



Australian Government  
Cotton Research and  
Development Corporation



AUSTRALIAN  
**FUTURE  
COTTON  
LEADERS**  
PROGRAM

## Evaluation Report

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## **Background**

The Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program is an initiative of Cotton Australia in partnership with the Cotton Research and Development Corporation. The initiative commenced in 2007. Including this program, the Partnership has facilitated four programs and there are now 61 graduates. The next program is planned for 2016.

## ***Purpose***

The purpose of this report is to provide an evaluative overview and report of the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program conducted in 2014.

## ***Project Goals***

The key goals of this program were to:

- Identify and develop the skills of the next generation of cotton leaders,
- Provide mentoring to guide and support these young people,
- Support participants to design and implement their own enterprise project and
- Link these future leaders with industry initiatives and events.

## ***Project Deliverables / Outputs***

The key outputs of this program are:

1. Facilitation of the Australian Future Cotton Leaders program
2. Identification of cotton growers and broader industry participants who are emerging leaders and are interested in taking up enterprise, industry leadership roles / positions in the future

## ***About the Project Facilitators***

**RuralScope Pty Limited** - a leading management firm providing communication and people development services to Australia's agricultural and rural sectors.

Jo Eady, Director, RuralScope Pty Limited facilitated the inaugural Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program. She has a rural background having been born and raised on a dairy farm in Victoria. She coordinates her management firm, RuralScope from Foster in South Gippsland, Victoria.

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### *Qualifications*

Master of Education, Graduate Diploma in Education, Diploma in Teaching and Diploma in Professional Counselling.

Jo is also a graduate of the Australian Institute of Executive Coaching and the Institute of Women's Leadership USA – California.

### *Overview*

Over the past 18 years Jo Eady has established and built a successful management firm in a competitive consulting environment focusing on providing people development services to Australia's agricultural and rural sectors. Her vision and passion is to influence positive leadership change across rural Australia and all projects she works on or initiatives she develops contribute to achieving this. Jo has extensive experience in the design, development and facilitation of leadership development and leadership mentoring programs. Her experience extends to the corporate and agricultural and rural sectors and industries. Jo is recognised for her pioneering work in the leadership mentoring field in Australia and has successfully coordinated over 400 matchings and approx 36 leadership mentoring programs, including the Executive Leadership Program with 3 major pastoral / agricultural companies and the Peer Mentoring Program with the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

Jo's key areas of demonstrated competence are:

- Project leadership and management
- Mentoring and coaching
- Leadership mentoring program design, development, tools and materials
- Leadership and communication
- Working with industry
- Personal Development

In addition, Jo has also completed projects for and has a current client list extending across the commercial and commonwealth, state and local government sectors.

### *Relevant Past Experience*

Jo has conducted research, designed, developed and facilitated leadership learning programs and leadership mentoring programs as follows:

- Australian Grain Farm Leaders Program

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- Australian Future Grain Leaders Program
  - RIRDC – National Mentoring Program for Rural Women.
  - Australian Rural Leadership Foundation, Peer Mentoring Program
  - Advancing Partnerships in Cotton – Australian Cotton Industry
  - Dairying Better n’ Better – Northern Australian Dairy Industry
  - The North Australian Pastoral Company, Strategic leadership and leadership mentoring programs
  - AFFA, AgLink, A Leadership Development Program for Australian Youth in Agriculture
  - Macropod and Wild Game Harvesting Association, JumpStart – Industry Leadership Mentoring Program
  - Individual participants, myVision – Leadership Mentoring Program for Women in Rural Industries
  - Queensland Dairyfarmer’s Organisation, Unlimited Horizons – A Leadership and Mentoring Program for Enterprise Owners / Managers.

