



Chairman's Report

Annual General Meeting – October 21, 2010 at Methven

I welcome you all to the 2010 annual general meeting.

This past year has been one of significant growth for Irrigation New Zealand as it tracks real ground as the nation's unified voice on irrigation issues. As a national body INZ is contributing a positive influence resulting in significant impact on all water related challenges.

Water quality and quantity, linked with the increasing demand for water continue to prompt ongoing vigorous debate on the science and management of water resources and its management.

INZ has proactively participated in the Land and Water Forum with chief executive Andrew Curtis specifically involved in infrastructure, allocation, good management practice and the Audited Self Management components of the work. I encourage you all to get familiar with the recommendations of this report.

INZ has maintained an influencing position of engagement with central and local government in the development and implementation of water policy. We have approached our business in clearly identified areas – leadership and advocacy, technical developments, communication with members, increasing membership and corporate revenue growth and liaison with other industry related groups.

Work has been prioritised on the basis of what benefits INZ can develop for members and how best to mitigate negative effects of policy changes.

The stand of the INZ Board is to make its position known from the platform of fact and reasoned argument in the circles where important decisions are made.

Irrigation NZ is dedicated to adding value to individual irrigators' business and committed to uplifting the general level of knowledge for sustainable outcomes from water use in terms of both quantity and quality.

The IrrigationNZ News magazine is focused with topical information and expert advice and opinion, community and irrigator experiences and general issues that address optimal water management in New Zealand.

DripFeed offers up-to-the-minute information to all members who have registered their email to receive this.

As INZ works to lift the level of understanding of on-farm issues within central and local government, it is working equally to highlight the value of irrigation to the wider economy and community of New Zealand.

Our magazine, and increased media participation, has been exceptionally well received and provides an INZ face to the full spectrum of the irrigation industry including farmers, consultants, engineers, scientists, politicians and to the wider community.

INZ is continually promoting the benefits and working on industry uptake of the INZ Codes of Practice for irrigation design and evaluation, and installation.

The Canterbury Water Management Strategy is all but complete and now moving into the implementation phase with the appointment of a number of zonal committees complete. The regional committee had its first meeting this month. It is gratifying to see a number of high profile rural water practitioners being appointed to these committees.

As regards water allocation, INZ has been instrumental in negotiating a realistic outcome for irrigators with Environment Canterbury. However, irrigators should recognise they will have to improve performance over the longer-term to ensure they achieve universally accepted water use efficiency targets. As an industry we all have to lift our game if we want to proactively move forward.

In respect to NRRP developments it is pleasing to report that ECan has accepted Irricalc.

It is also encouraging to see the commissioners have seen sense in terms of water allocation reliability, shifting from the original proposal of four to five years out to nine to ten years.

Water measuring becomes mandatory next month and INZ in partnership with MAF and MfE is undertaking the development of a cost-effective and robust national, industry led water measurement standard and associated quality assurance programme that will ensure consistent installation and verification of water measurement, and therefore future water management in New Zealand.

In my report last year I made reference to the concern INZ had with dysfunctional governance and leadership within Environment Canterbury. INZ played a behind the scenes role in voicing concern to central government on this matter. While government has come under significant criticism regarding the democracy of its decision to appoint commissioners, one would have to wonder what democracy is if 10 democratically elected district councils and a nationally elected government decides to sort out one bad egg. INZ has forged a professional working relationship with the commissioners, particularly those with water portfolio responsibilities. It is pleasing to note that ECan has finally become a member of IrrigationNZ.

The INZ Technical and Trade Special Interest Group has made significant progress in its first full year of business with the launch this month of the Decision Support Package for Irrigation Systems being one of its key achievements. The expected outcome of the project will enable farmers to be more specific in their requirements and expectation of irrigation supply companies.

Through this and other parallel projects INZ Tech and Trade is seeing an increased uptake of industry standards and a number of key industry members are participating in the training courses for the National Certificate in Irrigation Design.

INZ has experienced significant growth around the regions in this past year, in particular in respect to new industry and local government membership. Discussion is ongoing with water user groups throughout Southland, Hawkes Bay and Waikato. Given the increased workload and expectation of INZ led initiatives and projects, INZ plans discussion with members in the near future in respect to a membership fee increase.

Conference 2010 was a resounding success with plans afoot for the 2012 Conference.

Eleven regional Making Irrigation Pay workshops will be complete by the end of this month and thanks goes to principle workshop sponsors EECA, Fonterra and Agmardt who made this road show possible.

The launch and delivery of the Irrigator's Decision Support Package was part of these workshops.

INZ played a leading role in respect to the water challenges surrounding the Canterbury earthquake, working closely with the Rural Recovery Group to lead water and irrigation issues. This involved pulling together a specialist Water Taskforce to co-ordinate this work. INZ worked with the industry to develop a course of action and co-ordinate industry information and news releases.

INZ held a very successful financing infrastructure workshop in August that brought together economists, government officials and irrigation promoters.

This resulted in some positive and encouraging concepts that will be circulated in due course.

Several INZ board members and staff headed south to Otago for an action packed four-day field trip earlier in the year. The trip proved positive in terms of fostering relationships in new territory.

I would like to thank our members for their continuing support. These past five years have been a period of remarkable growth for our organisation in all respects, particularly in establishing a positive brand and the development of an effective working profile.

I acknowledge the support given to INZ projects by the MAF Sustainable Farming Fund, MfE Sustainable Management Fund and many regional councils and organisations throughout New Zealand. INZ projects have benefited in excess of \$750,000 from SFF and Community Irrigation funds.

On the staffing front we farewelled Pat from our administration office in April and welcomed her replacement Marilyn to the team. We went on to expand the team with the appointment of a projects manager – Paul Reese commenced work with INZ this month in that role.

I take this opportunity to thank our chief executive Andrew and staff – Chris, Marilyn and Annette – and the board, for their untiring input and support.

The challenges relating to important water issues ahead will be no less but I have every confidence INZ has the profile, knowledge, experience and support to meet all challenges with increasing confidence as a unified national body successfully representing irrigation interests and promoting excellence in irrigation development and efficient water management right throughout New Zealand.

This will be another important year for irrigated agriculture and INZ needs your continued support to have our voice heard strongly.

Graeme Sutton

Graeme Sutton
Chairman Irrigation NZ

