THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES

SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL,
EARTH AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
SCIENCES
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

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To Whom it may concern

Assessment of the rigour and standing of "Cottoning on-stories of Australian cotton-growing" by S. McHugh (1996)

I have worked on the ecology of rivers for more than twenty years and I have particularly concentrated on the ecological effects of building dams and diverting water on rivers and their wetlands. This has now become, with climate change, the two foremost environmental issues facing our country. The poor state of Australia's Murray-Darling Basin rivers is now matched by unprecedented steps by all governments to return flows to this river system. I regard Siobhan McHugh's work on cotton growing and particularly the development of water policies, as a of outstanding importance in the management of Australian rivers.

The power and rapidity of development by the cotton industry and its ability to withdraw considerable amounts of water in the northern part of the Murray-Darling Basin was poorly known or researched until this book was written. Siobhan McHugh's book was a particularly well researched piece of work which was essential, given the controversial nature of the issues that she was able to uncover. It is a measure of the works importance that I have cited it a number of times in peer reviewed papers that I have written on the ecology of the Murray-Darling Basin rivers. The information in her book on river flows extractions and most importantly the policies of governments to development are particularly illustrative and not covered by any other writings that I am aware of. The book continues to make a significant contribution to all of these areas in water management and water resource development. It commands considerable standing in the field.

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