

CHAIRMANS REPORT 2018

The Irrigation & Extension Committee is delivering on its promise to support our members to observe, understand and adopt cutting edge technology into their irrigation businesses.

We have demonstrated current 'high volume' irrigation layouts coupled with automation at the IREC field station. This has shown water savings of up to 20% compared to the previous syphon layout and increased productive potential. We are looking forward to measuring improved water use efficiency with the next development of a fully automated Pipe through the bank layout and an automated recycling storage system. Along with our ongoing manure trial, soil moisture probe project and a range of other demonstrations and trials, the field station is a valuable site for promoting best practice.

This year's annual IREC field day was a huge success. Having the above mentioned developments on display and a great list of speakers including Dr Wendy Quale-Deakin University (animal manure trial) Steve Buster-DPI (Growth regulant trial), Eric Kotez- DPI (Herbicide Resistance) and Kieran O'Keeffe - Cotton info (Mirid traps, drone application). We also had representatives from companies involved in supplying product and services to the infrastructure upgrades and the cotton crop (C18) speaking on the day.

The northern 'irrigation profitability tour' held in early February was another success. These tours promote great discussion and an abundance of innovative ideas from participants and guest speakers. This is a tremendous way to bring new ideas back into our region.

This year saw IREC's run its inaugural post summer crop 'Machinery Demo day'. This was well attended by farmers and supported by our local machinery dealers. We had great feedback from a lot of attendees with the general consensus being – 'it was great to see machinery operating in a commercial setting'.

As a committee representing our members we have a responsibility to remain current with our governance, structure and purpose. This has prompted us to assess our structure to make sure we are making best use of the skills within our committee. We realised that a lot of our meeting time has been taken up by 'administrative' and day to day 'functional' issues that don't require the full committee. We also viewed this as a distraction from exploring opportunities for future research priorities with our representative based committee.

In light of this we are proposing a change to our current structure. We see the need for a smaller group of four (including the chairperson) to oversee day to day functions including fund raising, strategic planning and making sure we are adequately staffed to accomplish our objectives. This committee must put all recommendations to the broader committee before any major decision is acted on.

It has been brought to our attention that our current constitution needs to be updated to remain compliant. While doing this we thought it would be prudent to accommodate our structural change at the same time. There will be opportunity for discussion on this later in the agenda.

There has been a lot of hard work behind the scenes to get to this point. I would like to acknowledge Lindsay Goldsby-Smith who is our MI representative. Lindsay was thrown in at the deep end and asked to facilitate our 'strategic planning' sessions. Her facilitating skills and ability to Analyse and report have been a tremendous asset to IREC.

Gillian Kirkup has used her skill set and understanding of 'corporate governance' to guide this process as well. I want to thank these two ladies for their skills, drive and commitment over the past twelve months.

To the rest of the committee for your input into the various sub committees you have been involved in, thank you. It is the work that you put in that makes the progress of IREC possible.

To our executive officer Iva and office manager Hayley thanks for all the work you do to make things happen. We can only deliver against our vision and goals if things that we plan actually 'happen'. Thanks for committing your time and energy to IREC.

I want to make special mention of our major sponsors: Southern Cotton, Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Coleambally Irrigation Co-operative Limited, Deakin University and Bendigo Community Bank. Your commitment to irrigation research and extension is remarkable. Your support makes many things possible that would otherwise not happen.

To our partners working together on our major projects at the field Station, the Cotton Research & Development Corporation, Grains Research & Development Corporation and Riverina LSS. It is pleasing to all our members to see that their levy money is being spent wisely.

Rob Houghton