### **Summary of Program**

The 2014 Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program was conducted between February 2014 and March 2015. The project framework was managed by Cotton Australia. The Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program was facilitated by RuralScope Pty Limited. The program involved three key stages over 14 months:

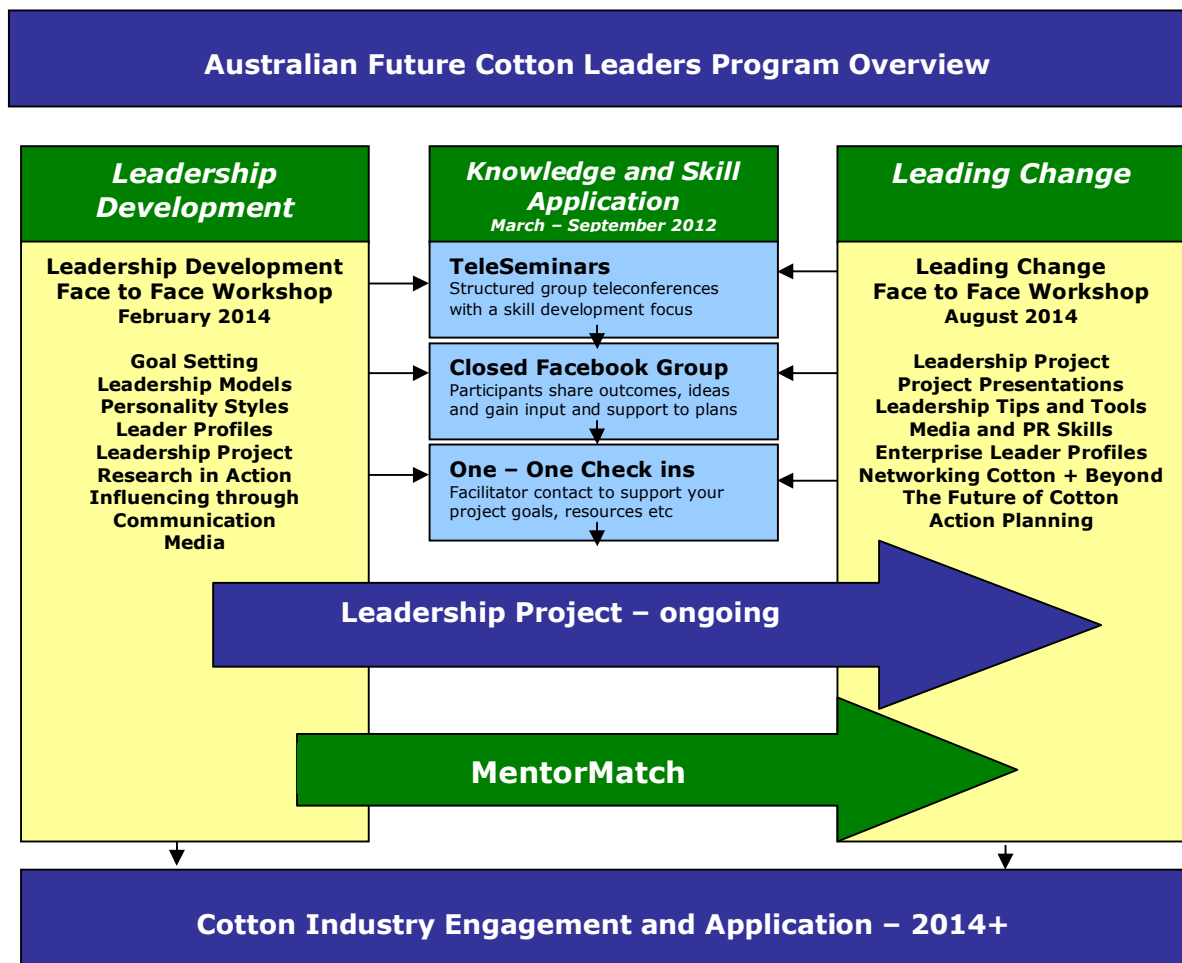
Stage 1 – Leadership development

Stage 2 – Knowledge and skill application

Stage 3 – Leading change

## Program Overview

An overview of the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program is outlined below. This customised program is the result of an industry briefing regarding the issues and requirements regarding human capacity building in the Australian cotton industry. A key focus of this program was participant's knowledge and skill application via their individual leadership project relevant to their enterprise / leadership aspirations. This real time, real enterprise leadership project is what stands this program apart from other content based leadership programs currently in the market place.



