

Draft Minutes

Present:

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

Members: Pedro Casemiro, Peter Hayes, John Harvie, Geoff Harvey, Andrew Ogden, Kosi Kalogerinis, Lily Robb, Scott Muller, Bryce Neyland, Jay Baker, David Ahlquist, MD Rowshon Kamal, Nicholas Marinucci, Mark Chivilo and Timm Clemens.

Proxies: John Pivac from Vinindex

Irrigation Australia Staff: Naomi Carragher, Marike Froneman, Stuart Alexander, Natalie Cunningham, and Ashleigh Lang.

Item 1 – Declaration of Quorum and Opening of Meeting

The Chair, Mr Simon Treptow, advised that a quorum had been achieved, declared the meeting open, and welcomed Members and guests. He provided a general overview of the format of the 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 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 13th November 2024 had been signed by the Chair as a true and correct record of that meeting at the board meeting held on Thursday 13th February 2024 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, Mr. Simon Treptow

Mr Simon Treptow (Chair) presented his report, covering the following key points:

- **Financial Performance**
 - The Association recorded a financial loss for the year ending 30 June 2025.
 - Contributing factors included:
 - Lower training enrolments in the final quarter of 2024.
 - The Irrigation Australia International Conference 2024 in Sydney achieved good engagement, but attendance was below target, resulting in a break-even outcome.
 - The event's large budget (\$1.5 million) and reliance on surpluses impacted overall results.
- **Industry Context**
 - The financial challenges reflected broader trends seen in other professional associations post-COVID.
 - The environment for large-scale events and funded training programs remains challenging, with

tighter budgets and reduced participation across the sector.

- **Refocus on Purpose**

- Some Members have expressed concern that the Association may have lost sight of its mission.
- The Chair reaffirmed that Irrigation Australia's focus remains on advancing the irrigation profession, promoting efficiency, recognition, and workforce sustainability.
- The Association's goals require a more stable financial foundation and a shift away from dependency on major events and training surpluses.

- **Leadership and Transition**

- Mr Dave Cameron completed his term as CEO in September 2025, leaving a more streamlined organisational structure and improved internal processes.
- The Board thanked Mr Cameron for his leadership and commitment during a challenging period.
- General Manager was acknowledged for successfully implementing a simplified, more focused strategy with early positive outcomes.

- **Member Engagement**

- The Chair emphasised that Irrigation Australia is a membership-driven organisation.
- A strong, active membership base is vital for advocacy, credibility, and industry support.
- Members were encouraged to participate in regional committees, which play a critical role in engagement and knowledge-sharing.
- The WA Waterwise Expo was highlighted as an excellent example of regional success and collaboration.

- **Commitment and Collaboration**

- The Chair thanked all Board Members, staff, and volunteers for their dedication and teamwork throughout the year.
- The Board and management remain united in their commitment to rebuilding financial stability and strengthening the Association's role within the irrigation industry.

- **Closing Remarks**

- While acknowledging that the past year was challenging, the Chair noted that it presents an opportunity for renewal and growth.
- He encouraged Members to stay engaged and supportive as Irrigation Australia focuses on stability, relevance, and long-term sustainability.

The Chair invited the General Manager, Naomi Carragher, to make her presentation.

Item 4 – Irrigation Australia – General Manager Address, Naomi Carragher

The General Manager presented her report, focusing on the Association's financial recovery, operational improvements, and future direction.

Financial Overview

- The Association recorded a loss of \$274,903 for FY2024–25.
- The shortfall resulted from:
 - Lower-than-expected returns from events.
 - Ongoing economic pressures across agricultural communities.
- A turnaround plan was implemented to stabilise finances and restore sustainability.
- The organisation is now reporting a surplus in Q1 FY2025–26, with a positive outlook for the

remainder of the year.

Strategic Focus and Rebuilding

- The Board and management are focused on financial recovery and long-term stability.
- Priorities for the next 12–18 months include:
 - Strengthening core services (training, certification, and industry events).
 - Reducing costs, improving efficiency, and tightening cash flow management.
 - Expanding sponsorship and Membership engagement.
 - Building recognition of irrigation as a professional, skilled industry.

Brand and Marketing

- A comprehensive marketing and brand review was completed in 2025.
- This sharpened Irrigation Australia's positioning and improved engagement with:
 - Members.
 - Government and regulators.
 - Industry and community stakeholders.
- The refreshed brand provides a clear framework to grow public awareness of irrigation's contribution to productivity, sustainability, and water management.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- The Association continues to expand partnerships nationally, with a focus on:
 - Regulation, workforce development, and sustainability.
 - Strong collaboration with Irrigation Futures sponsors, including Motion, Hunter, Iplex, Nelson Australia, Netafim, Philmac, Plasson Australia, Rivulis, Rodney Industries, Valley Irrigation, Bermad, Brown Brothers, Vinindex, Grundfos, and Irrigear.
- These partnerships play a vital role in funding training, professional development, and industry promotion.

