



# FINAL REPORT

## *Part 1 - Summary Details*

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*Please use your TAB key to complete Parts 1 & 2.*

CRDC Project Number: CA1603

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## **Project Title: Grower RDE Advisory Panels – R&D Consultation**

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Project Commencement Date: 1/07/2016 Project Completion Date: 30/06/2017

## *Part 2 – Contact Details*

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## *Part 3 – Final Report*

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(The points below are to be used as a guideline when completing your final report.)

### *Background*

#### **1. Outline the background to the project.**

The Cotton Australia grower RD&E Advisory Panels provide a critical role within the cotton industry by providing practical advice on research, development and extension needs and priorities. This advice is important guidance to CRDC in its formation of five-year Strategic R&D Plans, Annual Operational Plans, Expressions of Interest for RD&E and resultant CRDC decisions as to project investments.

Cotton Australia facilitates 4 advisory panels that are aligned with the CRDC strategic plan priorities. The panels consist of up to 40 grower, consultant and ginners members from every cotton growing region in Australia.

### *Objectives*

#### **2. List the project objectives (from the application) and the extent to which these have been achieved.**

*Objective 1. The project facilitates engagement with stakeholders for prioritising and capturing advice on RD&E issues.*

Stakeholders engagement has centred around preparation for, implementation of, and provision of advice within the;

- 2016 CRDC November meeting - provision of advice to CRDC regarding project investment within the 2017/18 investment cycle; and
- 2017 CRDC R&D Forum - provision of advice to CRDC regarding identification of key industry RDE priorities and subsequent development of expressions of interest for the 2018/19 investment cycle.
- 2019-2023 CRDC Strategic Plan – provision of advice to CRDC regarding key trends from the joint CRDC/Cotton Australia environmental scan.

The processes around stakeholder engagement continue to undergo review by the CRDC Program Managers, in consultation with the Cotton Australia Policy Team. This review process has allowed identification of opportunities to ensure continuous improvement of the process for stakeholder engagement, and has also facilitated implementation of initiatives to capitalise on these opportunities.

*Objective 2. The project provides for the travel and meeting expenses reasonably incurred by Cotton Australia in connection with RD&E Advisory Panel consultations with CRDC.*

All travel and meeting expenses reasonably incurred by Cotton Australia in connection with the RDE Advisory Panel consultations in November 2016 and May 2017 were provided under this project.

***Methods***

**3. Detail the methodology and justify the methodology used. Include any discoveries in methods that may benefit other related projects.**

*CRDC November meeting 2016, Brisbane*

Cotton Australia Member Representatives (through the RD&E Advisory Panels) considered and provided advice to CRDC on project proposals received in response to the 2017/18 Expressions of Interest (EOIs). The meeting location and agenda were organised by Cotton Australia in consultation with CRDC. The November meeting was preceded by a number of teleconferences involving panel representatives for the Farmers and Industry Panels to facilitate in-depth discussion of FRPs.

*CGA priority workshops*

The 2017 R&D Forum was preceded by a series of local CGA RDE prioritisation workshops facilitated by Cotton Australia. The aims of these workshops were to;

- Ensure all growers have a say on investment of statutory research levies across the Farmers, Industry, Customers and People panel themes
- Provide all Member Representatives with a list of CGA research priorities to inform discussion for the CRDC strategy forum

- Provide all CGA members with feedback on CRDC investments against CGA RD&E priorities identified in Feb-May 2016
- Ensure CRDC investment in relevant and practicable research opportunities

CGA members were specifically asked to consider new or emerging RD&E opportunities for prioritisation, as opposed to identifying all RD&E priorities. These research priorities were collated and formed the basis of panel discussions at the R&D forum.

#### *CRDC R&D Forum, May 2017, Brisbane*

Cotton Australia Member Representatives (through the RD&E Advisory Panels) identified and prioritise key strategic RDE gaps for consideration of development of 2018/19 EOIs.

A revised process was developed for the 2017 R&D Forum, based on informal feedback obtained following the 2016 Strategy Forum. Provisions to ensure a more robust process for development of industry-relevant EOIs included;

- Revising the agenda to allow CRDC Program Managers to effectively facilitate discussions across the four advisory panels;
- Inclusion of strategic RDE priorities from CRDC discipline-based reviews;
- Inclusion of RDE priorities to inform Cotton Australia's policy and advocacy work;
- Inclusion of capacity building sessions for the Customers and People panels;
- Briefing of Panel Chairs and Coordinators;
- Enhanced integration of CGA RD&E priorities into the Strategy Forum agenda through;
  - Development and delivery of local CGA priority workshops;
  - Provision of CGA priorities through background papers;
  - Providing Member Representatives with the opportunity to discuss their CGA priorities with the broader group, and reciprocally discuss the priorities identified by other CGAs;
  - Considering CGA priorities across all panel discussions, regardless of whether a Member Representative for each CGA was physically present for these discussions; and
  - The opportunity for Member Representatives to 'vote' on RDE priorities across all four advisory panels, regardless of which advisory panel they were primarily associated with.

