



WRI

WESTERN
RESEARCH INSTITUTE LTD

ANNUAL REPORT

2016

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The Western Research Institute Limited (WRI) was formed by a group of committed stakeholders in 1999 to undertake high quality, independent research to support the sustainable economic development of rural and regional Australia, in particular western inland NSW.

Over the last 17 years, we have provided research and independent advice to numerous regional organisations and businesses, and supported plans and initiatives that have delivered hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment, and jobs, to western NSW and inland communities.

Our foundation stakeholders are:



WRI also received Australian government support.

Who We Are

Our Goal

We aim to be a trusted partner of business, government and communities in regional development.

Our integrity, local knowledge and strong local collaborations ensure that our advice and support is highly sought after.

We help to grow regional businesses and services, support better decision-making and help to attract investment for the benefit of our clients and stakeholders.



In 2016, the Board of the Western Research Institute Limited (WRI) embarked on an ambitious new Strategy to strengthen WRI's role as a leading contributor to research and policy on inland development.

When we talk about rural and regional Australia we are not talking about one place, but a multitude of distinctive communities with different needs and aspirations. This is often lost in public policy discussions about regional development.

As a result, WRI believes it continues to have a critical role to play in contributing to discussions that ensures that public policy is responsive to the particular aspirations, opportunities and needs of inland communities.

Since its inception in 1999, WRI has staked out its place as the provider of high quality research and strategic advice in western NSW.

The foundation for our success has been our ability to deliver well-researched, credible, objective and independent economic advice to our stakeholders. What makes us different, however, is that we understand the value and importance of local knowledge and expertise in translating the ambitions of our communities into sound economic plans.

Our 2016-20 Strategy focusses on the sustainability and growth of WRI, so that we can ensure that inland communities continue to have access to high quality advice that is informed by a rigorous understanding of the circumstances, needs and opportunities of our communities.

This report sets out our performance in meeting our ambitions in 2016. With your support, advice and insights, we have worked hard to ensure our services and contributions are more attuned and responsive to your needs.

This report also shows how investing in local knowledge and expertise not only delivers better outcomes, but also delivers more economic activity and growth back to our communities.



In 2016, we returned more than 90% of our surplus back to our communities through the establishment of the public-purpose Inland Research Fund.

We committed more than 8% of our total operating budget to support major conferences in our regions, conduct innovation forums for local businesses, share our knowledge through public commentary and support local events.

And of course, we employ all our staff in the regions to ensure that we keep our resources local, and build the regional talent pool for the future.

In 2016, we welcomed new Directors to the Board to help us to implement our new strategic direction, and grow our networks to influence policy on inland economic development. We also farewelled three outstanding regional leaders who have helped guide and direct WRI over many years – Michael Milston, Ian Davison and Ian Rogan.

We think it is important for our stakeholders to know that every time you acquire our independent research you are not just getting the best expertise available on inland and regional development, you are making an investment in the growth of jobs and opportunity in regional communities.

We would like to thank our staff and Directors for their commitment to sound and sustainable inland and regional development, and to our stakeholders for continuing to support our role as a not-for-profit partner in the development of our regions.

Mark Burdack
Chair

Wendy Mason
General Manager



Message from the Chair & General Manager



Mark Burdack, Chair

BA, BLegS (Hon), Macq GAICD

Mark Burdack is an expert in corporate governance, tertiary education, health workforce and regional development. He is Principal Consultant, Cultivate Solutions Pty Ltd.

In a competitive environment, we need to be able to put forward an objective and well-evidenced case for regional economic development. WRI is unique in Australia because of its focus on inland communities. It has been a privilege to work with WRI to help grow our communities sustainably.



Juliet Duffy, Deputy Chair

MSM, Sydney MAICD

Juliet holds a Masters of Sustainable Management from Sydney University and brings to the WRI Board a wide range of experience. Juliet is the Founding Director of the start-up business Regional EnviroScience.

Sound research to support regional business growth, ensures prosperous and sustainable communities. It is exhilarating to see WRI repeatedly using its deep knowledge and expertise to support the transformation of regional Australia.



Jo-Anne Strader, Treasurer

BCom (Hons), Queens University, Canada

Jo-Anne is an accountant with senior level executive experience and is the Financial Controller for the global company DSM Nutritional Products Australia Pty Ltd.