## Program Elements

### Overview of Program Elements

A comprehensive suite of elements make up the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program. This is based on the initial brief provided by Cotton Australia in terms of the ultimate industry goals of this program. In addition, results, outcomes and recommendations of the 2012 Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program were taken into account. We then align these

elements to the leadership maturity continuum and ensure participants are introduced to them at the most appropriate stages of the program.

All elements place demand and accountability on participants in and outside of the face to face workshops as we are encouraging participants to become leaders and to operate in this way throughout the program. For development, it is essential that they actually do this in their enterprise / industry context. This way we can ensure there is a higher chance they will continue to contribute to their own development and hence their business and industry development post this program. In addition, some of the elements require limited funding, so hence greater value is achieved for the cotton industry from the program budget.

An overview of the elements is as follows:

Element	Description
1. Leadership Development Face to Face 1.	Interactive forum focusing on personal and leadership development. Key focus is on 'growing self' and developing enterprise project visions / plans.
2. TeleSeminars	Structured group teleconferences with a skills development focus. The topics are based on the participant's Enterprise Projects / needs.
3. Closed Facebook Group	All participants are part of a structured 'closed' Facebook Group. Participants share outcomes, ideas and gain input and support for their knowledge and skill development and their enterprise projects. It is also used as a key way of communicating program information and developments.
4. One on one Check ins (bi-monthly = 4 times per program)	One – One Check ins, where the facilitator and the participants have a one – one phone session relating to the participant's leadership project. The focus of these is to chart progress and to support participants to work with and overcome barriers they may face to achieving outcomes.
5. Leadership Project	Participants identify a project focus based on their current and future enterprise aspirations. This project has set outcomes which the participant then works to

	achieve with the support of the program, facilitator and other participants. This project is worked on between the two face to face forums. The outcomes of each project are unique.
6. MentorMatch	MentorMatch is where participants are linked with a “mentor” for the purpose of knowledge, skills and experience transfer which will assist them generally and more specifically with their project identified as a central part of the learning in this program. 2 sessions or a face to face visit is held with “mentors”.
7. Leading Change Face to Face 2. Combined with Australian Cotton Conference	Interactive forum focusing on leading change. Key focus is on “leadership in action” and promoting and profiling outcomes.
8. Enterprise and Industry Application and Involvement (12+ months)	Every opportunity is taken through the program to support participants to apply learnings to their enterprise development as well as link individual projects and group outcomes with the industry as a whole through Cotton Australia, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation and beyond. .

## Benefits to Industry

A summary of benefits to industry is as follows:

- A cohort of identified emerging leaders with leadership aptitude available for enterprise and industry leadership opportunities
- A cohort of emerging leaders with increased knowledge and understanding of how the Australian cotton industry operates and where they can assist / contribute to enterprise / industry development.
- A network of emerging leaders supporting each other to inject and integrate fresh ideas, motivation and support for new ideas at an enterprise, regional and industry level.
- A skilled group of future cotton leaders for industry stakeholders to consider for industry positions such as committees etc
- Integrated enterprise / industry leadership projects implemented and reaching different areas, people of the industry for benefit at limited industry investment.

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- New initiatives via enterprise / leadership projects being established and implemented for benefit of the region / industry at different levels, eg individual, enterprise, community, whole of industry etc.
  - Recognition of the importance of leadership development for the Australian cotton industry
  - A structured human capacity building program committed to building future leaders across and beyond cotton growing communities.
  - A leadership succession strategy for the Australian cotton industry developed and in place and achieving results for the future of the industry today
  - Recognition of the Cotton Australia and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation as initiator / funder of the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program

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## Summary of Results

### Program Results

Formative evaluations were completed at the conclusion of the two face to face events. A summary of these is included below.