Member Representatives also considered and identified the top trends from the joint CRDC/Cotton Australia environmental scan, to inform planning for the 2019-2023 CRDC Strategic Plan.

Meeting timing, location and agenda were organised by CRDC in consultation with Cotton Australia.

#### *Outcomes*

- 4. Describe how the project's outputs will contribute to the planned outcomes identified in the project application. Describe the planned outcomes achieved to date.**

The project has delivered on strengthening connections between stakeholder RD&E priorities and industry investment for improved profitability, sustainability and competitiveness.

#### *Advice on stakeholder RDE needs and priorities*

Stakeholder RD&E needs and priorities were preliminarily identified through a series of CGA RDE priority workshops (February – May 2017). These priorities were reported against existing CRDC projects and then presented to the Cotton Australia Member Representatives for consideration and discussion at the 2017 CRDC R&D Forum.

This revised process for identification of stakeholder RDE emerging/new priorities has enabled representation of industry wide, as well as geographically specific RDE priorities across the entire CRDC investment portfolio. This has also delivered a framework to ensure that every cotton grower has the opportunity to identify research priorities for investment consideration.

Following this first iteration of the CGA RDE prioritisation workshop process, feedback has been obtained to identify opportunities to improve the process for the next investment round. Efficiency gains are anticipated following an improved familiarisation with the process from workshop facilitators. Engagement challenges will be addressed through enhanced communication and further consideration of workshop timing.

#### *Advice on RDE project proposals*

Member Representatives provided advice on RDE project proposals through FRP deliberation via teleconference (10 November 2016) and discussions at the November meeting (16 November 2016). Advice was not provided for RDE project proposals that sat outside of the FRP process, such as projects that were directly negotiated, or funded through the Rural R&D for Profit Programme.

#### *Written report*

This final written report was provided to CRDC in August 2017.

#### **5. Please report on any:-**

- a) Feedback forms used and what the results were
- b) The highlights for participants or key learnings achieved
- c) The number of people participating and any comments on level of participation

#### *November Meeting*

Formal feedback was gathered regarding the R&D Panel engagement process, in conjunction with the Cotton Australia General Meeting.

Overall, participants indicated that the meeting was a valuable use of time (Figure 1). The majority of negative feedback was associated with insufficient time allocated to discuss FRPs, particularly for the Farmers and Industry Panels.

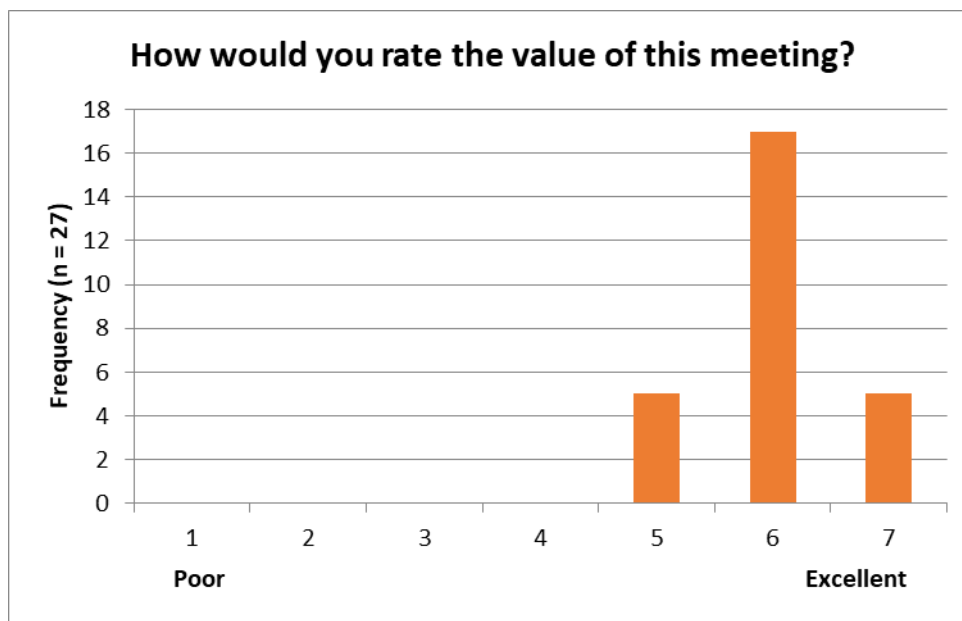


Figure 1 All surveyed meeting participants indicated that the November meeting format and content was a valuable use of their time.

