



Chairman's Address to the Annual General Meeting of Irrigation NZ Inc.

17th October 2013

Ladies and gentlemen welcome to the 2013 annual general meeting of Irrigation NZ.

It has been another eventful year for Irrigation NZ and irrigators generally.

There has been a lot of activity in the land and water space, much of it positive but also some concerning developments.

The Land and Water Forum (LAWF) concluded its deliberations late in 2012 culminating in its final report. Irrigation NZ CEO Andrew Curtis spent much of 2012 in Wellington, heavily involved in the LAWF process. Irrigation NZ was generally pleased with the final report but would have liked to see the report go further in providing irrigators with greater long term certainty of water supply.

Regional Councils across the country began various processes to give effect to the Government's 2011 National Policy Statement on Freshwater, which requires Council's to put in place protections for water quality and manage the over allocation of water supplies, where this was an issue.

In some regions the processes have been open and transparent and the rules being developed are able to be understood and interpreted. In other regions the outcome of the processes is less clear, which puts existing irrigators and those developing with irrigation in a very difficult situation. Irrigation NZ has some concerns about the inconsistent outcomes of these processes across the country.

The highlight of the year for me has been the support shown by Government for the irrigation sector. Grant funding from the \$35M Irrigation Acceleration Fund (IAF) has been pivotal in a number of irrigation schemes getting closer to becoming a reality.

The irrigation sector was boosted at the beginning of the year by the announcement from Government that it was bringing forward its proposed investment in irrigation infrastructure with the allocation of \$80M for investment and establishing the Crown Irrigation Investment Company (CIIL) to undertake the investment process. Good progress has been made during the year and I'm hopeful that we will see the CIIL make its first investments early in 2014.

I would like to thank the current Minister of primary industries the Hon. Nathan Guy, and his predecessor Hon. David Carter MP for their support of the sector. Thanks also to Kevin Steele and Murray Doak at IAF for their work with the sector.

Mother Nature also wielded her power throughout the year, with summer drought conditions in many regions and low river flows and groundwater levels severely restricting irrigators' ability to irrigate. This situation serves to highlight again the need for more water storage capacity to provide greater reliability of supply.

Widespread gale force winds across the eastern sea board of the North and South Islands in September caused millions of dollars of damage to irrigation equipment. The damage has created some real concerns for irrigators with irrigation due to start at any time, while irrigation service companies have scrambled to complete repairs that are likely to see them working overtime until into the New Year.

The severe weather event has raised a number of questions in the irrigation sector about managing the risk associated with such an event. Irrigation NZ has a role in ensuring the lessons from this event are learned so that the impact of a similar future event will be mitigated.

Another highlight for me this year is the higher level of collaboration between agricultural sector representative organisations to achieve better outcomes for farmers and irrigators.

The establishment of Primary Sector Land and Water Partnership by Federated Farmers is a significant initiative, which aims to provide a united position for agriculture in respect of the significant land management and water issues that are likely to confront farmers in future.

The L&WP is chaired by Federated Farmers (FF) National Board Member and retiring Irrigation NZ Board member Ian Mackenzie. Thank you Ian for your hard work for Irrigation NZ over the past four years. I'm in no doubt that your advocacy for irrigators will continue with FF and that the close relationship that you have fostered between FF and Irrigation NZ will remain strong.

This organisation is nothing without the people that govern and manage it.

My thanks to my fellow Board members of Irrigation NZ who continue to give generously of their time to make the organisation more effective at representing the interests of the irrigation sector.

My grateful appreciation to the staff of Irrigation NZ who often give well beyond their brief for the good of the organisation. This is especially true of our CEO Andrew Curtis, who works far too late most nights but has become a very effective "herder of cats" taking a pivotal role in coordinating the agricultural sector interests around water and nutrients, particularly in the Selwyn-Waihora Zone in Canterbury but also more widely. Thank you Andrew.

Thanks also to the Irrigation NZ Members who continue to strongly support the work of the organisation.

John Donkers
Chairman
Irrigation NZ Inc.