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## Editorial...

David Dowling, Editor

**A**FTER a decent rain event like we have just had over much of eastern Australia, you have to be a little careful of who you talk to. There are always some areas that don't do as well as others but hopefully the areas that missed out will do better next time. And the encouraging thing is that at least we have a bit more confidence that there will be a next time, and hopefully soon.

By the end of 2019, there was probably more gloom and doom in rural Australia than any time in recent decades. But it is amazing what a difference a drop of rain can make. Many areas have now had more rain in the first five weeks of 2020 than in all of 2019. Although, that's not saying much!

If we drill down into the figures a little, we can see just how dry it was in 2019 in the main cotton areas of Australia. In most of them, it was the driest year ever, often with records going back to before the "Federation drought" of the early 1900s. Moree, for example, had only 125 mm in 2019 – only 21 per cent of their average and less than half of the previous lowest rainfall year, in 1902. As with most areas, this came on the back of another very dry year in 2018. On the bright side, many areas around Moree have already had storms delivering more rain than all of last year.

That is pretty bad, but St George was even worse with only 106 mm for all of 2019 – also 21 per cent of the average.

These figures suggest that 2018–19 represents the worst drought ever in eastern Australia. Hopefully, the recent change in weather patterns will ensure the drought doesn't continue in 2020 but some areas have received very little so far and there has been minimal runoff into our storages – with the happy exception of parts of southern Queensland. To break a drought like this will take some exceptional rainfall events followed by above average rainfall for a year or two. Here's hoping!

On another happy note, *The Australian Cottongrower* celebrates its 40th birthday this issue. To get this far in the face of droughts, floods, low prices and the challenges of the digital age has been a pretty good achievement. The success of the magazine has been due to the great support of cotton growers and the industry in general – especially our contributors and advertisers – and we are looking forward to the future with enthusiasm.

I have been accused of keeping the same photo of myself at the top of this editorial for more years than necessary. So to mark our 40th birthday, a replacement has been found which was at least taken this century.

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