

## **Irrigation NZ Conference and Expo**

October 14 '08

### **Chairman's opening address**

Ladies and gentlemen, Irrigation New Zealand members, invited speakers and the Right Honourable Jim Anderton - Welcome

Irrigation New Zealand is delighted to see you here at the biggest irrigation event ever held in this country.

Water issues continue to be every which way, and this event provides an ideal opportunity for the irrigation industry to put its best foot forward and show how much it contributes to the nation and how responsibly it manages water.

The conference theme of innovation and sustainability is reflected in a programme full of innovative technologies and solutions that will allow improved water management and improved productive capacity.

During the conference you will see the best and latest irrigation technology, hear up-to-date presentations about irrigation practice and policy and meet fellow irrigators and key people in the industry.

This event is a unique opportunity to meet like-minded farmers and industry associates who want to grow their business and be informed by global and national keynote speakers.

Significant 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 are prompting vigorous debate on the science and management of water resources and management of land.

This conference presents a strong line up of both national and international speakers who will outline systems, tools and innovation that will provide information pertaining to the challenging issues flowing with water and lead New Zealand's irrigated agriculture into the future.

There is opportunity to socialise and catch up with friends and colleagues at the conference dinner and exhibition.

The wide and varied exhibition has been staged as part of the expo giving conference delegates and members of the public free of charge exposure to the latest in irrigation industry business, product and technology.

\*\*\*\*\*

These are troubling times globally. Food security, climate change, environmental sustainability are challenges that the New Zealand irrigation industry must address.

Population increases are a fact.

Reducing access to water for agriculture in the developing world is a fact.

Land degradation under irrigation in arid climates removes more land from production each year than new lands are developed.

We in New Zealand have the capacity to help with making more food available and reducing pressures on the land and water resources of the developing world.

New Zealand irrigation has a large part to play. We have suitable land and generous water resources.

We have a global responsibility in the same way that we have a responsibility around climate change.

The global clock will not turn back to the gentler times of the 1950's. Those that preach this as where we should go are unrealistic.

Our own environmental quality of life is best guaranteed by having a strong economy. And that means a strong agriculture sector.

But we need to do things differently and better. The majority of irrigation farmers know that we need to do things better.

Many are leading the world in best practice irrigation.

By world standards our water use in agriculture is good – we need to make it excellent.

For Canterbury and Otago, and soon for Wairarapa and Hawkes Bay, water storage of excess flows is the key and most urgent issue for the future of our agriculture.

Viable dryland farming is becoming difficult in some areas – impossible in others.

We need to plan to invest now in multi-purpose water infrastructure to realise the agricultural, environmental and social benefits there for the taking.

These issues will crop up right throughout this conference.

This 2008 event is undoubtedly the largest ever comprehensive irrigation industry event New Zealand has ever staged – Take all you can from it, and work with it.

I would like to extend special thanks for the generous support of all sponsors and exhibitors who are key components ensuring the success of this event

Irrigation New Zealand looks forward to continued associations with you all in the future and encourage you to support the organisation through your membership as it works on your behalf promoting excellence in irrigation development and efficient water management based on the principles of responsible and sustainable management of water resources.

***Graeme Sutton***

Irrigation NZ chairman