

CAMERON DERBIDGE

ADAMA Chris Lehmann Trust Young Cotton Achiever of the Year Finalist



Cameron Derbidge is an agronomist with Total Ag Services in the Macintyre Valley. After starting his career in cotton as a farm hand, Cameron worked his way up to irrigation manager and continued to work in the field while studying agriculture externally. "My first job on an irrigation farm was starting syphons, driving tractors, planting cotton, cultivating and operating cotton pickers which led to managing staff and the crops, working alongside the agronomist before stepping into the next role as an agronomist," Cameron recalls. "Starting at the bottom and working my way through is where I give myself the most credit."

Cameron's leadership skills and keen interest in developing the cotton industry has seen him excel as an agronomist and gain a positive reputation in the industry. "I'm working with farmers and supplying them with advice to the best of my knowledge to grow the best crop," Cameron says. "To be able to convince a grower to grow cotton for the first time in a dryland scenario and pull off a reasonable crop, it's probably the biggest achievement that I get through my job."

Among his many contributions to the industry, Cameron has been actively involved with the Macintyre Valley Cotton Field Day Committee for the past six years and recently served two years as committee president. The committee hosted the Monsanto National Cotton Grower of the Year Field Day at Reardon Farms in March 2016, an event which has been described as the cotton industry's most successful field day attracting more than 300 people to Talwood.

Cameron works hard to showcase the farming industry in the Macintyre Valley. He also feels that field days and crop tours allow him to continually gather new ideas to refine and apply to local situations. "It's good to see the growers coming up from the Gwydir and the Namoi Valleys to see what we're doing as a valley and they then take that information home to their own farms," he says. "Field days are a great way to help facilitate change and adoption. They encourage growers to consider new industry developments by having the opportunity to engage in discussions with both the experts and the growers who are pioneering the adoption and programs, as well as see it visually in the paddock."



Community involvement through the Macintyre Valley Cotton Charity Golf Days saw \$77,000 raised for the Goondiwindi State High School bursary over the past 11 years. Cameron has also helped with the Cotton Awards Dinner that attracts 240 guests annually. He heads up the annual Macintyre Valley Cotton Crop Competition in both irrigated and dryland categories with a team of judges from across the industry. This season the competition attracted 31 farms to enter. Cameron is motivated by the pace of the cotton industry's development and hopes to continue the innovation and collaboration. "The sky is the limit; I wouldn't doubt that in another 10 year's time our yields are going to be higher again," he says. "There's so much research and work done with varieties and growth habits that I think anything's possible. It's such a proactive industry."



His vision for the next five to ten years is for cotton growers nationwide to be effectively and appropriately using some form of satellite imagery or drone technologies combined with soil and moisture monitoring equipment. He also hopes to improve cotton's water efficiency and nutrition. Cameron believes agronomists can work with ADAMA to push for industry improvements. "They're definitely one of our preferred companies to work with. They do a lot of research and bring a lot of data with their new products," he explains. "I think in the cotton industry their chemical portfolio is probably the biggest and they've got new products coming through all the time."

**FOR FULL DETAILS PLEASE VISIT
THE AUSTRALIAN COTTON AWARDS WEBSITE:
WWW.AUSTRALIANCOTTONAWARDS.COM**

