

Webinar Q&A Irrigation Suppliers & Service		
Question #	Question	Answer
1	With rising society concerns about sustainability (lets leave the US out of the picture at the moment) - how has the industry promoted its environmental credentials, in order to attract talent and new entrants. Younger talent has stronger environmental and social expectations and standards.	From our perspective, the point is recognised, and the answer is not enough yet. Our new vision of sorts from 2024 is "Irrigation Australia's purpose is to be the centre of excellence for drive the adoption of efficient irrigation practices across Australia's food and fibre production markets, leisure activity spaces and commercial activities to ensure the best use of our most precious resource." A lot of our careers messaging is trying to pick up these themes, but limited by available resources. Check out www.irrigationcareers.org.au - we're always keen on feedback around messaging and the site is our attempt to start to improve the dialogue.
		I agree that there are still some big challenges around social license and the irrigation industry. There are so many great examples of delivering multiple benefits through improvements in water use efficiency that we potentially need to better promote.
2	Historically, Govt grants/subsidies focused on improving irrigation efficiency have provided incentives for irrigation infrastructure upgrades which have arguably underpinned work for regional irrigation supply & installation businesses. In theory, this has provided opportunities for irrigation businesses to upscale to meet the additional demand the grant programs create. My regional observations have seen irrigation businesses have a preference to underpin the next x years of workload with existing staff resources to provide the business (& existing staff) security, rather than take the risk to expand and potentially not be able to keep on the additional staff when the subsidies for customers dries up. Interested in the panels comments on this issue and have we (an an industry) missed an opportunity here to recruit & provide a the next workforce generation within irrigation businesses across Australia?	I think most businesses that are part of irrigear find it difficult to find and keep quality staff. That's the factor. It's not so much that they wouldn't employ more people, it's finding them in the first place. This is regardless of skills and knowledge.
3	Are global suppliers providing advances in irrigation technologies systems that meet Australian needs or are they focussed more on bigger markets elsewhere?	Irrigear believes that the Australian market is important to our suppliers and that they are interested in showcasing and supplying new tech
4	What is the current state of Australia's home grown irrigation technology manufacturers? Is there an opportunity for this to grow? Are there particular niches that Australian companies can compete in?	Irrigear finds there are certainly some Australian companies that are competing very well with overseas companies.
5	Maybe more a comment than question, but another challenge for young / new people to sector is regarding the social licence pressures. Certainly when I was working in broadacre ag, many agricultural outsiders/general public would comment "we shouldn't be growing irrigated rice/cotton in australia, our water is too precious". I've experienced less of this in the horticulture sector. haven't experienced this at all when working in developing countries as food security is often the focus	
6	What steps need to be taken to motivate the old farmers to listen to the views of young people on modern technology techniques in agriculture development?	In my experience 'old farmers' are quite motivated to adopt modern technology and techniques, it's the capital investment required that holds them back. If there's no succession plan in place, and not too long to pay off a loan before a farmer needs to retire, why make such a big investment?