



COTTON AUSTRALIA LIMITED

6 December 2004

**Chairman**

Australian Senate

*Environment, Communications, Information  
Technology and the Arts*

Legislation Committee

Parliament House

**CANBERRA ACT 2600**

Dear Sir,

Cotton Australia, as the organisation representing cotton growers and cotton ginnerers, is pleased to submit the following comments on the National Water Commission Bill to your Committee.

In its role as the representative of the cotton growers, Cotton Australia has been heavily involved in the discussions and negotiations that eventually led to the Council of Australian Governments Agreement establishing the National Water Initiative on 25 June 2004. Therefore in commenting on the Bill, your Committee needs to recognise the significance that the cotton industry places in the NWI and subsequently in this Bill as the first step of that Initiative.

Please refer to the attachment for Cotton Australia's comments on the National Water Commission Bill.

Yours sincerely,

**Ralph Leutton**

***Program Manager – Policy & Legislation***



COTTON AUSTRALIA LIMITED

***Attachment***

***Comments on National Water Commission Bill***

**1.0 General:**

Cotton Australia welcomes the introduction of this Bill into the Parliament as the first legislative step following the groundbreaking Council of Australian Governments (CoAG) Agreement giving rise to the National Water Initiative (NWI). Despite interruptions to the process of implementing the NWI resulting from electoral and political tactics, the water using industries are reliant on the full and timely introduction of all aspects of the NWI.

The establishment of the National Water Commission (NWC) is crucial to the on-going roll out of the many aspects of the Initiative, as well as overseeing the disbursement and use of the monies in the National Water Fund.

Cotton Australia, as a member of the National Farmers Federation and the NSW and Queensland Irrigators Councils, shares the concerns that monies and effort required for structural adjustment and returning to sustainable yields for water resources, as well as diligent management of the environmental natural resource, had the opportunity to be misplaced without the timely establishment of the NWC.

**2.0 Specific Comment:**

**2.1 Section 8:**

In this section that deals with the nomination and appointment of Commissioners, there is a degree of concern with the clarity in the process of appointment.

While s.8(1) describes the constitution of the Commission, neither s.8(2) or s.8(3) describes who actually does the appointment. Would it be correct to assume that the parties to the Agreement each make their nominations and then it is the CoAG that makes the appointments? This needs to be clarified.

All other Sections of the Bill would appear to be very supportive of the implementation of the NWI. A key issue embedded in this Bill is the commitment to timelines and the delivery of outcomes. As a water using industry, cotton believes that this is critical.

Also of importance is the issue of transparency and clear reporting. Water using industries have for too long borne the burden of inadequate consultation compounded by insufficient, if any, reporting pathways.

**Ralph Leutton**  
***Cotton Australia***