

# THE RON COCKS MEMORIAL AWARD

FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN IRRIGATION

## Allan Hubbard

### Ron Cocks Memorial Award Winner 2010

***Allan Hubbard knew water would change the economy after he saw the difference it made to his Ashburton dryland farm back in the 1960's.***

A man of his time for water in Canterbury, a farmer, a visionary, businessman and financier – Allan Hubbard long classed water as the 'new gold' believing that if properly implemented and managed, both economically and environmentally, that irrigation would be the cornerstone for growth in New Zealand.

Allan became a key driver of water management infrastructure for environmental and economic benefit around irrigated agriculture. Quietly behind the scenes he breathed life into ambitious water management and irrigation development in Canterbury for more than 50 years.

Modest about his achievements and the progressive growth he pioneered and continued to support through his intensive involvement in farming circles and water related groups, Allan's passion and enthusiasm was encouraging to all.

Allan moved to Timaru with his wife Jean in 1953 setting up his own Chartered Accountant business and raising five daughters. As a young man he came to believe that wealth and success conferred duties and obligations rather than rights.

Allan's ability was long directed towards the development of the Canterbury region's full capacity.

He saw first-hand the impact a reliable supply of water could have after inspecting irrigation schemes in arid California. It was his interest in the Californian Water Board that inspired him to bring the North American model to New Zealand.

At the time his Mid Canterbury farm was a dryland property. He told the story of the man he brought the farm from – "he didn't believe in irrigation because it brings the weeds".



Also in the early 1960's a Lincoln College professor produced a paper suggesting that dryland farming was more profitable than irrigated land. Allan had his own opinion.

The changing economic and drought events spurred a change in thinking and Allan became the driving force in establishing the Opuha Dam, articulating early the importance of conserving water in South Canterbury. The Opuha project delivered in generating electricity and providing water for 16,000ha of irrigated agriculture while also supplying water for urban consumption and improving environmental flows.

Following the collapse of the Opuha Dam in 1997 personal interests in the development of the dam found Allan relentless in his bid to get the dam commissioned as he took on a 50% shareholding himself to make it a meaningful project and to see it through to completion. It was always his vision to see Opuha Water 100% farmer owned and he led that realisation.

A key figure in the growth of Central Plains Water (CPW), Allan again put his money with his passion. Through his Dairy Holdings enterprise he came to the rescue when the project needed money. If it wasn't for Allan's bail out CPW would not have obtained consents and be where it is today.

Allan had substantial and wide spread business interest and involvements, holding directorships in a large number of New Zealand private companies throughout various industries. But his passion was farming and personally he recently had ownership of over 30 dairy, sheep and beef farms throughout New Zealand.

One of his greatest disappointments was that politics had become so involved in water.

He remained actively involved in the business community right up until his death in 2011.