Certification and Waterwise Programs

- Certification and Waterwise remain central to professionalism and public trust in the industry.
- Major milestone: launch of the new Certified Irrigation Designer (CID) examination.
 - Provides a formal recognition pathway for professional capability.
 - Acknowledgement given to Rebecca New, John Harvie, and the Certification Committee for their leadership.
- Recruitment is underway for a Waterwise and Certification Programs Coordinator to support program growth and delivery.
- The Waterwise Program continues to achieve strong engagement and recognition.

Training and RTO Operations

- Training remains the foundation of a professional and safe workforce.
- Following review, it was determined that the funded RTO model is no longer sustainable due to:
 - High administrative and compliance costs.
 - Delays in government funding.
 - Limited capacity to manage multi-state funding frameworks.
- Irrigation Australia will transition to a supplier-based, fee-for-service training model, delivered in partnership with product suppliers and industry experts.
- This new model will:
 - Focus on real-world skills.
 - Reduce administrative overheads.
 - Reinvest savings into member services.
 - Keep training industry-led and accessible.
- Funded training will be retained in Western Australia, with Queensland, New South Wales, and

South Australia moving to fee-for-service only.

Irrigation as a Recognised Trade

- Many Members have asked about progress toward trade recognition.
- It was clarified that:
 - Recognition as a trade typically takes 7–10 years of sustained advocacy with no guarantee.
 - Success requires full-time advocacy, industry evidence, and funding support.
 - Without consistent membership and training investment, this level of advocacy cannot be sustained.
- Member support and renewal are critical to continuing this long-term effort.

Membership

- Membership continues to grow and stabilise:
 - 72 new Memberships in FY2024–25 (38 individuals and 34 companies).
 - Total Membership now 463 active Members.
- Renewals are improving, with efforts focused on delivering tangible member value and engagement.
- Membership revenue directly supports advocacy, training, and certification programs.

Industry Events

- Events remain key for connection, knowledge-sharing, and showcasing innovation.
- Activities in FY2024–25 included:
 - Irrigation Australia Conference & Exhibition.
 - Waterwise Expo in Perth, with strong attendance and positive feedback.
- Upcoming major event:
 - Irrigation Show 2026, to be held at Sydney Showground (12–13 August 2026).
 - Organised by Expertise Events with support from Irrigation Australia.
 - Irrigation Australia will curate and deliver the conference and professional development program.

Governance and Committees

- Board committees remain active and focused on recovery and accountability:
 - Audit & Risk Committee
 - Governance Committee
 - Certification Committee
 - ICID Committee
 - Regional Committees
- The Board has implemented:
 - A financial turnaround plan.
 - Tighter cost controls.
 - Improved cash flow management.
 - Greater supplier engagement and governance oversight.

Acknowledgements

- General Manager thanked:
 - The Board for its guidance and support.
 - The staff team for their professionalism and resilience.
 - The Irrigation Futures sponsors for their ongoing partnership.
- She recognised that the organisation is on a challenging journey but expressed confidence in the team's resilience and shared purpose.

Closing Remarks

- Irrigation Australia is entering a period of rebuilding and refocus.
- The next 12–18 months will prioritise:
 - Financial stability.
 - Sustainable growth.
 - Strengthening industry relationships.
- Transparency and collaboration with Members will remain a key focus.
- General Manager concluded by reaffirming that with continued support and engagement from Members, Irrigation Australia will emerge stronger and more united.

Item 6 – Members Questions and Comments

The Chair invited Members to ask questions and participate in discussion.

Key topics raised included:

- **RTO Operations:** Confirmation that the RTO remains open but will phase out funded training in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia, retaining it only in Western Australia.
- **Member Engagement:** Concerns were raised about limited communication and visibility. The Chair and General Manager acknowledged these concerns and reiterated a renewed focus on direct member engagement and relationship-building.
- **Leadership Appointment:** Queries were raised about the General Manager appointment process. The Chair confirmed the appointment was a unanimous Board decision based on experience and organisational knowledge.
- **Training Strategy:** Discussion on whether reducing funded training may impact revenue and education access. The Chair and Board clarified that the shift is to ensure financial sustainability, not to reduce training commitment.
- **Industry Feedback:** The General Manager encouraged Members to provide direct feedback, noting that limited responses were received to the earlier member survey and that little feedback is currently being communicated directly to Irrigation Australia.
- **Financial Viability:** Board Members discussed the significant financial challenges facing the Association and emphasised that structural reform is critical to ensure the Association's ongoing survival and long-term sustainability.

Item 7 – 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 2025. He invited the General Manager to deliver the financial report to the Members.

General Manager presented the financial report for the year ended 30 June 2025, outlining the Association's financial performance, key challenges, corrective actions, and forward strategy.

Overall Financial Position

- The Association recorded a loss of \$274,903 for the 2024–25 financial year.
- This result was consistent with the broader trend of declining revenue across professional associations post-COVID.

- The loss primarily stemmed from:
 - Event revenue shortfall – the 2024 Irrigation Australia International Conference in Sydney achieved engagement but did not deliver the anticipated surplus, instead breaking even on a \$1.5 million budget.
 - Reduced training enrolments in the final quarter of the year, directly affecting one of the Association's core income streams.
 - Ongoing economic pressures across regional and agricultural sectors, affecting both training and Membership renewals.

