

IREC Executive Officers Report

2007

2006/7 has been another big year for IREC with plenty happening and a number of changes to our operations.

Our staff has changed over the course of this financial year with Hayley Wordsworth starting with us in September 2006 with a long change over period to “download” Nell, our stalwart secretary for the last 18 years. Hayley has really got to grips with the organisation and is making our operation look effortless now that she is in full control.

The biggest change was Nell Snaidero’s retirement in August. Nell has had difficulty leaving and has “filled in” while Hayley was on leave and may still be seen from time to time. Nell will be working in a voluntary capacity on a history of the IREC.

Judy Lasscock also left us in December 2006 as she was casually employed to assist Nell, but with Hayley on board this assistance was no longer required. Judy continues to assist IREC with a helping hand from time to time when we have mail outs, etc.

In terms of projects, IREC has taken a bit of a back seat to the Irrigated Cropping Forum, but we continue to remain active in driving forward the messages about research and extension needs through the ICF.

The Coleambally Demo Farm project officially ended at the end of the 2006 financial year but due to drought the works had not been completed. We continue to work on this project, particularly on the automation aspect and I am pleased to report that Coleambally Irrigation have generously provided up to 250 ML of water for use at the demo farm to ensure that research projects can still be conducted this season. Some of this water will be made available to our project to grow a maize crop and demonstrate and better understand the automated bay system as well as demonstrating the new soil moisture monitoring and communication system that is part of the CICL water smart initiative.

The major impact on the IREC business was the end of the rice industry funded IRE6A project which has provided support for our administration as well as the *Farmers Newsletter* and the rice field days and some of the RiceCheck publication. Due to ongoing reductions on rice research income, RIRDC was only able to continue support for the *Farmers Newsletter* under IREC management,

with the other aspects of the project being either no longer funded or transferred and amalgamated with the DPI work in the same area. We are grateful for the one year funding support for the *Farmers Newsletter* in 06/07. The ongoing drought conditions however are causing major stress on the rice research programme and we can only hope that the funding base can return to normal as quickly as possible.

At present the effect of this reduced funding is that IREC has no ongoing support through RIRDC rice committee and at this stage this is also likely to have a negative impact on our operations into the future. We continue to work with RIRDC in an attempt to maintain the positions of our staff in our office and at Yanco and also to ensure continuity of the *Farmers Newsletter*. However if the current conditions continue and we are unable to secure any new funding sources, IREC will be forced to begin to eat into our financial reserves which would be close to exhaustion sometime in the following financial year (2008/09).

On a brighter note, IREC hosted a very successful GRDC Update in August 2006 along with the final Irrigated farm Competition dinner and field day at Graham Menzies and Dean Morris' and Wayne Prothero's properties. Just for the record the 07 events were also very successful with a new 2 day format for the Update with which we combined the new Irrigation Showcase dinner which highlighted the previous 20 years winners of the former IFCOM. This year also were also very pleased to award Clive Polkinghorne with the Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his services to irrigation in this region throughout his career.

Lastly, IREC will shortly be required to vacate our old office at "Siberia" to make way for new tenants. Murrumbidgee Irrigation has generously offered to allow us to move into the old "Chief's House" behind the main building. We are considering this offer but taking the opportunity to consider our longer term future and other alternative propositions that would add value to our role and involvement with the wider irrigation industry.

We can only hope that the drought breaks and things return to something closer to "normal" so we can all have a little respite from the constant challenges upon us.

Bryan Clark
Executive Officer