



WRI

**WESTERN
RESEARCH INSTITUTE LTD**

ANNUAL REPORT

2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



2020 has been a year like no other when COVID-19 started to spike causing shockwaves through communities and businesses across the world. Sanitiser, surgical masks, social distancing and online meetings have become the new norm as we all strive together to minimise the larger impacts of this pandemic.

Despite these unprecedented events, 2020 was a successful year for WRI in attracting investment to regional Australia and continuing our direct contribution to regional development. WRI continues to build strong relationships with regional NSW and present reliable and informative outcomes for our clients.

WRI's consulting services have contributed to regional development for over 20 years. We have continued to develop and promote our Tourism Model. The Tourism Model received funding from Central NSW Joint Organisation of Councils and its 10 members councils in the pilot year 2019 and their commitment continued in 2020. Destination NSW Country and Outback supported the project financially in 2019.

The Board of WRI is particularly proud of WRI's skilled and experienced research team this year, who in increasingly difficult economic conditions, have worked tirelessly for our clients and rewarded our organisation with an end of year financial surplus, the first in 4 years. This is no doubt, a result of internal productivity and training strategies put in place in recent years to ensure our staff continue to enhance their expertise and local knowledge and deliver high quality research for our clients. I would like to thank our Deputy Chair, Gavin Priestley and Treasurer, Jo-Anne Strader for volunteering their time and expertise.

Special mention is also made of WRI's Administration Officer trainee, Heather Waters who was announced as the winner of the 2020 Joyce Hawkes Skillset Trainee of the Year. Since completing her Certificate III in Business, Heather is now furthering her skills with a Certificate IV in Business.

I thank all our staff and Directors for their continued commitment to regional development in NSW.

In closing I would also like to congratulate and thank our many stakeholders and clients whose projects and initiatives pave the way for our regional communities to grow and flourish now and in the future.


Juliet Duffy
Chair

OUR GOALS



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

OUR SERVICES

Economic impact

Business case/
Strategic plans

Human capital

Process
improvement

Benefit cost analysis

Research papers

Surveys/
Consultation

Presentations

Evaluations

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of Country where we live and work. We pay respects to Elders of past, present and the future and acknowledge continuous connections and contribution to land, sea and community.



Juliet Duffy
Chair

Juliet is an award winning, regional entrepreneur and can add WRI's first female Chair to her growing list of achievements. Juliet founded Regional EnviroScience, now rebranded EnviroScience Solutions Pty Ltd.

In 2018 Juliet was named NSW Regional Woman of the year, listed on both the Australian Financial Review (AFR) Fast 100 growing companies and the AFR 100 most influential women. Juliet was recently awarded a regional scholarship to undertake the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) course in 2020. Juliet holds a Masters in Sustainable Management from Sydney University, and has been managing occupational health and environmental projects since the 1980s. Additionally Juliet has worked in Regional Development and in an Asia Pacific role for a Tier One IT & C Company working within the Asia Pacific region in Sydney, Singapore and Santa Clara.



Gavin Priestley
Deputy Chair

Gavin has an intimate knowledge of the issues confronting regional Australia which has enabled him to contribute in government (Federal and State) and the commercial arena. Extensive experience and qualifications in management has assisted him in developing remote teams ensuring professional service delivery of complex technical solutions.

Gavin is passionate about bringing education and employment opportunities to the smaller towns in NSW. He has particular focus on training and employment for aboriginal youth in remote communities.



Jo-Anne Strader
Treasurer

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.

In 2020 WRI completed 36 projects with revenue received of \$520,636. Of these projects, 5 projects attracted NSW and Federal Government funding of \$27,909,000.

This illustrates the value that WRI can offer to our clients when they are seeking grant funding.

OUR IMPACT

We consulted with **26** individual clients in 2020, to help them make informed decisions. Some clients came back to us for multiple projects.

SERVICES PROVIDED

14

Evaluations

11

Process Improvement
Presentations
Research Papers

5

Economic Impact
Benefit Cost Analysis

5

Surveys/Consultations

1

Human Capital
Business case/Strategic plan

CLIENT SECTORS

14

Local Government

16

Not for Profits
Finance

5

State Government
Other

1

Regional Development Organisations

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDER OF CHOICE

In 2020 we serviced **13** local government entities across a range of projects. The **10** local government entities who are members of Central NSW Joint Organisation also joined our 2020 Tourism Model project.

WRI continues to be appointed to the NSW Local Government Internal Audit Panel.