Response and Turnaround Plan

- Following these outcomes, the Board and management implemented a financial turnaround plan aimed at stabilising the organisation and restoring financial sustainability.
- The plan focused on:
 - Streamlining operations – reducing administrative overheads and rationalising expenses.
 - Tightening cost control – implementing closer financial oversight, reviewing supplier contracts, and pausing non-essential spending.
 - Improving cash collection – enhancing debtor management and payment systems.
 - Investing in growth areas that provide long-term revenue (e.g., training reform, sponsorship, Membership growth).
- The plan has delivered early success, with the Association now reporting a positive surplus in Quarter 1 of FY2025–26 and a stable cash position.

Revenue and Income Streams

- Training (RTO) remains a significant income source but continues to face structural challenges due to the complexity and administrative burden of state-funded programs.
 - Transition to a fee-for-service, supplier-based delivery model is underway to create a more predictable and sustainable revenue base.
 - Funded training will remain available in Western Australia, with Queensland, NSW, and South Australia transitioning to fee-for-service delivery.
- Membership revenue showed modest growth, supported by renewal campaigns and new member recruitment:
 - 72 new Members joined (38 individual, 34 company).
 - Total Membership now stands at 463 active Members.
- Event income was steady but below projections:
 - The Waterwise Expo (WA) generated a small surplus and strong participation, offsetting part of the loss from the Sydney Expo.
 - New event partnerships, such as the Irrigation Show 2026, are expected to deliver long-term revenue with reduced financial risk.
- Sponsorship revenue strengthened through the Irrigation Futures Program, supported by major industry sponsors including Motion Australia, Hunter, Iplex, Vinindex, Nelson Australia, Netafim, Philmac, Plasson Australia, Rivulis, Rodney Industries, Valley Irrigation, Bermad, Brown Brothers, Grundfos, and Irrigear.
- Certification and Waterwise programs contributed consistent income, with opportunities for growth following the introduction of the new Certified Irrigation Designer (CID) Examination.

Expenses and Cost Management

- The largest cost categories for FY2024–25 included:
 - Training delivery and compliance costs (trainer contracts, student resources, and system administration).
 - Event management expenses (venue, logistics, marketing, and international delegate costs).

- Employee costs, which remained stable following internal restructuring.
- Cost-reduction measures implemented during the year:
 - Consolidation of supplier contracts and service providers.
 - Reduction in external consulting costs.
 - Greater in-house delivery of communications, marketing, and training coordination functions.
- These measures contributed to improved efficiency and will continue to provide savings into FY2025–26.

Investments and Future Growth

- Despite financial pressures, key investments were made to strengthen future revenue streams:
 - Brand and website redevelopment – improved visibility, member experience, and marketing reach.
 - Launch of the CID Examination Program – expected to generate examination and certification income from FY2025–26.
 - Expansion of the Irrigation Futures sponsorship program – to diversify non-training income.
 - Introduction of the Irrigation Efficiency & Practical Skills Micro-Credential – creating entry-level training opportunities for employers and new industry entrants.
- These initiatives align with the organisation’s focus on long-term sustainability, member value, and industry impact.

Governance and Financial Oversight

- The Audit and Risk Committee provided active oversight throughout the year, supported by the Board and external auditors.
- Independent audit services were provided by FSA Tax and Advisory Partners, who reported no material concerns.
- Internal controls, cash flow forecasting, and management reporting were strengthened.
- External financial advisors were engaged to support the turnaround plan and confirm ongoing viability under safe harbour provisions.
- The Association continues to meet its obligations to Members, staff, and suppliers.

2025–26 Financial Outlook

- The current financial year has begun with an early surplus result.
- Key priorities for FY2025–26 include:
 - Achieving sustained monthly surpluses through disciplined cost control.
 - Growing fee-for-service training revenue and expanding national partnerships.
 - Strengthening sponsorship and event income through strategic collaborations.
 - Continuing to rebuild Membership renewals and engagement.

Acknowledgements

- The General Manager acknowledged:
 - The Board for their guidance and financial stewardship.
 - The Audit and Risk Committee for ongoing governance oversight.
 - The staff team for their commitment to cost management and operational reform.
 - The auditors, FSA Tax and Advisory Partners, for maintaining their professional support and holding fees at the previous year’s rate (\$17,100).

The Chair noted that the financial report, directors’ report, and independent auditor’s report had been made available to Members for the required period. The reports were presented for noting and no resolution was needed.



Item 8 – 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 the renominating directors: Mr. Simon Treptow, Mr. Clinton Hort and Mr. Gennaro Vellotti were duly re-elected.

The Chair congratulated the returning Directors. He welcomed and congratulated incoming director Bryce Neyland.

Peter Brueck was thanked for 10 years of dedicated service and support on the Board.

Item 9 – Appointment of the Auditor

The Chair presented the following resolution:

That FSA Tax and Advisory Partners be appointed as the Association's auditor for the 2025–26 financial year.

The quoted fee of \$17,100 was noted, consistent with the previous year.

Resolution: Carried unanimously.

Close

There being no further business, the chair declared the meeting closed at 11.58 am AEST.