#### **Expectations**

	Expectations Measure		
Activity	Expectations not met	Expectations met	Expectations exceeded
<b>2014 Program</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>

Participant comments about the program are as follows.

- Excellent
- Well organised – a great program
- Brilliant / excellent program (although I would have enjoyed seeing some places I hadn't been to before!)
- Facilitation of this program was excellent – Jo is very engaging and everything ran smoothly
- Cross section of participants was well researched and selected
- I loved all the activities where you asked us to pair up with someone else who we hadn't spent much time with – I learned a lot.
- All excellent
- Great program
- Better than I had anticipated
- I would like to stay in the program for 2 years rather than one
- Having access to a facilitator like Jo throughout the entire program is amazing – gives you the confidence and accountability to get on and do stuff, push yourself to do things that you wouldn't ordinarily do
- Well organised
- Really enjoyed all the personal development stuff and becoming more self aware
- Ran really well.

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### ***Elements of Program***

Participants rated the eight core elements of the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program regarding value in their enterprise / leadership development.

100% of participants rated the first Face to Face – Toowoomba as well as the second Face to Face – Gold Coast as extremely valuable, with the majority also making mention of the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Welcome event the night before the Australian Cotton Conference.

In addition, the following elements were rated by all participants as extremely or very valuable. They are listed in order of value.

- Enterprise Visit - John Cameron and Kerry Connolly - Bongeen
- Personality Assessment / Communication Styles Reports and Workshops
- Media workshop with Ruth
- One on One Sessions with Facilitator Jo
- Leadership Project

### ***Key Leadership Skills***

Personality types and styles, Disc Communication, Enterprise / Management Case Studies and Leader Pathways sessions and Self Awareness were identified as key leadership skills developed through the program. More detailed skills include;

- Negotiating
- Influencing others
- Goal Setting
- Developing and sharing a vision and following through with action planning
- Project planning
- Networking with industry leaders and groups
- Media skills
- Speaking off the cuff (ie PRES)
- Understanding power and how it influences relationships

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### ***Implementation of Actions Post Program***

Participants were asked to identify things that they will do differently as a result of this program. A summary is as follows.

- Develop an integrated career and life plan
- Develop an enterprise plan
- Approach my family about succession
- Speak to family members about developing a family meetings plan
- Observe my team and identify their communication styles
- Challenge myself to become more involved in industry leadership and politics
- Investigate international travel and work opportunities
- Maintain and further develop my relationship with my mentor
- Keep informed of industry developments
- Apply for further training and industry involvement opportunities ie board appointments etc
- Keep in touch with group and ensure this network continues
- Approach Jo as I would like to be involved in future programs
- Start attending industry meetings with the view to putting my hand up for a local CGA position.

### ***Improvements to Program***

Participants were asked to indicate what would improve the program. A summary of feedback is as follows;

- Majority of participants indicated program is great the way it is – “Don’t change a thing”, “this program is great”, “this program was not what I expected it was much better” etc.
- More time on enterprise visits hearing from established leaders
- More interaction with leaders.

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**Course Recommendation**

100% of participants indicated that they would recommend the course to others.

