reduce water losses;
- \$5 million to conduct a feasibility study to examine the viability of using coal seam gas water as an alternative water resource; and,
- Up to \$350 million for future purchase of water entitlements from willing sellers in the Queensland section of the Murray Darling Basin.

With this sort of money available, it makes sense for all irrigators to acquaint themselves with the program. The National Australian Cotton Trade Show will be the best chance to meet the man with the cheque book in his pocket – for the northern region at least.

## NorthCrop forums a major attraction

One of the major attractions of the National Australian Cotton Trade Show this year will be the strength of the seminar programs. There will be two NorthCrop forums run each day and the topics have been designed to appeal to all farmers in the northern cropping zone – not just cotton growers.

### Marketing

The NorthCrop marketing forum will feature Ed Jernigan, the Managing Director (Asia) for international commodity risk management group FC Stone LLC. Ed will cover the major factors impacting on cotton and grain markets at the moment and give some insight on how things may develop over the next year or so in these times of great financial uncertainty. Other speakers in the marketing forum will look at the premium cotton initiative, on-farm grain storage solutions and future currency movements.



### Grower innovation forum

The grower innovation forum will look at some of the many on-farm innovations that growers and consultants are developing – and help to develop them further through discussion and with the input of researchers.

### Beating spring weeds

The success of any summer crop is highly dependent on the efficient and economical management of spring weeds. And, of course, spray drift has become more of a threat in recent years. This session will look at best management practice for controlling spring weeds, glyphosate resistance risks and spraying technology to maximise efficiency and reduce drift.

### On-farm energy use and carbon farming

Energy audits of both irrigated and dryland farms can provide very useful information about potential energy and cost savings on-farm. As with water, to manage energy, you must first measure it.

The forum will then look at farming practices that reduce or increase soil carbon and the links between soil carbon, nitrogen and fertiliser use. This leads naturally to the concept of emissions trading schemes and 'carbon farming' and the threats and opportunities these concepts pose to agriculture.

The seminar room at the Moree TAFE site has limited space, so make sure you get there early.

Invitations with free entry to the Trade Show will be circulated in early May, or call 07 4659 3555 to receive a special invitation and guarantee your place at the forums.

