



Chairman's Report

Annual General Meeting – October 7, 2009 at Ashburton

I welcome you all to the 2009 annual general meeting.

2009 has been a significant and generally satisfying year for Irrigation New Zealand.

Irrigation New Zealand continues to gain momentum as the nation's unified voice on irrigated issues, as a national body contributing a positive influence resulting in significant impact on water related challenges for all irrigated agriculture in New Zealand.

Growth of water allocation and continued increasing demand for water continues to place New Zealand's water resources under increasing pressure. Water quality and quantity continue to prompt ongoing vigorous debate on the science and management of water resources and management of the land.

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.

We have been successful in this approach as evidenced by the influence INZ has had on the development of water policy at the central and local government levels.

We also take the opportunity to speak in a balanced way at many conferences and forums where the general public is represented.

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.

Our new magazine – IrrigationNZ News, replacing the traditional newsletter, covers generic issues experienced by water users across all sectors. The magazine is focused with topical information and expert advice and opinion, community and irrigator experiences and general issues that address New Zealand's irrigated agriculture from both industry sources and farmer perspectives.

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. This new magazine 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 of existing system performance. The development of the installation Code of Practice is also currently making good progress.

The Canterbury Water Management Strategy draft was launched last month. This document highlights a water management shake-up with key changes including a move away from the effects-based management of individual consents under the RMA to integrated water management based on water management zones.

The strategy encompasses water allocation decisions that address sustainable environmental limits and climate variability with action to protect and restore freshwater biosecurity alongside the management of the cumulative effects of water abstraction and land use intensification.

As regards water allocation, INZ has been instrumental in negotiating a realistic outcome for irrigators with Environment Canterbury. Engaging Aqualinc to develop the Irricalc methodology has been vital in ensuring a fair and economically achievable solution for irrigators. 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. INZ is now working with Environment Canterbury to enable the Irricalc methodology to become embedded within the NRRP.

Under the Primary Sector Water Partnership a leadership document has now been produced. This contains a series of goals including a water efficiency target stating that 80% of extracted water used by the sector will be under a self management approach to meet benchmarks of water efficiency by 2016. Audited Self Management allows monitoring systems to be designed around adding value to an irrigator's business as opposed to the often unproductive and valueless requirement of the regulatory route.

In working with regional councils INZ reports a mix of satisfaction and disappointment over this past year. Clearly there are questions around what is working and what is not and while we have seen some very successful regional council strategy implementation when it comes to water management programmes – we have also encountered some regions seriously lacking structure and sustainable leadership.

In particular INZ has real concern with what is clearly dysfunctional governance and leadership within Environment Canterbury. This 'locked horns' power struggle is creating huge challenges for water management in Canterbury. INZ is objectively working through this current scenario, ensuring the best interests of water users are accounted for – water management has to work for water users.

INZ has encouraged the establishment of the Trade and Technical Special Interest Group within INZ membership involving technical and scientific members. Representatives have further met to progress the first-cut programme which has a clear focus to develop better outcomes for the trade and irrigators alike with regard to sustainable water management.

Membership has progressed steadily over the past year. INZ currently has over 3,500 members covering 350,000ha of irrigation – 50% of the total irrigated area. All the key irrigation suppliers and consultants are also members, this makes us a truly unique organisation being representative of the whole irrigation industry. As regards the distribution of irrigator membership, INZ is now making headway in the North Island as well as in the other South Island regions outside Canterbury – INZ is clearly now a national organisation.

Home base for INZ has moved from Lichfield Street to 323 Manchester Street (Christchurch). The new premise is a 2-storey, character stand alone house with INZ sole occupant. The lease term is for this premise is three years.

Planning for the conference and expo to be held in Christchurch, April 26-28 2010 is well underway. A steering group with a mix of technical experts and irrigators is working on the programme and organisation of this conference with early indication that this 2010 event is going to be even better than last time – tackling the challenges ahead while exploring future opportunities for sustainable water management. We are delighted to announce that Meridian and Hynds have joined as principal partners for this 2010 conference and expo.

Several INZ board members and staff headed north to Wairarapa and Hawkes Bay for an action packed three-day field trip in August. This trip was a stunning success. The Wairarapa Irrigation Trust has unveiled a promising scheme that will unlock much potential within the region. The Hawke's Bay leg of the journey demonstrated there is another way when it comes to water management, perhaps highlighting the need to determine whether the tools and processes we currently use to manage our resources are really working. The Horizons Regional Council is clearly the leader when it comes to water demand management. The 'WaterMatters' system they have developed appears leak proof.

I would like to thank our members for their continuing support. Our membership continues to grow and I am confident that this will be the case in the future. These past four years have been truly remarkable.

I acknowledge the support given to INZ work by the MAF Sustainable Farming Fund, MfE Sustainable Management Fund and many regional council's throughout New Zealand.

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

Andrew Curtis took up the position as chief executive in July, taking over from the retiring Dr Terry Heiler who has now moved his focus to work more specifically in a specialist project management role within INZ.

The transition of our new chief executive is complete and I have much pleasure in acknowledging credit to Terry for establishing the organisation on a firm footing over its formative years. Early signs are that the challenge to step to even greater heights under Andrew's leadership will definitely be a happening reality.

I also acknowledge the valuable contribution of Peter Scott who as an executive board member has contributed significantly to the irrigation industry. Peter stepped down from the board in July. During his time on the board Peter worked tirelessly for all INZ members. His determination and keen sense of humour will be missed around the board table. I thank him most sincerely for his long and untiring service and commitment to the association.

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