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## **Key Learnings / Recommendations**

A summary of key learnings and recommendations from the experience of facilitating the 2014 Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program is as follows:

### ***Key Learnings***

#### 1. Australian Future Cotton Leaders Dinner

The Australian Future Cotton Leaders Dinner was held the evening before the Australian Cotton Conference and the evening of the official last face to face day of the program. The Dinner was attended by industry leaders, current program participants, Cotton Australia and Cotton Research and Development Corporation management and Board members and Horizons Scholars and Conference Scholarship awardees. Approx. 60 people attended and the logistics of the evening ran smoothly with attendees paying their own way. Allyse Morris, current participant was supported to plan and MC the event. Each current participant was also matched with a scholarship awardee and as part of this greeted the person and welcomed them and then sat with them throughout the dinner. Feedback was extremely positive about this experience for them and also industry leaders also provided positive comments about the evening with all suggesting the evening should be held again in 2016. From a leadership perspective, this evening gave current participants the opportunity to profile their projects whilst also being an event mentor to Scholarship Awardees. This is an important leadership concept to practise ie giving back, sharing with others and also being part of the fabric of enhancing the experience of younger people at the Australian Cotton Conference. This event certainly achieved this.

#### 2. Inclusion of Online Forum

The Online event did not work as well this program. Instead of being a part of the program and hence facilitated by the program leaders, it matched the project of a participant and hence it became their project. As a result, the Online Forum 2014 did not achieve, in this instance, the level of profile / interest that it had done in the previous program. And the flow on from this was that there was limited media opportunity and quality outcomes to share back with industry. Given that the online forum includes participants who are currently in the program, graduates and those interested in the topic / possibly interested in applying for a place in the next Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program, this element of the program needs to remain as one that is fully facilitated by the Program Leaders with support of a small team of current participants. Program participants can be encouraged to facilitate their own online forum if it

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fits with the aim of their project and hence this will not interfere with this important element of the program. This is also a key way of providing direct feedback of the younger voice to program funders and this needs to be maximised in the next program.

### 3. Mentoring

MentorMatch was identified as an element of the program to evaluate this time around from a program, mentor and mentee perspective, rather than just the Mentees perspective. This occurred through phone and email communication with the Program Facilitator. The outcomes revealed;

- Mentors are willing to give time and support to the program and see it as an important program for the industry's leadership development and succession
- Mentors value the structured nature of the MentorMatch element as it provides clear expectations and also a beginning and end point for their involvement
- Mentors like to be kept informed by the mentee of their project and its results / outcomes and this does not always occur.
- The MentorMatch element of the program takes time and expertise (including the industry committee who reviews requests for Mentors and identifies them for the Program Facilitator) to coordinate.
- MentorMatch is often a key attractor for applicants to the program, however a small number of participants do not maximise their time in this element of the program.
- Mentees, once matched and introduced to their Mentor via the Program Facilitator's email have responsibility to make contact and to set up the first phone call / face to face. It appears that this is difficult for a small number of Mentees to do and in some cases does not occur with time lapsing and hence in some cases is not pursued.
- From a program perspective, there is concern that the lack of take up once matched with a Mentor may result in Mentors not wishing to be engaged in future programs and hence questioning their involvement or that of other established leaders in this element of the program. 3 out of 15 participants in this program did not pursue their MentorMatch.
- A suggestion is that this element of the program could require that participants need to apply to be matched once in the program or in fact find their own mentor and undertake this element with the Program Facilitator's support.

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#### 4. Farm Visit

The Farm Visit was an extremely valuable part of this program. For future programs, a Farm visit needs to be built into the program.

#### 5. Media Session

The Media Session was facilitated by Ruth Redfern CRDC. This session was highly valued by the participants and as a result, all participants felt competent to undertake radio / print interviews. In addition, this session also equipped participants with know how about key messages and how these can and should be used in conversation / presentations etc. The Media Session is an extremely important and valued session when done well.

#### 6. Group Facebook Page

The Close Group Facebook Page worked extremely well. It provided an ongoing communication platform for day to day conversations about the industry in terms of weather, planting, harvesting, industry events and where / when participants were travelling in other people's areas. In light of this we saw more face to face contact and catch ups between participant than in any other program to date. From a Program perspective it allowed transparent communication about program elements, activities, dates / times, requirements and the sharing of industry information and leadership readings / website links etc. All participants actively engaged in the Closed Facebook page and many used this also as a way to communication the status of their projects and also ask for feedback when required. It was an easy and efficient platform to use.

