



**Submission to the Senate
Standing Committee on
Environment &
Communications Review of the
EPB&C Amendment
(Independent Expert Scientific
Committee on Coal Seam Gas
and Large Coal Mining
Development) Bill 2012**

April, 2012



Cotton Australia

Cotton Australia is the key representative body for the Australian cotton growing industry. It helps the industry to work together to be world competitive and sustainable, and also tell the good news about the industry's achievements. Cotton Australia determines and drives the industry's strategic direction, retaining its strong focus on R&D, promoting the value of the industry, reporting on its environmental credibility, and implementing policy objectives in consultation with its stakeholders.

Cotton Australia works to ensure an environment conducive to efficient and sustainable cotton production. It has a key role in Best Management Practices (*MyBMP*), an environmental management program for growers. This work has seen a significant improvement in the environmental performance of the industry, with huge improvements in water use efficiency, significant reductions in pesticide use, and millions of dollars invested into R&D.

The Australian cotton industry directly employs thousands of Australians and this year will contribute over \$2 billion to the Australia economy.

Cotton Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide this brief submission to the committee's inquiry into the **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development) Bill 2012 [Provisions]**

Cotton Australia is a member of the National Farmers Federation, and the New South Wales Irrigators' Council, and endorses the submissions lodged by these two organisations.



General Comments

The rapid expansion of the Australian energy sector, particularly in New South Wales and Queensland, is putting at risk Australia's water resources, a resource that has long been relied on by our irrigation industries to provide a long-term and sustainable wealth stream for Australia.

More than two decades of water resource reform has placed rigid restrictions around agriculture's water use largely in the name of protecting our environment.

Therefore our industry has for sometime held considerable concern over what appears to be a much less rigorous approach to the allocation and management of water associated with mining and coal seam gas extraction.

Therefore it welcomes in broad terms the amendment of this Act, and the consequent creation of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development.

However, in welcoming the establishment of the committee Cotton Australia is disappointed that the committee will only be providing recommendations on projects that have as yet not received approval.

It is the understanding of Cotton Australia that only one of the four major coal seam gas developments in Queensland (Arrow Energy) will face scrutiny by the committee, even though the three other projects are only in the very early stages of development.

Secondly, while Cotton Australia welcomes additional scrutiny of the coal mining and coal seam gas extraction industries, and in particular the potential impacts on water resources, it wants to make sure that the work of this expert committee is well coordinated with a number of other government, university and industry initiatives that are all working towards enhancing knowledge in this area.