

Irrigation sector remains optimistic

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[Mark Odlin](#) and [Peter Owles](#) recently attended and presented at Irrigation New Zealand's biannual Irrigation Conference (Unlocking a Golden Future) which, this year, was held in Alexandra (in New Zealand's driest region, Otago). You can find the recent articles that Mark and Peter wrote below.

The messages that we took away from this well-attended and successful conference are:

- Government's decision not to fund large irrigation schemes is simply another hurdle to be overcome by irrigation schemes who will have to explore other options (such as those discussed in Peter's article, [brave new world for irrigation funding](#)) that meet their long-term vision
- Those who have access to water need to share not only the benefits of such water but also the pain (ie take into account environmental and community factors). This was relevant, particularly, in respect of replacing the approximately 300 remaining historic water rights granted in the 1800s with resource consents before the water rights expire in October 2021. An example of this idea of pain and gain sharing in respect to water was well illustrated by the Kyeburn Catchment Limited's application for a collective consent to replace the shareholders' expiring water rights and the implementation of a water sharing regime that ensures that the minimum flow requirements are met
- There is plenty of science in New Zealand discussing the impact of water use and irrigators need to do a better job of learning from issues associated with (among other matters) farming intensification that such science has identified and disseminating any positive messages found in such information. The point being that irrigation schemes in themselves do not have negative effects on the environment but rather how available water is used and there are examples of responsible use of water in New Zealand
- New Zealand may need to consider a water entitlements trading system within the context of water resource management to create a price signal for water that encourages the most efficient use of water.

Overall our impression is that there is real optimism for the future of the irrigation sector among the community of irrigation schemes, water users and industry professionals involved in the sector. We look forward to the 2020 conference.

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