

# About Colin Austin

Colin Austin has had a varied career after graduating in engineering in from Sheffield University in 1963. He started his career in process control, gradually building up expertise in the control of plastics processing equipment, working as R & D Manager of Johns Hydraulics before taking a spell in academia lecturing at RMIT in Melbourne.

Some years ago, Colin wrote a piece of software that transformed the international design of plastics moulds using scientific principles rather than 'gut feel'. So successful was this software that the company that Colin founded (Moldflow) became the largest exporter of technical software in Australia, a multi-million dollar company selling in over 48 countries throughout the world.

He became increasingly concerned about environmental issues, particularly the management of what he sees as the world's most critical resource fresh water. Just as he had changed the plastics industry from a 'hunch based' to a science based process, he saw that irrigation technology could be transformed by the application of the scientific approach.

A key development was the development of micro flood irrigation which uses thin wall blown film to transport and deliver water under gravity, replacing the traditional open channels which lead to major losses of water by evaporation and leakage. A key element of the systems is a simple sequencing valve which squeezes the plastic pipe to control the water distribution and allow precise application of water.

He has continued his software development with scheduling software which enables precise application of water by calculating plant water usage from and water holding capacity of the soil from soil and plant sensors.

On his return from Ethiopia where he has been working with World Vision to train local farmers in how to install and operate this simple but effective technology he developed the wicking bed system which he believes will save thousands of lives by enabling local farmers to grow food under the cyclic droughts which leads to the death of many thousands of people.

## Awards

He has received numerous awards including:-

1980 John Derham Award for Technical Innovation  
awarded to Colin Austin

1982 National Small Business Award

1983 Governor of Victoria, Export Award

1984 Governor of Victoria, Export Award

1984 Dept of Trade in Association with Confederation of  
Australian Industry's Export Award for outstanding  
achievement.

1985 AITA, Cad software solution of the year award

1988 Australian Bicentennial Export Award, Services Category

1989 Australian British Chamber of Commerce  
Federal Award for small business export initiative and  
innovation

1990 Governor of Victoria Export Award to Colin Austin for  
significant export achievement by an individual

1990 Government of Victoria Export Award Certificate of  
Commendation, services category

1990 Business Bulletin Small Business Achievement Award

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1991 The John Hart Technology Award

1991 Rolls Royce/Qantas award together with the Warren Centre  
award for engineering excellence

1991 Governor of Victoria Export Award, awarded for significant  
achievement by an export product

1993 AITA Exporter of the year award

1993 ANTEC (USA) best technical paper award for lean plastics

manufacture

1994 Southern Cross Award for Excellence awarded by  
Technology in Government Committee

1997 Fred O.Conley Award for outstanding achievement in plastics  
engineering & technology

2002 Triannual Plastics Industry Award for contributions to the plastics industry

2002 SPE Environmental Award

2002 SaveWater award winner agricultural section

2003 SaveWater award Regional Sustainability

## Publications

Publication	Date	Theme
Intelligent Irrigation	1996	Closed loop control of irrigation
The Murray Darling Basin A Technological Solution	1997	Replacing flood irrigation
Soil Moisture Interpretation Made Easy	1997	Guide to soil moisture
Agriflow Making water go further	1999	Replacing flood irrigation
Vision for the Bush	2000	Managing our natural resources
Irrigation Scheduling	2000	Guide to scheduling
Water Right The new thinking on irrigation scheduling	2001	Adaptive scheduling
Sensor based irrigation scheduling	2002	Training course
Reaping the benefits of water saving technology	2002	Implementation of water saving technology
Water, technology and policy interactions	2002	Water policy
Myths and fantasies of sustainable food production in Australia	2003	Critique of DNRE
Irrigation scheduling	2003	Scheduling manual
Making the most of water	2003	Micro flood user guide
Micro flood operating manual		
Water, Wit and Wisdom- The search for the solution to the water crisis	2004	Book ISBN 06463814-X
Solving the water crisis	2005	DVD