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## Editorial...

David Dowling, Editor

This issue comes to you directly from the 78th Plenary Meeting of the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) in Brisbane. The ICAC started meeting in Washington DC back in 1940 and after the first six years in Washington, the meeting has rotated to various cotton involved countries around the world – producers and consumers. It is an inter-governmental organisation and the only major cotton producing countries which are not members are China and Turkmenistan.

This is only the third time the ICAC meeting has come to Australia and I may be corrected on this, but I suspect that I am about the only Australian who has been to all three meetings after the Sydney meeting in 1985 and the big party in Cairns in 2000. The Cairns meeting was noted for at least two things: An early onset of the wet season (in November) with some huge tropical storms playing havoc with 'rainforest' events; and, the cultural shock of delegates when proceedings were halted for several minutes to watch a horse race on the big screen.

The current Brisbane meeting is a little more subdued than Cairns for a few reasons. Apparently some of the delegates from Africa especially, left their run a little late to get Australian visas. And of course, our current drought has put something of a damper on any celebrations. Even though they are experts in the cotton market, many delegates are having trouble getting their heads around the fact that Australia is likely to produce less than one million bales next year. Many delegates are heading for a field trip to the Darling Downs after the conference, and while it will still showcase the best of Australian technology and farming, they are likely to be shocked by the lack of crop.

The conference may be a little subdued, but it is great to see a healthy sprinkling of Australian cotton growers in the audience. One of them unkindly suggested that they had very little else to do at the moment, but it is another indicator of the thirst for knowledge shown by some of our farmers, even in this difficult time. And there are a number of Australian researchers making excellent presentations and highlighting once again the quality of the research in Australia.

Even though the number of attendees is down a little, the meeting provides opportunities to meet people doing incredible things from around the world. There are cotton researchers from the US, ginners from Pakistan, spinners from India and even a farmer from Ethiopia who has 14 different farms and apart from growing cotton, supplies most of the tea and coffee produced in Ethiopia and sells cut flowers around the world, including into Australia.

An interesting week and a distraction from the main game of waiting for that next big rain to fall.

From everyone at *The Australian Cottongrower*, may you have a very merry Christmas and a very wet New Year.

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