



# CGA FINAL REPORT

## Part 1 - Summary Details

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

**CRDC Project Number:** CGA1903

**CGA:** Southern Valleys

**Project Title:** 2019 Grower Development and Extension Programs and Off Target Spray Drift Mitigation

**Project Commencement Date:** 1/11/18      **Project Completion Date:** 30/9/19

## 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.**

During the past few cotton seasons in the CGA region there were approximately 20 spray drift reports per season, with nearly 40 unreported events per season. It is estimated that these events impacted 15-20,000ha of crop in our region alone. The 2015/16 Crop Consultants Australia survey estimated that 45,000ha of cotton was affected by spray drift. Spray drift events not only lead to yield reduction and so forfeited income but also leads to numerous social problems such as conflict between neighbours as well as damaging the image of cotton growers and ultimately impacting our social licence to farm.

Southern cotton growers had the opportunity to tour northern cotton growing areas in 2017 and 2018 attending the GVIA field days, meeting number of industry leading farmers and visiting their properties. These tours not only exposed growers to the cotton growing systems in the north and cotton research but it also provided a tremendous opportunity to network with growers from other regions, learn about alternative irrigation systems relevant to their farming operations.

### **Objectives**

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

The objective of this project is to provide educational and outreach programs for cotton growers in the southern valleys region. We plan to partner with other industries and organisations to cohesively fund various programs for the benefit of the growers in the region.

The first objective was to target all local industries within the southern valleys CGA, and focus on the prevention and management of off target spray drift. A meeting was held in January 2019 attended by around 60 representatives from all agriculture and spray related industries including, dryland cropping and grazing, rice, grains and horticultural production systems, apiarists, local council weeds officers, irrigation companies and government departments. A stakeholder spray drift committee was formed and since then, Stop Off-Target Spraying Riverina Valleys Inc (SOS RV) has been formed. The SOS RV has met monthly and will be running a 2day training event targeting Advisors and Agronomists in late October and a series of farmer focussed workshops also in late October.

The second objective was to organise and coordinate a trip to the northern valleys for growers in the southern region. The aim of this trip is to create an opportunity for these less experienced growers to explore the farming operations and learn about some of the cotton growing fundamentals in the northern valleys to ultimately increase their knowledge and develop and implement some of these methods in their own farming operations. In March, 18 southern growers and industry representatives were on the bus tour which included attending the 2019 Monsanto Cotton Grower of the Year Award Winner Field Day at Mundine, Goondiwindi as well as tour of Keytah and other properties around Moree.

**Methods**

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

N/A

**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.**

One of the main outputs was the formation of SOS Riverina Valleys Inc. Other outputs will be the agronomist training and farmer workshops. The primary outcome/benefit to the cotton and wider ag industry of the spray drift program is the increased awareness of the risks of off target spray drift, and to ultimately reduce the incidence of drift events and associated extensive production and financial losses that occur in the southern growing region. It will also provide an opportunity for a unified approach across all local industries to discuss the potential risks and associated mitigation tactics to minimise these risks.

The outcome from the northern tour saw attendees benefit by the expansion of their network and increase their knowledge base. Attending the 2019 Monsanto Cotton Grower of the Year Award Winner Field Day at Mundine, Goondiwindi as well as tour of Keytah and other properties around Moree allowed less experienced growers to explore the farming operations and learn about cotton growing fundamentals in the northern valleys which increased their knowledge as well as develop and implement some of the methods in their own farming operations.

