

Cotton industry opens its doors for community engagement day

NO topic was off limit as the Australian cotton industry opened its doors and welcomed a broad range of community stakeholders to its Cotton Open House engagement event in Sydney today.

Hosted by Cotton Australia, the event was designed to bring a diverse range of community stakeholders together and put the industry under the microscope in the spirit of complete transparency and engagement.

Guests listened to a variety of panel sessions and presentations about key topics affecting the Australian cotton industry, and guests were given the opportunity to ask questions of growers and industry personnel.

Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay said the industry needed to be better at engaging with the public about Australian cotton.

"We accept that over the recent past, we have not engaged with the broader community well enough about what we do and why we do it," Adam said.

"We completely accept that portions of the community have deep concerns and questions about the Australian cotton industry. We hear those people and we acknowledge their concerns.

"This has led to the creation of the Cotton Open House engagement event, and we hope this initiative will play an important role in the process of improving community understanding of our industry."

A broad range of guests were invited to the event, including representatives from non-government organisations, business, community and environmental groups, media and government.

"We didn't want to preach to the converted; we wanted attendees that have had limited exposure to our industry so they could have the opportunity to question us and learn about what we do," Adam said.

"It was important for attendees to hear from those in our industry who work on the ground and across the supply chain

– growers, scientists, and other personnel who are experts in key topics including water, climate change, sustainability and community."

Queensland-based cotton grower Fleur Anderson said engaging with community members was important for the industry.

"As a grower, I hear the concerns that have been raised about the cotton industry and I accept that those concerns are real. Caring for the environment, being water efficient, and tackling climate change – topics we hear the community question us on – are all things I care about too," Fleur said.

"We need to bridge the city-country divide, and what's really key is that we have a calm, rational conversation about: concerns, what we have in common, where we have differences, and what the industry needs to work on to better engage with the community.

"It was really wonderful to be involved in the event today and to meet with stakeholders and share our industry's story with them, because we have a great story to tell, and it is an industry that I'm very proud to be involved in."

Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay encouraged the broader community to engage with the cotton industry.

"We've made a concerted effort to improve how we share information about our industry," he said.

"A great place to start is by visiting Cotton Australia's new website – cottonaustralia.com.au – and by exploring all the information pages we have collated.

"We really encourage people to reach out to us, chat to us, and ask us the questions you have.

"The Australian cotton industry's doors are open, and we absolutely want the community to know about our industry and discover our story and achievements."

Cotton Australia is the peak body for Australia's cotton growers. For more information visit <https://cottonaustralia.com.au>