#### 7. Graduate Alumni and Involvement in Future Programs

As mentioned in the last Program Evaluation, there is room for graduates of the program to be more actively used as a resource support to the program. This could include;

- Suggesting possible focus farms, enterprises to visit, guest speakers, farming case studies etc.
- Being involved in media alerts / releases and opportunities as directed by Cotton Australia / Cotton Research and Development Corporation.
- Being involved in the selection committee
- Being guest speakers themselves

In addition, there is interest from graduates about a 'formal' type online meeting place which continues beyond the program.

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## **Recommendations**

Key recommendations from the 2014 Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program are as follows;

1. Australian cotton industry host a 2016 Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program, making enhancements to the program as recommended.
2. Host the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Dinner on the evening before Australian Cotton Conference in 2016. Maintain the casual feel of the 2014 Dinner and ensure that all graduates of the program along with younger people coming to the conference by way of Scholarships etc are invited / included as part of the event. And as was the case in 2014, invite industry leaders, board members and senior managers from across cotton organisations.
3. Link / Match up 2016 Australian Future Cotton Leaders with Scholarship Awardees etc in the lead up to the Australian Cotton Conference so that they then meet up at the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Dinner and twice across the conference. .
4. Request input from Cotton Australia and the Cotton Research and Development Corporation regarding key issues of interest that they would value a younger person's perspective on and hence could be used as the focus of the 2016 Australian Future Cotton Leaders Online Forum.
5. Establish a once in program request and sign up for MentorMatch.
6. Include program graduates in the selection and hosting of future program Farm / Enterprise visits.
7. Include Media session in program timetable and request that Ruth Redfern, Cotton Research and Development Corporation facilitate this as part of the first Face to Face element of the program.
8. Facilitate a closed Facebook group for the 2016 Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program.
9. Utilise program graduates in the program promotion, recruitment of applications for the 2016 program. As well as utilising them as possible guest speakers, mentors and enterprise hosts.

