

Event Recap & MAC Update – JULY 2025

We're excited to share that we held our first major event on Saturday, 12th July and it was a great success! We welcomed 27 attendees from across the region, including Griffith, Darlington Point, Carrathool, Hillston, Urana, Condobolin, Gundagai, and Wagga. It was fantastic to see such a strong and diverse turnout.

Inside Southern Cotton

Our group boarded the bus in Griffith and made our way to Southern Cotton Gin for a tour with the incredible Kate O'Callaghan.

As one of the founding team members at Southern Cotton, Kate offered a deeply knowledgeable and personal perspective on the gin's operations. Her walkthrough of the paddock-to-processing journey gave attendees a newfound appreciation for the cotton industry and its vital role in the region's economy and identity.

Some facts from Kate:

- Established in 2011, Southern Cotton is now in its 13th year of ginning — a major milestone for the business and the local cotton industry.
- While not the largest gin in the region, Southern Cotton works with around 70 cotton growers, stretching from Forbes to Finley.
- On the back of what's shaping up to be a record-breaking year for regional cotton, Southern Cotton is set to break its own processing record, with an expected 220,000 bales ginned this season.
- Their single-shift processing record stands at an incredible 900 bales over a 12-hour run — though they typically process around 80 bales per hour.
- Southern Cotton holds a stake in Voyager Craft Malt and the Whitton Malthouse, which is currently expanding to include a new caravan park on site.
- Southern Cotton has recently invested in a Tasmanian wool mill. Cotton from the Riverina has already been sent there to create blended cotton-wool textiles, primarily for clothing.



Behind-the-Scenes Tour at Voyager Craft Malt

After Southern Cotton, we made our way to Voyager Craft Malt (VCM), where we were hosted by Alya Young, the Business Operations Manager.

Alya has been working alongside founders, Stuart Whytcross and Brad Woolner, for over five years and took the lead giving us a fantastic tour.

Alya brought a unique perspective, having previously worked at Southern Cotton before joining VCM. She guided us through the warehouse, grain storage silos, and key parts of the kilning, steaming, malting and testing processes. Attendees got an in-depth look at how world-class malt is crafted right here in the Riverina.

Some facts from Alya:

- Once grain is delivered by local growers at harvest, VCM can produce bagged malt ready for dispatch in under a week, an impressively fast turnaround.
- Standard packaging options include 25 kg bags and 1-tonne bulk bags.
- VCM supplies malt to major beer brands including Balter Beer and Stone & Wood.
- They also create custom malt blends tailored to individual customer specifications.
- VCM has provided expertise and consultation for the development of other malthouses interstate, highlighting their leadership in the industry.
- Most of their malt ends up in NSW, Victoria, and Queensland.
- One of their specialty products is a smoked malt, made by burning redwood and mountain ash wood and pumping the smoke through the malting chamber, adding unique depth and flavour to the final product.
- While barley is the base for most malts, VCM has diversified into rye corn, and oats. Some of the rye corn is sourced from cover crops grown in Hillston.
- Ever heard of purple barley or black barley? Both are grown locally. Black barley originates from Ethiopia, and purple barley from Tibet. Malts made from these grains are highly sought after for their unique flavour profiles and striking appearance.
- VCM has recently earned both Organic and Sustainability accreditations. Their certified organic malt is in growing demand, and they currently source organic grain from a local grower in the Riverina.



Sunsets, Sips & a Feast at the Whitton Malthouse

After a few hours of touring and learning, the group wound down with evening drinks at the Whitton Malthouse, just in time to catch a stunning sunset over the iconic lake. It was the perfect setting to relax and connect.

Attendees mingled over drinks, with some opting for the whiskey tasting paddle, a fitting continuation from our earlier malt tour with Alya. We then headed indoors for a delicious and comforting dinner of slow-cooked lamb shoulder and roast chicken.

As a bonus, we enjoyed a last-minute included tasting of the Beale Street Choc Milk Stout from Tumut River Brewing Co, along with a pour of Kinglake Single Malt Whisky, both made using Voyager Craft Malt's own product. It was a feast fit for kings, and needless to say, no one left hungry or thirsty.

The night wrapped up with a relaxing bus ride back to Griffith, where a few of us capped off the evening with a cocktail at the Gem Hotel before parting ways.

We're calling it a success! We received great responses from attendees on the day, and the initial results from our follow-up survey have been overwhelmingly positive. One helpful suggestion that has come through is to allow more time for socialising and networking, a great insight we'll take on board for future events.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this event! We loved catching up with our members and meeting so many local young aggies from across the region. We hope to see you all again soon!

