



Chairman's foreword

Irrigators continue to face a challenging period with wide variations in rainfall from irrigation areas in northern Victoria to the Lachlan River in NSW. Many winter crops were sown without moisture and are struggling with water allocations remaining on zero. There is the added frustration of sitting on the sidelines while commodity prices are stronger than they have been for many years.

IREC is also at a crossroad, facing some of its biggest challenges in its 70 year history. Farmer participation is vital to ensure that IREC is an organisation that benefits farmers – and of recent years IREC has found farmer participation in its events dwindling. Another significant challenge is accessing funding with reductions in both the number of organisations providing funding and the amounts available.

The organisation has had a long history of helping irrigators and next year will be the 70th anniversary of the committee's formation. Recent publicity about IREC's future was designed to get your attention so that we could get your feedback, be it positive or negative.

The question for irrigators is 'do we want IREC into the future?'

Your feedback in this case is critical. So please complete the survey form included in this edition of the *Farmers' Newsletter*. Your responses will help shape the future of IREC, which is the key agenda item for the Annual General Meeting in November.

The role of an irrigation industry organisation such as IREC, which covers all irrigation enterprises, was once again demonstrated in late July. The Irrigation Showcase Dinner, organised by IREC and ICF, and the GRDC Irrigation Grains Research Update, hosted by IREC, were both great successes judging by the positive feedback received.

The Irrigation Showcase Dinner featured two of 14 irrigators profiled in the ICF publication *Lifting irrigated profitability and*

water use efficiency, which was distributed with the last edition of this magazine. Jason Mitchell outlined the trials and tribulations but great benefits of 'no till' and stubble retention with the big stubble loads irrigation produces. Ian Sutherland charted the changes at Coleambally from scalded bare paddocks through to high tech water delivery and management of water on farm. The case studies publication is available from the IREC office or on the Irrigated Cropping Forum website. Our sponsors for the night were AGA, RABO Bank, Think Water, PHL Surveyors, EnviroWise, Berton Vineyard and DobijaWorld.

Two GRDC Irrigation Grains Research Updates are held annually with one in the south hosted by VICC and the other one in the north hosted by IREC. The Updates are a great opportunity to bring in expertise from outside the area to give new or different angles on the challenges we face. A wide range of topics were covered and the presentations will be available on the IREC and GRDC websites. Sponsors for the northern update included AGA, gps-Ag, CASE IH, AWB Seeds, Commonwealth Bank Agribusiness and GRDC.

Many people have helped in the organisation of these events and I would like to thank and acknowledge Marg Andreazza (IREC EO), Hayley Wordsworth (IREC Administration) Matt McCarthy (ORM) and Rob Fisher (ICF EO), as well as our many speakers and contributors.

The *Farmers' Newsletter* continues to be highly regarded and it is in large part due to the skills of editor Lucy Kealey, as well as the wide support of our article contributors. I hope you find this current issue of value to your business.

Peter Draper
Chairman IREC