After moving from a city over 23 years ago I feel blessed to live and raise my family in regional NSW. I hope to use my skills with WRI to help ensure that opportunities continue to exist for regional Australians and that others may access the quality of life that we enjoy.



Kate Baxter, Secretary

B Social Work (Hons), Sydney
Masters Social Administration, Flin
MEd, UTS
Grad Dip Counselling, MCAE
Grad Dip VET, CSU

Kate is a Regional General Manager of Australia's largest provider of vocational education, TAFE NSW.

It is important that regional Australia has a strong voice in public policy and WRI is able to contribute to strengthening that voice through research and economic modelling.



Lesa Dunn, Director

BBus, CSU

Lesa is an expert in asset management and is Director, North Western NSW Asset Management Unit, NSW Department of Education and Training.

I'm passionate about ensuring our country communities are strong, resilient and growing.

WRI provides solid funding arguments for organisations to ensure there are rewarding careers in the country and a great lifestyle to go with them.



Andrew Everett, Director

LLB, Sydney BEc, Macq

Andrew has extensive experience as a senior executive in the telecommunications, data and information technology sectors and is currently Director, NSW Department of Industry.

Regional communities punch above their weight in terms of innovation and productivity and need to be encouraged and supported. The work that WRI undertakes helps build stronger regional communities through evidence based policy and decision making.

Our Board

Board Changes

During 2016 WRI undertook a strategic governance review to assist the Board in determining the skills, qualifications and experience to drive the new strategic plan, including the development of a Board Succession Plan. Following this review, the Board farewelled Michael Milston, Ian Davison and Ian Rogan and welcomed two new Directors; Andrew Everett and Jo-Anne Strader. WRI has greatly benefited from the outstanding contribution of the outgoing Directors and thanks them for their dedication and service.

Happy Customers

We have been working hard to make sure that we meet and exceed our customers' expectations. In 2016, we aimed to have a Net Promoter Score (that is the difference between the percentage of customers who will actively promote our work, minus the number who are neutral) of at least 80%.

In 2016 our Net Promoter Score increased from 54% to 80%.

NET PROMOTER SCORE
54%  **80%**

Solid Returns

In 2016 we committed to improving our surplus so we could invest more in public-purpose research that supports regional economic development.

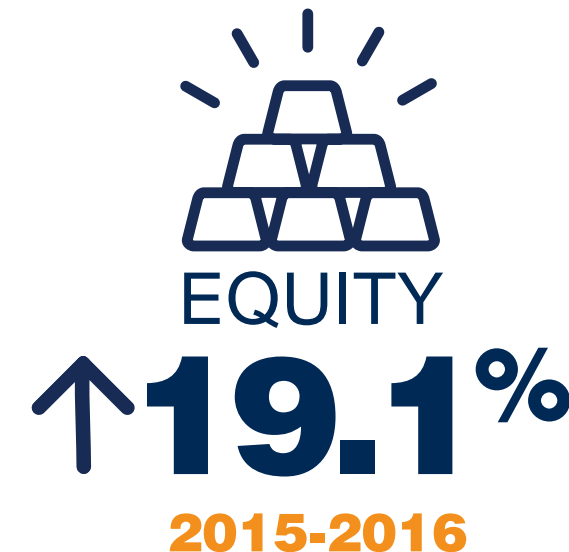
In 2016 we delivered a \$54,643 surplus - a 316% improvement on 2015.

In 2016 we committed to increasing our engagement in public disclosure on regional economic development.



In 2016 we were quoted or cited in 50 media reports. An increase of 108% since 2012.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
↑108%
2012-2016



Delivering Outcomes

We have been creating value for our clients.

In 2016, 100% of applications we supported for infrastructure funding were successful.



