

## Draft Minutes

### Present:

**Directors:** Simon Treptow, Valentina Tripp, Matthew Binder, Peter Brueck, Gennaro Vellotti, Rob Nadebaum, Clinton Hort, Greig Graham and Carl Walters.

**Members:** Kristian Tkatchenko, Frank Nocera, Lucy Wilson, Gary Andrews, Hamed Ebrahimian Taleshi, Brett Peel, Chris Joseph, Renee Chapman, Raymond Najjar, Alison Waters, Andrew Rathjen, Peter McCartney and Nigel Dolenec.

**Proxies:** Greene Eden, Western Irrigation, Twist Engineering, Elliotts Irrigation, Des Horton, Paul Danziger

**Irrigation Australia Staff:** Dave Cameron; Naomi Carragher; Marike Froneman; Rebecca New; Stuart Alexander; Maddison Coward; Ashleigh Lang; Sam O'Brien, Amy Haldane, Ane Froneman and Madeleine Farmilio.

**Apologies:** Green Eden, Andrew Ogden, Des Horton, Paul Danziger, Sid Dyer and Jim Purcell.

### Item 1 – Declaration of Quorum and Opening of Meeting

The Chair, Simon Treptow advised that a quorum had been achieved and declared the meeting open and welcomed members and guests. He provided a general overview of the format of proceedings for the meeting. He advised Members that the meeting would be recorded.

The Notice of meeting and Explanatory Note were taken as read.

The Company Secretary explained the voting procedure for the appointment of an auditor, the adoption of the new constitution and the process for questions.

### Item 2 – Adoption of Previous Annual General Meeting Minutes

It was noted that the minutes of the Irrigation Australia Limited Annual General Meeting of members held Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023 had been signed by the Chair as a true and correct record of that meeting at the board meeting held on Wednesday 13th December 2023 further noting that the minutes had also been circulated with the Notice of Meeting distributed to members within the required time period, and also made available on the Irrigation Australia website.

### Item 3 – Irrigation Australia Board - Chair's Address, Simon Treptow

The Chair spoke to his presentation and acknowledged the following key items:

- The association recorded an operating loss for 2024, but the result represents an improvement over the previous financial year, showing progress toward financial stability despite ongoing challenges.
- Visits with the Sydney and Brisbane teams in 2024 highlighted staff's passion, dedication, and commitment in improving operations and driving the association's mission forward.

- Special recognition was given to Tracy Martin for her leadership in Western Australia's regional operations and the membership program. Her contributions were critical to the success of the August 2023 Waterwise Expo.
- Continuing as Australia's only provider of irrigation-focused water management training, the association aims to broaden career pathways and strengthen the industry.
- The *Irrigation Futures* initiative supports this goal by enhancing the Centre of Irrigation Excellence framework and prioritising careers in water management in upcoming conferences and exhibitions.
- Member benefits and satisfaction remain a top priority. Efforts are underway to build and align resources toward creating tangible value for members.
- While significant attention was dedicated to the Sydney conference, the association is shifting focus to ensure long-term improvements in member offerings.
- Acknowledgment of the critical contributions of volunteers, National Board directors, subcommittee members, and Regional Committees, whose work underpins the association's success.
- Thanks extended to the Western Australian Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Water Corporation for their continued support of initiatives.
- Recognition of Paul Smith's service and contributions to the association.
- The association remains committed to advancing the recognition and growth of the irrigation industry.
- Appreciation extended to all individuals and organisations supporting Irrigation Australia's vision and efforts to drive the industry forward.

The Chair invited the CEO, Dave Cameron to make his presentation. The following key points were made:

#### **Item 4 – Irrigation Australia – CEO Address, Dave Cameron**

##### **Welcome & Acknowledgements:**

- Warmly welcomed members, staff, and supporters to the Annual General Meeting.
- Expressed gratitude for their time, dedication, and ongoing engagement, which remain critical to the success of Irrigation Australia and its initiatives.

