

IREC Chairman's Report

IREC Annual General Meeting – 2009

Unfortunately, 2009 was not the year that the drought was broken. My tenure as chairman has been characterised by drought with one good year in the middle. It is definitely time for change.

My original impetus to have greater involvement with IREC was to try and get more research funding for irrigated crops after seeing the success of the rice industry's involvement with Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC).

Thanks to IREC and its involvement with the Irrigated Cropping Forum (ICF), the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) now has a greater recognition of irrigated grain crops and have funded some excellent projects which are still bearing fruit. The drought, however, has begun to have a negative impact on levy income which is determined by grain production, which is also down as a result of drought.

The drought effect is becoming insidious both on demographics and spirit. We are seeing a decline in the number of irrigation farmers with the amalgamation of properties and sale of water to different levels of government. It is a "perfect storm" at the moment with all of IREC member organisations experiencing difficult times. Seventy years ago IREC was born to help handle the area's adversity and I am sure it will have a role in the future. IREC's original role came about due to too much water and the issues it caused, which is very different to the circumstances in which we now find ourselves.

IREC continued its core activities during the year but with the only executive meeting being held prior to the AGM. Activities included two issues of the Farmers' Newsletter, hosting the GRDC irrigation update, supporting ICF and sponsorship of the Young Irrigation Network's Family Day.

I would like to thank all of our sponsors for their support. This support is vital to the ongoing work of IREC. The Farmers' Newsletter continues to excel as a resource for irrigation farmers and I thank the authors for their articles and contributions. Lucy Kealey does an outstanding job producing this magazine, which is well recognised in wider circles, and I thank her for the professional approach she always delivers to this magazine.

IREC staff, Hayley Wordsworth and Marg Andreazza, have again successfully kept the wheels turning and my sincere thanks to them for their efforts. With the reduced activity within the organisation it is probably harder to stay motivated however, both have done an excellent job.

Remember 'good things come to those who wait'. May 2010 be the year of delivery!

Peter Draper
Chairman