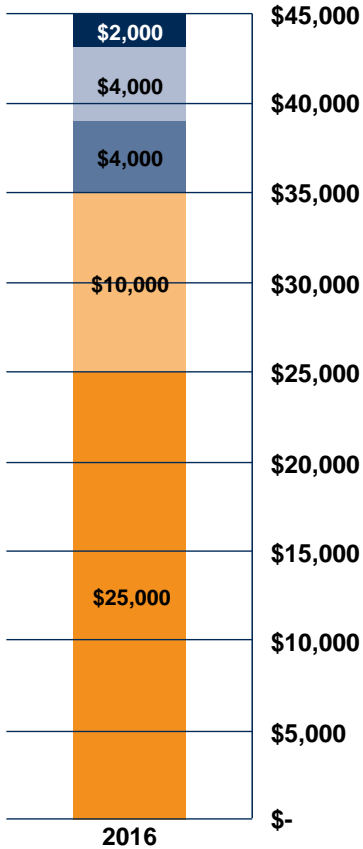
Prudent Management

In 2016 we committed to growing equity by 10% to ensure that we could make strategic investments in our technology, staff and research capacity for the future.

In 2016 we increased our equity by 19.1% to \$341,282.

Key Outcomes in 2016

Return To Our Communities



- Regional Engagement
- Media Commentary
- Sponsorship
- Research Activities
- Other

In 2016, we committed to continuing to invest in the growth of our communities by buying from regional businesses, contributing to public discourse and funding public research.

In 2016 we returned 91.4% of our surplus (\$50,000) to create the Inland Research Fund (IRF) to support public good research into the needs of inland communities, and the opportunities for economic and employment growth.

We invested a further \$45,000 (8% of our operational budget) into regional development activities during the year, including:

- sponsorship of the Australian Regional Development Conference, partnership with the Illawarra Regional Information Service, the Bathurst Women’s Network and the Bathurst Business Chamber;
- providing thought leadership and insights at key economic development forums, including hosting an Innovation Forum as part of our Insight Series, presenting to the Economic Development Officer’s Network, chairing a panel at the Australian Regional Development Conference and leading media commentary on the inland rail at the Central West Business Summit;
- publication of research reports, particularly an Aged Care Skills Hotspot report with Verto; and
- a range of media commentary and other engagement activities.



In 2016 we returned 91.4% of our surplus (\$50,000) to create the Inland Research Fund to support public good research into the needs of inland communities, and the opportunities for economic and employment growth.

Regional Citizenship

Investing in local knowledge and expertise not only delivers better outcomes, but also delivers more economic activity and growth back to our communities.

By using our regionally based service, every \$1 dollar spent by our clients with WRI results in a multiplier expansion of 2.2 in regional NSW.



WRI is committed to ensuring the growth of regional economies through our procurement practices, actively seeking to use regional businesses wherever possible.

Through our regional expenditure, WRI helped create:

- \$1.277 million in output
- \$72,100 in gross regional product
- \$432,000 in household income
- 6.4 full-time equivalent jobs for the regional NSW economy



In December 2016 WRI established the Inland Research Fund. Its mission is to build effective collaborations, deliver objective evidence and increase our policy influence to support improved decision making and investment for the development of inland Australia.

WRI recognises that there is a great deal of research on rural and regional communities in general, but this often fails to differentiate between the experiences and needs of coastal, city and inland communities, or different communities within inland areas.

The Inland Research Fund was established with an initial \$50,000 in seed funding, and will be expanded over the coming years through surpluses generated from WRI's regional activities and through contributions and grants.

Our goal is to give inland Australia a stronger voice about its future in public policy development.

We are very proud to have the opportunity to give back to the communities and regions that support our work through the establishment of the Inland Research Fund.

Mark Burdack WRI Chair

Building Our Research Future

On 7 December 2016, the WRI Chair hosted our regional stakeholders and foundation partners at a function to deliver an update report on our strategy and activities, and to thank outgoing Chair Michael Milston and Deputy Chair Ian Davison.

WRI Directors, past and present: Mark Burdack, Andrew Everett, Juliet Duffy, Michael Milston, Lesa Dunn, Ian Davison, Peter Batten and Sandy Morrison.



Working With Our Communities



Incoming WRI Director Andrew Everett with WRI Chair, Mark Burdack.



Ian and Kay Davison with Sandy Morrison.



Mark Burdack thanking Ian Davison for his committed service to WRI.



Peter McMillan (RDA Central West), Peter Batten (Former WRI Director) and Juliet Duffy (WRI Director).



Dale Curran (WRI), Wai Matthews (WRI) and Chris Maybin (VERTO).



Juliet Duffy (WRI) and Greg Dresser (CareWest).



Mark Burdack thanking Michael Milston for his many years of dedicated service to WRI.



Graham Sattler (Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums) and Sonia Muir (NSW Department of Primary Industries).



