



Media Statement

July 16, 2010

Irrigation NZ welcomes changes to community scheme funding

Irrigation NZ welcomes changes to the Community Irrigation Fund believing the reshape will clear significant stumbling blocks encountered in the early stages of developing sustainable community schemes.

Irrigation NZ (INZ) has been working with MAF officials for some time to extend the scope of the fund to speed up development and improve cost efficiencies and management of community irrigation schemes.

The Community Irrigation Fund plays a key role in supporting local communities and regional councils to develop sustainable water schemes and water strategies.

Agriculture Minister David Carter today announced changes that will widen the eligibility criteria of the Community Irrigation Fund to cover technical design work and training.

INZ chairman Graeme Sutton said clearing the way for technical design work to be covered under the funding criteria effectively removes the blockage that frequently impedes progress in the early stages of a scheme's development.

While INZ has been working "off its own bat" to up-skill people involved in scheme development and management in a number of governance type roles – incorporating training into the Community Irrigation Fund will allow the industry to fast track this training to ensure the necessary skills are attained, incorporating tangible economic benefit and a strengthened knowledge and understanding of environmental imperatives.

"Getting our people up to speed to cope with the overall development including financial, community and sustainable environmental management is increasingly important for what in many cases going forward will be large infrastructure developments."

While the size of the fund has not been increased at this stage it is INZ's expectation that this will happen once the current fund has been exhausted.

"Meantime widening the funding opportunity is a pleasing step in the right direction for better utilisation of the existing funds," Sutton concluded.

Further comment: Graeme Sutton phone 0274 449673

Irrigation NZ is a national body representing all irrigation interests in a unified voice to promote excellence in irrigation development and efficient water management based on the principles of responsible and sustainable water management throughout NZ.