Specific feedback from participants relating to the Panel sessions included;

- More face-to-face time is required to consider the FRPs
- The Panel Chairs require a briefing before the meeting
- The choice of venue suited the meeting
- The timing of the May and November forums should be reconsidered as both cotton and winter rotations require attention at this time. July and July are preferred.
- More focus should be placed on the grower input into research priorities.
- The R&D feedback process need to be more collaborative and may be better held in the regions where growers, researchers and cotton info could workshop ideas and provide input in to project design.

#### *CRDC R&D Forum*

Formal feedback was collected by CRDC at the conclusion of the 2017 Annual R&D Forum. Overall, participants indicated that they had sufficient opportunity to contribute to the identification of research gaps and R&D needs (Figure 2).

Specific feedback indicated that the majority of Forum participants thought that the small facilitated group discussion worked well in delivering productive discussion. Participants found the electronic voting system (poll everywhere) to be efficient and effective in delivering outcomes. Other elements of the process that were flagged as positive meeting attributes;

- The overall agenda including a mix of session, appropriate pace, and allocation of short breaks;
- A diverse mix of people in the room;
- Creating of an environment for positive and productive discussion;
- An early start and finish time;

- The method for obtaining Panel priorities; and
- The introduction of the CGA priorities were also flagged as positive meeting attributes.

Notably, the St George CGA flagged the process whereby CRDC provided feedback directly to the CGA, and in-person as a particularly positive aspect of the process for obtaining R&D advice.

Opportunities flagged for process improvement included;

- Longer time allocation for Panel discussions;
- Additional information on the goals of the voting processes;
- Ensuring that less exciting R&D topics are sufficiently discussed;
- Improving engagement with the CGAs and determining whether raised priorities include a mix of current and future challenges;
- Provisions for new Member Representatives to rotate between Panels; and
- Provision of feedback immediately to CGAs/Member Reps.

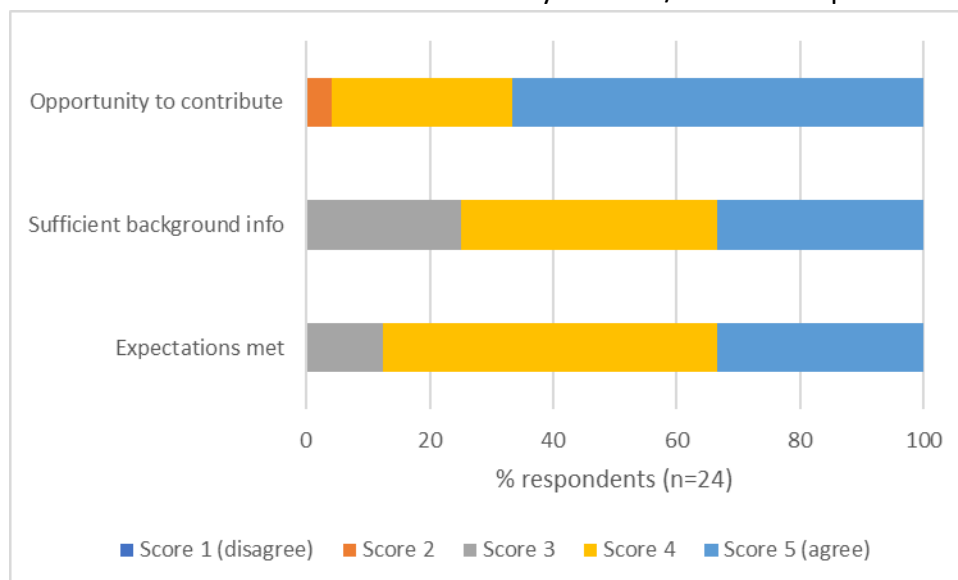


Figure 2 Agreement of survey participants (n=24) with the CRDC survey questions; “Did today's workshop meet your expectations”, “Was the background material sufficient to enable you to understand the current investment portfolio and position for the program with which you were associated” and “Do you feel that you had sufficient opportunity to contribute to the identification of research gaps and R&D needs”, where a score of 1 indicates disagreement and a score of 5 indicates agreement.

### **Budget**

#### **6. Describe how the project’s budget was spent in comparison with the application budget. Outline any changes and provide justification.**

The project budget was spent in accordance with the application budget. No changes are required.

### **Conclusion**

#### **7. Provide an assessment of the likely impact of the results and conclusions of the research project for the cotton industry. What are the take home messages?**

The project enabled effective stakeholder engagement for provision of advice to CRDC on industry RD&E priorities for investment.

The majority of stakeholders engaged in the process saw extremely high value in consultation around investment priorities for statutory research levies, and industry ownership of RDE processes and outcomes.

Implementation of a review process for activities undertaken in the project has allowed identification of opportunities to continuously improve the process for stakeholder engagement, and has also facilitated implementation of initiatives to capitalise on these opportunities.