Ann Dib pictured with Greg Beileiter (NSW Department of Industry).



Jenny Bennett (CENTROC), Lucy White (Bathurst Regional Council) and Wendy Mason (WRI).



Ian Rogan (Former WRI Director).

12 May 2016

WRI hosted the Opposition Parliamentary Secretary for Digital Innovation and StartUps, the Hon Ed Husic MP, and key Central West business leaders for a roundtable discussion on innovation in Bathurst.

The conversation focused on the opportunities for growth and innovation start-ups in a regional NSW setting including:

- the need for a balanced focus on innovation in our regions, as well as our cities;
- the importance of the development of human capital through investment in regional skills for the future, along with the infrastructure, to ensure success; and
- the need for appropriate policy settings, adequate technology infrastructure and strategic collaboration between parties to encourage a “critical mass” of start-ups in the region.



Craig Randazzo (Skillset), the Hon Ed Husic MP, Marie Sullivan (ClearPath Family Law), Cr Jess Jennings, Gerarda Mader (entrepreneur), David Reeves (CSU), Wendy Mason (WRI), Julia Andrews (RDA Central West), Jo Charles (Reliance Bank), Steve Semmens (Bathurst Business Chamber) and Zoe Hida (appiwork).

WRI Innovation Roundtable

17 August 2016

More than 60 entrepreneurs, innovators, researchers and big thinkers came together in Bathurst to talk about innovation at an event hosted by WRI, appiwork and the NSW Department of Industry.



Mark Burdack (WRI Chair), Tony Mader (Olinet) and Stephen Harper (Suez Recycling and Recovery) pictured at the Insight Series Event.



Simon Wright (CSU) and Danielle Ranshaw (WRI) pictured deep in conversation.



Lucy White (Bathurst Regional Council), Professor Mark Frost (CSU) and Zoe Hida (appiwork) talking innovation.



WRI conducted research to highlight the economic contribution of NSW TAFE Western to its local community. In addition to generating 870 jobs and \$90 million in household income, \$125 million of additional income will be earned by the NSW TAFE Western graduates of 2015 across their lifetime (when compared to a similar group with no post school qualifications).

“We’re really proud to be such an important asset to our local communities. These figures not only emphasise the crucial contribution we make in regional NSW, but also prove that we do offer life changing opportunities for our students.”

Adam Bennett

WRI General Manager, Wendy Mason, pictured with NSW TAFE Western Acting Director Adam Bennett, holding copies of the report.

WRI Insight Series: Innovation Forum

Economic Impact and Human Capital Contribution of NSW TAFE Western

WRI conducted a series of community forums to provide Bathurst Regional Council with valuable information and feedback from local businesses to help shape the 2017-2020 Economic Development Strategy. The strategy is responsible for driving continued local business growth, innovation, investment, jobs growth and residential relocation and attracting businesses to the region.

Gary Rush (Mayor) pictured with Wendy Mason (WRI General Manager) and Lindsay Gale (Central West Business Enterprise Centre) at a business community consultation session.