##### **2023/24 Reflections:**

- The year presented both challenges and changes, with ongoing economic pressures impacting operations.
- While the year ended with a financial deficit, this represents a significant improvement compared to 2022/23, demonstrating progress toward stability.
- Notable achievements included delivering the bi-annual Irrigation Australia Conference & Exhibition and the 9th ICID Asian Regional Conference. These events, supported by exhibitors and government grants, achieved a break-even financial result.
- These events provided valuable opportunities for industry networking, future planning, and evaluating new, innovative ways to deliver impactful industry events.

#### **Future Events & Strategic Partnerships:**

- Insights from recent events and the success of the Waterwise Expo model provide a foundation for reshaping future national conferences.
- Plans to develop partnerships with like-minded associations to create impactful opportunities for manufacturers and distributors.
- Focus on fostering collaboration and innovation to strengthen industry connections and advance shared goals.

#### **Team & Training Programs:**

- Excitement about the positive impact of talented new team members whose enthusiasm and expertise drive progress.
- Training programs have undergone significant transformation, with exceptional feedback from students and employers. Due to ongoing modernisation and streamlining efforts, complaints have been nearly eliminated.
- Re-engaged long-term students to help them complete qualifications, ensuring they derive maximum benefits from training programs.
- Implement a new student and learner management system to enhance content quality, streamline processes, and address student concerns effectively.
- Achieved delivery of over 30 short courses and Certificate III blocks to more than 200 students, with plans for additional offerings in the latter half of the financial year.
- Focus on securing government funding to make training programs more accessible and support industry growth.
- The revamped Certified Irrigation Installer (CII) program is experiencing strong uptake, with collaborative efforts underway with state regulators to enhance its appeal to industry professionals.

#### **Key Strategic Focus Areas:**

- Increasing Training Places: Actively pursuing funding submissions to state training authorities and identifying opportunities to demonstrate value to members through expanded training options.
- Promoting Industry Careers: Highlighted broad agreement among members on the need to attract young talent and make the industry more competitive.
- Leveraging the *Irrigation Futures* program to focus on career development, including the free online industry induction course available on the *Irrigation Careers* platform.
- Partnering with the Australian Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to raise industry awareness and improve access to development programs.
- Showcasing career journeys and success stories to inspire the next generation of irrigation professionals.

#### **Regional Committees & Local Initiatives:**

- Significant progress in re-establishing regional committees in Queensland and South Australia to complement established chapters in Western Australia and Victoria.

- Committees are actively working on advocacy plans and initiatives to drive uptake of training programs and services nationwide.
- A new NSW committee meeting is scheduled, reinforcing regional engagement and collaboration.
- Positive feedback on the partnership with TIACS, focusing on supporting mental health in the irrigation industry, underscoring its importance to members.

#### **Acknowledgments:**

- Extended thanks to the board of directors for their support, with special recognition of retiring director Paul Smith's service and contributions.
- Congratulations to award recipients Andrew Ogden, Ben Chapman, and Chris Thompson for their outstanding achievements.
- Recognised the efforts of committee leaders across national and regional groups, including key office-bearers in Rainwater Harvesting, Certification, ICID, and regional committees.
- Expressed gratitude to major *Irrigation Futures* sponsors (e.g., Brown Bros, Netafim, Philmac) and other sponsors (e.g., Nutrien, Grundfos) for their continued support.
- Acknowledged the Western Australia Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Water Corporation for their active involvement and financial and programmatic support for initiatives like the Waterwise program.

#### **Conclusion:**

- Reflected on a year marked by growth, learning, and significant improvement across multiple areas.
- Reaffirmed optimism about the future of Irrigation Australia and the broader industry.
- Thanked all members, staff, volunteers, and partners for their collective commitment and passion, which are critical to achieving shared goals.
- Concluded with a vision of building a brighter, more successful future for the irrigation industry through collaboration and dedication.

Members were invited to ask questions regarding the Chair and CEO presentations and there were no questions raised.

