

IREC Executive Officer's Report

IREC Annual General Meeting – 2008

As you know, Bryan Clark took his leave of IREC earlier this year to pursue other opportunities further afield.

Peter Draper kindly invited me to take on the role of Part-Time Executive Officer, which I accepted with pleasure. Having been involved with IREC during my time at Ricegrowers' Association, I was pleased to become part of this well-respected organisation.

I've been enjoying my time working with the Hayley Wordsworth (who is the one who really runs the organisation!) and the dedicated members of the Executive Committee.

Bryan is a hard act to follow with his knowledge and passion of the irrigation industry and he has been generous enough to continue his input when needed.

I consider that I have been taking a bit of a caretaker role, rather than being a driving force behind IREC, as there has been uncertainty as to IREC's role into the future.

Even though activities at IREC have been slowing down somewhat, since coming on board we have held two successful events and put out another excellent edition of the Farmers' Newsletter.

The Irrigation Showcase Dinner was held on Tuesday 5 August, in Griffith, and was well attended with around 70 guests. We decided this year to profile the farmers who were featured in the publication "Lifting Irrigated Cropping Profitability and Water Use Efficiency", which was published by GRDC and the Irrigated Cropping Forum and distributed with the Autumn Farmers' Newsletter.

Two farmers from that publication spoke at that dinner – Ian Sutherland from Coleambally and Jason Mitchell from Carrathool. Both speakers were interesting and entertaining and gave a good insight into their excellent farming practices. Other farmers who were profiled in the book also attended the dinner.

The following day on Wednesday 6 August 2008, the GRDC Irrigated Cropping Update was held. This too was well attended by around 85 guests. The program was organised by O'Callaghan Rural Management with input from the IREC Cropping Systems Committee. The program included a variety of presentations, including Global Economics, Grain Markets, Biotechnologies, Barley, Industrial Hemp, New Cereals for Irrigation and Climate Change. Feedback indicated it was an interesting program and participants gained a lot of new knowledge. IREC is proud to be the driving force behind this update and will continue to be so.

Lucy Kealey has continued her outstanding work as Editor of The Farmers' Newsletter and the Spring Edition was another excellent publication. A survey was sent with that edition, asking readers for their thoughts and input into its content. Overwhelmingly, the comments have been positive indicating the publication is worthwhile, relevant and valued. IREC plans to continue to publish The Farmers Newsletter and we are investigating options of funding it into the future. Hopefully when there is a rice crop, RIRDC funding will resume to fund a rice-based edition again.

As for projects being conducted under the IREC umbrella, these have all come to an end this year. The positions based at Yanco and funded by RIRDC finished up in June this year and the Oilseeds project concluded in September.

The Irrigated Cropping Forum, of which IREC is a member, has continued to source funding for projects in irrigation and the results from these will intimately benefit IREC and its members.

IREC "moved house" this year and is now comfortably located in the old CSIRO library behind the main CSIRO building. With Murrumbidgee Irrigation moving in next door, there will soon be much more traffic around the place.

As you know, there is a Special Resolution to be discussed at today's AGM. If passed, in effect this will mean the Executive will not need to meet as regularly and IREC's activities will be scaled back to the baseline activities such as the Irrigated Cropping Forum and the Farmers Newsletter. All feedback we have received indicates people would like to see these activities continue.

If the resolution is not passed, it is likely activities will still be scaled back, but the Executive will continue to meet. This hiatus in activities will give IREC a chance to refocus and hopefully re-energise to emerge stronger when the drought breaks (which it will!).

Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to work with IREC and I look forward to continuing my involvement as needed.

Margaret Andrezza
Executive Officer