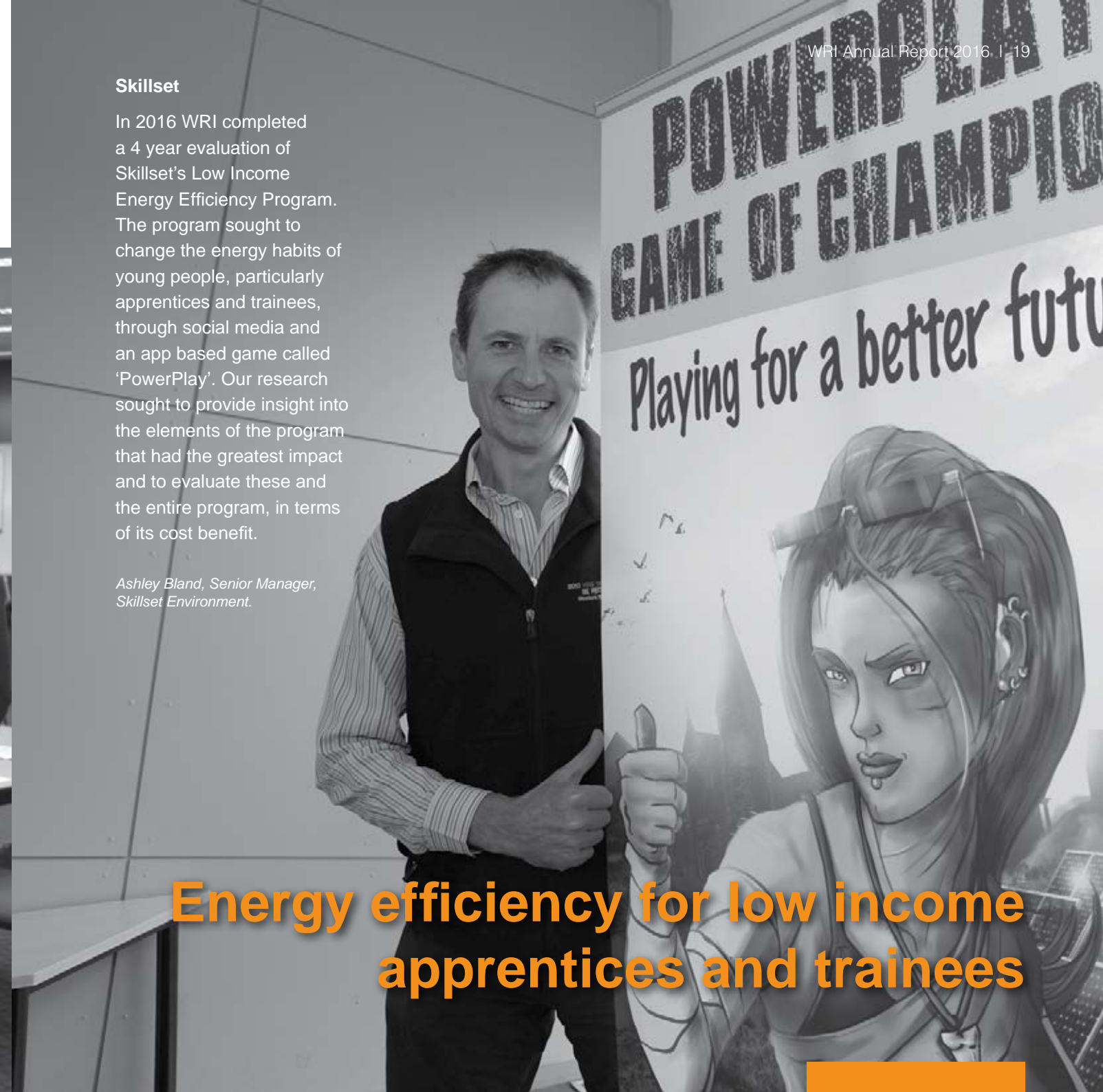


Bathurst Economic Development Community Consultation

Skillset

In 2016 WRI completed a 4 year evaluation of Skillset's Low Income Energy Efficiency Program. The program sought to change the energy habits of young people, particularly apprentices and trainees, through social media and an app based game called 'PowerPlay'. Our research sought to provide insight into the elements of the program that had the greatest impact and to evaluate these and the entire program, in terms of its cost benefit.

Ashley Bland, Senior Manager, Skillset Environment.



Energy efficiency for low income apprentices and trainees

WRI thanks all our clients for their continued support, collaboration and dedication to regional economic and social development.

Client	Research consultancy project
Skillset	Low income energy efficiency program evaluation
Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources Security, University of Sydney	Economic evaluation of NSW coastal aquaculture
Association of NSW Conservatoriums of Music	Evaluation of Regional Conservatorium music programs for school students
NSW TAFE Western	Economic impact and human capital contribution
Catholic Diocese of Maitland – Newcastle	Cathedral Street Precinct re-development: economic appraisal and cost benefit analysis
Bathurst Regional Council	Community consultation – effluent diversion proposal
Charles Sturt University	Understanding perceptions of post school education among Australia's Youth: follow up study
Cadia Valley Operations	Community sentiment survey 2016
Maitland City Council	Maitland regional sportsground complex: cost benefit analysis
Charles Sturt University	Research impacts
Bathurst Regional Council	Community survey on urban seating
Bathurst Regional Council	Peer review of economic assessment of proposed Rail Museum
Illawarra Regional Information Service (IRIS)	Banksia Village project appraisal
Regional Development Australia Central West	Industry summaries to inform regional plan

