



Australian Government

Cotton Research and  
Development Corporation

# FINAL REPORT 2014/2015

## *Part 1 - Summary Details*

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

**CRDC Project Number:** CGA1305

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**Project Title:** Central Highlands Irrigation History Book

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**Project Commencement Date:** 20/09/2012 **Project Completion Date:** 31/08/2014

## *Part 2 – Contact Details*

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## *Part 3 – Final Report*

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### *Background*

Many individuals had discussed producing a history book that documents the irrigation history attached to the Fairbairn Dam. The 40 year anniversary of the construction of the Fairbairn Dam and Emerald Irrigation Scheme prompted the CHCG&IA, alongside motivated growers and industry personnel, to commence production of a book that will encapsulate the history that has allowed the development of a resilient and reliable cotton production valley. The book has captured history through the words of those involved, with personal recounts from irrigators - both past and present, industry representatives and those involved with the construction of the dam.

### *Objectives*

The Emerald Irrigation History Book Committee's project objectives included;

- Documenting irrigators personal stories whilst still possible.  
More than 100 personal recounts have been collected for the book. These include those who chose to write and contribute their own stories, while others were collected by conducting a series of interviews.
- An objective documentation of the history with personal reflections.  
The personal reflections included in the project do indeed capture the history of the Emerald Irrigation Area directly from the mouths of those involved. The stories are based on each person's personal experiences. With a wide cross section of subjects, including irrigators, industry representatives and

those involved in the construction of the dam, a great variety of viewpoints and knowledge have been drawn upon. Facts and figures have also been drawn on to verify the personal recounts.

- Promote and celebrate, agriculture and the cotton industry across the Central Highlands.

The people featured in the book live and breathe agriculture. It is their passion and this comes across strongly in their stories. Their stories give an honest viewpoint of life in the Emerald Irrigation Area, from the hard times, to the good times and all of the things that make the Emerald Irrigation Area unique.

- Build the CHCG&IA's capacity to manage a project (budgeting, grant writing, networking, interviewing etc).

There have been many aspects to getting this project off the ground. CHCG&IA has been involved with planning, budgeting, grant writing, researching, scheduling meetings, interviewing, writing, sourcing additional information and photographs, layout and design and publishing. Many people have contributed to the project.

- Build partnerships within the industry via participation.

This project has relied on input not only from CHCG&IA members, but from a large number of people who have been involved with the Emerald Irrigation Area past and present. Not only cotton growers and irrigators were involved. Many industry representatives, from government officials to agronomists and industry supply companies and construction personnel have contributed to this project. There are a wide range of people who would claim some "ownership" of this book and are excited about the project.

- Connect growers with each other through reflection.

While each story featured in the book is unique, there are many shared experiences that have been included. Many of our interviewees were able to suggest other people whose stories should be included.

### ***Methods***

The original methodology for gathering information was adjusted during the course of the project to ensure as many stories as possible could be captured. While many people were happy to write their own stories and contribute them, others were not comfortable or lacked the time to put pen to paper. In these cases, a journalist conducted interviews and wrote the story, which was then read by the interviewee for their approval or suggested amendments. All contributed stories were also subject to editing, to ensure they were grammatically correct. All stories and photographs then went through the desktop publishing process. Meetings were held to discuss preferred layout and design options.

### ***Outcomes***

This project has very successfully resulted in a tangible collection of stories that will objectively document the history of the Emerald Irrigation Scheme. It has achieved this by compiling a recollection of stories from past growers and people associated with growing cotton in the irrigation area over the past 40 years. The project has grown since its inception, as the value of more people's recollections came to light. Many, many people have been involved with the Emerald Irrigation Area over the past 40 years and their stories all contribute to the scheme's history. The book will be

fascinating not only for those whose stories are featured, but also the community at large as they are given an insight into the Emerald Irrigation Area and the challenges and good times faced by those involved. This book will give the scheme "humanity" and will give readers a recount of life in the Emerald Irrigation Area and how it has impacted the wider community.

The highlights for the participants were being involved in the interviews and listening to people tell their stories, reliving and laughing about the good times and understanding their bad times and benefiting from their wisdom. Their stories touched our hearts as they relived their life of being involved with the Emerald Irrigation Area. Some stories, we walked away saying "that's going to be hard, putting that into a story" but nevertheless we set out to accomplish this. No two stories are the same and we look forward to the end result.

Key learnings were to have a timeframes as a committee and stick to it. After adjusting how we captured the stories by interviews we didn't fully adjust our timeframes to reflect this change. It has proven to be difficult to receive the final stories and photos of people that have assured us that they would like to contribute, but we had to draw the line in order to achieve our goal of putting the EIA memories into a documented book.

Also, it has been stressful in ensuring that we haven't left anyone out, and we have done this to the best of our ability through newspaper articles, radio announcements and, of course, emails and word-of-mouth.

People who participated were limited. We consisted of a committee of 8 with other people contributing with their strengths, such as photo editing, scanning and typing up stories. The biggest job was tracking people from years ago and encouraging them to write a story and convincing them they had a story worth writing and reading about. After all, everyone has a history!! SunWater have been very helpful in sourcing archive information in relation to the EIA scheme, in particular the construction of the Emerald Irrigation Area.

### ***Budget***

Even though the project hasn't been fully completed and, therefore, not fully paid for we have been firm with our budget in relation to the layout and design and the publishing of the book. However, we did not budget for the interviewer as we initially anticipated receiving many more stories from people writing them themselves. Therefore this has been an additional cost from the budget, but believe we have captured so many worthwhile stories to complete the book.

### ***Conclusion***

This project has resulted in a comprehensive, first-hand account of life in the Emerald Irrigation Area - from days gone by to modern times. It gives readers an insight into what life as a cotton grower and/or irrigator is like and the changes that have occurred to the industry over the years. Forty years on from the construction of the Fairbairn Dam, we risk losing the historical recounts these people have. Having these recollections documented for present and future generations makes this project invaluable. Participants in this project have learnt many things along the way and readers from the wider community will come away with a greater appreciation of the industry.