### **Item 5 – Financial Report, Directors Report and Independent Auditor's Report**

The Chair formally tabled Irrigation Australia's Financial Report, which included the Financial Statements, Directors Report, Directors' Declaration and Auditor's Report for the year ended 30 June 2024. He invited the CEO to deliver the financial report to members.

#### **Financial Overview:**

- An overall deficit of \$149,209, significantly reduced from the previous year.
- Key contributors to the deficit include:
  - Training course write-offs exceeding \$100k, with at-risk traineeships reduced by 60% but still being monitored.
  - Other write-offs, such as non-renewed memberships.

- Increased employee-related expenses due to staff transitions and compliance-related hires, partially offset by reduced outsourcing costs.
- Cash reserves are diminished, and careful financial management remains a priority.

**Training Revenue and Quality:**

- Increased training revenue due to more delivery days and reduced expenses.
- RTO registration successfully renewed, supported by experienced staff driving improvements.
- 44 courses delivered during the period, with training quality as a key focus.

**Membership Stability:**

- Membership remained largely stable.
- Implementation of a clear membership communication plan and increased support for regional committees to enhance the value proposition.

**Waterwise Expo Success:**

- The August 2023 Waterwise Expo achieved a surplus.
- Strong planning and early exhibitor interest for the 2025 Expo.

**Cost Management:**

- Reduced operational expenses for telephony, IT, equipment leasing, and software, with benefits expected to be realised in the current financial year.
- Decreased training expenses following significant reviews and streamlining efforts.
- Increased administration and governance expenses, reflecting bad debts.

**Future Focus:**

- A clear surplus target was set by the board, with efforts focused on securing additional government funding and increasing enrolments in early 2025.
- Long-term employment strategies under discussion, with expectations for reduced employment expenses moving forward.

## Item 6 – Election of Directors

The Chair confirmed that, as the number of candidates in the election of directors was more than the number of positions to be filled, a formal ballot was conducted in accordance with the constitution. He asked the Company Secretary to inform the meeting of the result of the ballot.

The Company Secretary announced that renominating directors: Valentina Tripp, Greig Graham, Rob Nadebaum, Matthew Binder and Carl Walters were duly re-elected.

The Chair congratulated the returning Directors. He welcomed and congratulated incoming director Lucy Wilson.

He thanked the other two nominees for putting their hands up and encouraged them to stand again in the future.

## Item 7 – Appointment of the Auditor

The company refers the appointment of the company's Auditor to members for special resolution.

The CEO advised members that there were no material items mentioned in the audit report and the Auditor considered the process of high standard.

The Chair asked if there were any questions on the resolution and there were none.

It was noted that the Board has accepted a recommendation from the Audit & Risk Management Committee that FSA Partners be appointed as the company's auditor for 2024/25.

The Chair moved that FSA Partners be appointed as the company's auditors for the 2024/25 financial year.

The Company Secretary called for members to vote and the motion was **carried unanimously**.

### **Item 8 – Adoption of new Irrigation Australia Constitution**

The company refers the appointment of the adoption of the new Irrigation Australia Constitution for special resolution.

The CEO advised members that no significant change to intent or entitlements was proposed—the rewrite's purpose is only to modernise the document and clarify existing areas of confusion.

The Chair asked if there were any questions on the resolution and there were none.

It was noted that the Board has accepted the Governance Committee's recommendation that the new Irrigation Australia Constitution be adopted.

The Chair moved that the new Irrigation Australia Constitution be adopted.

The Company Secretary called for members to vote and the motion was **carried unanimously**.

### **Item 9 – Question Time**

The Chair invited all those present to raise any matters of relevance that have not been dealt with on the agenda.

The Chair thanked everyone for making time available and their continuing interest, cooperation and support in our association.

Chris Joseph raised a question about currency training for Certified Meter Installers, the CEO thanked him for the question and advised that staff would follow up to discuss out of session.

### **Close**

There being no further business, the chair declared the meeting closed at 11.38 am AEST.

Confirmed as a true and correct record:

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Simon Treptow

Chair

Date: 13 February 2024