The Water Directorate	Equivalent tenement analysis
Australian Paper	Economic impact report
Bathurst Regional Council	Velocity Park: economic appraisal
NSW Department of Primary Industries	Young farmers business project survey snapshot
Charles Sturt University	Building on parents' knowledge of higher education, access and success
NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet	Regional coordination branch evaluation framework
Regional Development Australia Far West	Agribusiness growth and diversification in Far West NSW
Illawarra Regional Information Service (IRIS)	Australian disability enterprise economic analysis
Bathurst Regional Council	Economic development strategy consultation
Charles Sturt University	Economic impact update
NSW Water Solutions – Public Works Advisory	Broken Hill long term water supply project: social impact assessment
Illawarra Regional Information Service (IRIS)	Economic impact of Bluescope Steel
Horticulture Innovation Australia	Turf industry statistics
Geolyse	Oberon residential land analysis
NSW TAFE Western	Work health and safety training needs for small to medium enterprises
Bathurst Regional Council	Business case for a regional collections facility
Charles Sturt University	Focus group coordination

Our Research



Wendy Mason
General Manager

BEd Sydney, Grad Cert HR, Grad Cert Business (Marketing), MAICD

Joining in 2016, Wendy brings broad management capability to WRI from her former role as Head of the Commonwealth Bank Foundation. Growing up in Central West NSW, Wendy has enthusiastically returned to the region, leading the WRI team to support the social, economic, and environmental development of our communities.



Danielle Ranshaw
Senior Research Consultant

BEd&Fin, NSW

Bringing more than ten years of research experience, Danielle has deep expertise in conducting large research projects to deliver key insights for clients. With well refined research skills, Danielle has worked across a number of sectors, with a broad client base and developed a particular interest in program evaluation.



Alistair Maclellan
Senior Research Consultant

BA Political Economy (Hons I), UNE

Using well developed skills in data analysis, economics and business, and experience in policy development, Alistair has a strong focus on fully understanding our clients' needs and providing tailored research to create value. Engaging with stakeholders and consulting with the community is a real strength, ensuring research is well-informed and actionable.



Wai Matthews
Research Consultant

BBus (Fin/Eco), CSU

Utilising the experience and knowledge gained in local business operations, management and finance, Wai brings real on-the-ground commercial experience to WRI. With an active interest in issues affecting regional areas, expertise in Input-Output (IO) modelling, and strong economic analysis skills, Wai delivers key insights for WRI's clients.



Dale Curran
**Executive Officer
& Company Secretary**

BA, ANU

Providing key support to the WRI team and Board of Directors, Dale brings a wealth of administration, financial and policy development expertise. With more than ten years of experience with WRI, Dale understands our business, the needs of our clients and how we can assist them to deliver outcomes.

Our Team

The most important way that WRI impacts on its regions and makes a positive difference, is through our consulting expertise and advice.

Our team of professional research staff and associates has the expertise necessary to provide our clients with robust and reliable research solutions.



Client & Stakeholder Focused

We listen to our clients and stakeholders and try to understand their individual needs. We go beyond collating data and information, and work to provide knowledge and advice that builds value for our clients and stakeholders. We aim to make a real difference in our communities, and to be a first-choice, front of mind service for our regions.



Collaborative & Inclusive

We are at our best when we work together to achieve common goals. We recognise that we achieve better outcomes when we embrace and respect the different views, knowledge, cultures and abilities of all our stakeholders, internally and externally.



Integrity & Reliability

We are consistent, trustworthy, dependable and we have integrity. We set realistic goals and we endeavour to achieve them.



Responsive

We recognise that our environment, and the needs of our clients and stakeholders are constantly changing and we continually refine and adapt to these different and changing needs.

Services:

- Economic development
- Market structure and assessment
- Economic Impact analysis and inter-industry modelling
- Business Case development
- Cost Benefit Analysis
- Competitive advantage assessment
- Economic modelling
- Market research
- Project assessment
- Evaluation studies
- Feasibility assessments
- Community consultation and engagement
- Strategic Plan development



Markets:

- Local Government
- State Government
- Federal Government
- Health & Community services
- Vocational Education and Training
- Higher Education
- Regional Development Australia
- Cultural and Recreational Services
- Research & Development Corporations
- Industry
- SMEs
- Environment



Our Values