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

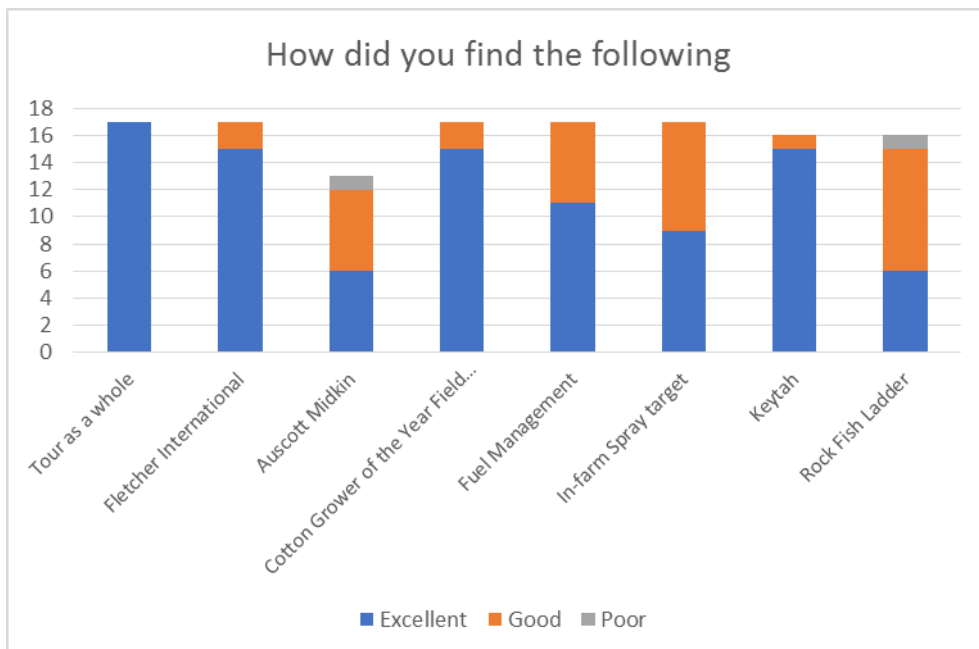
a) Feedback forms used and what the results were

Feedback was obtained from participants on the Northern Tour and the complete collated evaluation report is attached.

b) The highlights for participants or key learnings achieved

Highlights from the evaluation are below:

- 100% of attendees said the tour was excellent
- 100% said that they gained knowledge and skills as a result of the tour,
- 94% said it is beneficial to visit farms in other regions and
- 86% said they will do things differently on their farms as a result of the tour.



c) The number of people participating and any comments on level of participation 60 representatives from ALL farming industries in the region (including cotton, dryland cropping and grazing, rice, grains, apiarists and horticultural production systems), advisors, chemical suppliers/resellers, spray applicators, councils, government departments and water supply organisations attended the initial spray drift stakeholder meeting. The formation of the SOS RV shows the commitment of all to this issue. There is now a push to develop the SOS model across other valleys.

Fig 1. 18 growers and industry people attended the Northern Tour- with a tour of Keytah one of the highlights.



Fig 2. Hearing about the use of new technology in on-farm Diesel Management was of great interest at Rob Newell’s Goondiwindi property.



### ***Conclusion***

#### **6. 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?**

##### **Spray drift:**

One of the main take home messages is that spray drift is not relevant to one industry only- it impacts the whole of the community/region. The formation of the SOS RV and the expansion of the SOS model to other valleys is proof of this. A collaborative approach to dealing with spray drift will ensure success. SOS NSW will enable this to occur.

##### **Northern Tour:**

Not only did growers attend the Grower of the Year Award Winner Field Day at Mundine but they also visited a number of farms around Moree and Goondiwindi and looked at the use of different technology on farm. The use of technology to monitor and manage fuel was of particular interest, as was the importance of managing human resources in the business and use of automation and making the most of your resources (using field as short term storage).

### ***Extension Opportunities***

#### **7. Detail a plan for the activities or other steps that may be taken:**

- (a) To tell other CGAs/growers/regions about your project

All events were widely publicised prior to and during the event by IREC/SVCGA via social media (twitter & FB) as well as via email.

A press release informing of the formation of SOS RV was distributed to all local media. SOS RV has set up a Twitter account to distribute any Spray related information including event dates. It also has an email address to anonymously report spray drift events.

There will be an article on the SOS RV in the upcoming Spring Edition of the IREC Farmers' Newsletter.

- (b) To keep in touch with participants.

Attendance lists for both events were taken. THE SOS RV was formed from participants of the Spray Drift meeting. IREC has followed up with the bus trip participants.

- (c) For future projects.

IREC plan to run a Northern Tour in early 2020, and there are a number of spray drift events planned for the future (Agronomist/Advisor Ag Skills training end Oct early Nov and farmer workshops in 29-31 Oct).  
SOS NSW is being developed at a higher level- with industry and government support.

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*Please email your completed report to [research@crdc.com.au](mailto:research@crdc.com.au)*