## Appendix 1

### Listing of Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program Participants 2014

Name	Contact Details	DRAFT Project Focus DRAFT
Renee Anderson	RG, JM, BH and RL Anderson PO Box 1288, Emerald. QLD 4720 Phone 0448 125 156 Email reneea@cotton.org.au	Develop mentoring component for a workforce development program. Program connects trainees with cotton growers to develop a skilled and sustainable workforce pool in the Central Highlands.
Nicola Cottee	CSIRO – Plant Industry Locked Bag 59, Narrabri. NSW 2390 Phone 02 6799 1539 Mobile 0421 283 957 Email Nicola.cottee@csiro.au	Develop a Centre of Excellence for young professionals in the cotton industry; targeting career building in rural areas. This Centre will initially be incorporated into existing social media networks, online forums or career oriented websites.
Ben Dawson	B&W Rural PO Box 285, Moree. NSW 2400 Phone 02 6759 5503 Mobile 0429 120 706 Email ben.dawson@elders.com.au	Educate growers on glyphosate sustainability and help develop an industry wide auditing process to better identify outbreaks and potential outbreaks of glyphosate resistant weeds in cotton farming regions.
Tom Galbraith	Independent Commodity Management PO Box 1701 Toowoomba. QLD 4350 Phone 07 4637 9466 Mobile 0410 681 917 Email tom@icm.net.au	Explore an investigation into the implications for both growers and merchants with a move from manual assessment of colour and leaf to 100% HVI assessment for all Australian Cotton.
Alex Harris	ECOM Commodities "Oreel" Rowena NSW 2387 Phone 0429 022 213 Email aduncanharris@ecomtrading.com	Two projects ideas – 1. Spreading messages of importance of developing and maintaining a strong brand for Australian cotton and in particular the relevance of BCI cotton and Cotton Leads in creating a sustainable image of Aust cotton. 2. Opportunities for the expansion of cotton growing in the Nth areas of Qld, NT and WA.
Ross Harvie	Rivcom Pty Ltd 190 Zanotto Rd, Nericon. NSW 2680 Phone 02 6963 4927 Mobile 0458 567 776 Email rivcom1@bigpond.com	Investigate and research a business model for a Murrumbidgee based cotton classing facility.
Georgie Krieg	Glen Royal Farms "Glen Royal" Brookstead. QLD 4364 Phone 0746 4693 9244 Mobile 0429 939 244 Email Georgie.krieg@bigpond.com	Through our grower association, I would like to bring a local approach to our area around Brookstead. I would like to develop confidence and ability to coordinate local meetings / shed gatherings to discuss topical issues, whether they are seasonal growing issues, health concerns or administrative matters.
Elizabeth Lobsey	Metears Pty Limited 47 Diggers Drive, Dalby. QLD 4405 Phone 0409 649 567 Mobile 0419 740 371 Email liz.meteora@live.com.au	Identify areas that young people involved in the industry feel they need further training on and work with industry and other organisations to create or start creating upskilling programs. Identify what would make those already involved in the industry want to attend upskilling programs.
Heath McWhirter	Elders Griffith 11 Banna Ave. Griffith. NSW 2680 Phone 02 6969 2900 Mobile 0428 386 393 Email heath.mcwhirter@elders.com.au	Further develop the new cotton grower project launched this season. Hold grower meetings and do post grower meeting reviews. Develop a plan to put ideas into action for the next season and maximize benefit of these grower meetings to new / potential cotton growers.
Allyse Morris	Queensland Cotton PO Box 278, Dalby QLD 4405 Phone 0746 625 220 Mobile 0400646 579 Email allyse.morris@olamnet.com	Facilitate a women's marketing and mingling day on the downs and in Sth West Qld with support of other industry bodies. Aim would be to

		encourage women to be more involved in the decision making process when it comes to marketing cotton.
Alex North	Cotton Seed Distributors 7 Francis St, Goondiwindi. QLD 4390 Phone 0428 950 021 Email anorth@csd.net.au	Explore different farming techniques, practices and technologies that are being used for cotton production not only in Australia but also around the world that could be adopted here to improve our efficiencies and ultimately our yields and quality as well.
Tom Quigley	Quigley Farms "Muntham", Trangie. NSW 2823 Phone 02 6847 6299 Mobile 0409 476 338 Email tomquig@bigpond.com	Further explore the first "Sprinkler Irrigation Forum" held in Naromine. One year on with using this technology, discussions can be more in depth and directed on certain issues. This will lead to tweaking some management decisions to get the more desired "more crop per drop." Spread to other irrigation methods and into the social media sphere.
Lauryn Riordan	Koramba Ginning PO Box 49, Moree. NSW 2400 Phone 02 6751 1255 Mobile 0429 774 649 Email marketing@koramba.com.au	Identify the fibre quality characteristics most preferred by spinning mills in some of our key markets and then take this information back to the gin level to assess how the gin can ensure that it is meeting these quality standards. Ensure ginners are informed of the preferred end product and have skills and equipment to deliver this product and hence the highest quality bale of lint for customer.
Alex Roughly	Tandou Limited Tandou Farm, Menindee. NSW 2879 Phone 08 8091 1513 Mobile 0407 015 335 Email aroughley@tandou.com.au	A training package for precision agriculture type products that are commonly used in the industry eg auto steer / controlled traffic. The package would ensure growers are maximizing the use of this technology.
John Smith	CottonInfo 1 Rosella Gardens Drive. Meringandan West. QLD 4352 Phone 0408 258 786 Email john.smith@cottoninfo.net.au	Lead development of audio, using podcasts as a method of information delivery for the industry.

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## Further Information



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