HAPPY CUSTOMERS

100% of our clients would engage our services for future projects.

61% of our clients in 2020 would actively promote our services.

DELIVERING OUTCOMES: WRI TOURISM MODEL 2020

THE PROJECT:

The Tourism Model for 2020 was funded by Central NSW Joint Organisation and 10 Central West councils.

The participating councils were Bathurst Regional Council, Blayney Shire Council, Cabonne Council, Cowra Shire Council, Forbes Shire Council, Lachlan Shire Council, Oberon Council, Orange City Council, Parkes Shire Council and Weddin Shire Council.

The Tourism Model was created by WRI to improve the quality and level of reporting on the visitor economy of local areas. It provides reliable and complete data at the local government level. Our model collects primary data on what visitors are spending in each local government area. We also analyse the impact of specific events to better understand what they offer to the local economy.

Our model provides annualised reliable estimates of the contribution of the visitor economy to gross regional product, employment and household income.

OUR ROLE:

Our team collated data from a range of sources to estimate the visitor economy in council areas. This includes primary and secondary data sources which were collated to produce a profile that estimates the value of the visitor economy and the characteristics of visitors to regions.

Our Tourism Model captures a previously hidden part of the visitor economy by estimating how much residents spend hosting their family and friends. We learnt how people plan their trips, what they did while in the region and if they plan to return.

OUTCOME

Central NSW visitor economy value estimated at \$592.1 million per annum

DELIVERING OUTCOMES: BEGA VALLEY JOBS AND SKILLS

THE PROJECT:

Bega Valley Shire Council sought our services to produce two reports.

The Labour Force Capabilities Report explores the occupations, skills and employment to visualise the opportunities for the community and to keep jobs local while promoting growth for the Shire.

The Practical Resources Guide illustrates ideas to help the Shire with job opportunities, address challenges and connect the community to skills development and work.

The jobs projection was completed prior to the summer bushfire disaster and COVID-19 impacts.

OUR ROLE:

Using WRI's skills in consultation and economic impact analysis in this comprehensive project WRI created a model of the Bega Valley Shire Council area's labour force and identified what jobs the 74 major projects analysed would be expected to generate through construction and ongoing operations and the flow on jobs the new construction will create locally.

A comparative analysis of the areas where the Shire had economic advantage in terms of skills held was provided. Extensive consultation was undertaken with 167 participants across a range of approaches designed to best suit the participants. This included 2 workshops held in Bega and Eden using WRI's Big Ideas methodology where participants actively develop a prioritised list of outcomes and leave the sessions with a sense of achievement.

The full report can be found on the [Bega Valley Shire Council website](#).

OUTCOME:

The impact of 74 major projects analysed over the next 5 years will add almost 2,296 full time local jobs to the Bega Valley area

Alison Vandenberg
Economic Development Officer

"WRI provided Bega Valley Shire Council with an informative Labour Force and Capabilities Report and a Practical Resources Guide assessing current and future needs of jobs and skills in the Council's region. It's been a great experience to have WRI on our team. They brought a professional can do attitude and adapted to many pressures, including fires, flood and COVID impacts, through out the project. The community consultation used WRI's Big Ideas methodology to capture community sentiment and ideas to help drive long term growth for the region."

DELIVERING OUTCOMES: TRANSPORT LANDSCAPE AND CONNECTIONS ANALYSIS

THE PROJECT:

The Transport Landscape and Connections Analysis Project was commissioned by Regional Development Australia Far South Coast after receiving funding through the Regional Employment Trials Program under the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

The project aimed to identify and establish the extent of specific issues regarding the transport offerings in the study region comprising the Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley Local Government Areas and to identify opportunities to improve access to employment and build connectivity between employers and job seekers as well as enabling access to educational pursuits.

OUR ROLE:

The production of this report included analysis via an extensive consultation process where 78 people were engaged across key stakeholders in one on one group interviews and two online surveys to assess the transport issues impacting on workers and those seeking education in the Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley council areas.

The project identified in a transport matrix the current infrastructure and summarised future plans for improvements. It also created an action plan of recommended actions to deliver coordinated services across the three tiers and government with the involvement of the business and education sectors to improve transport outcomes. The research will underpin strategic project planning in the transport space.

OUTCOME:

Transport was identified as the most significant issue impacting on access to work and education

Fiona Hatcher

CEO and Director of Regional Development

"Regional Development Australia Far South Coast engaged WRI to undertake analysis to assess the implications and impacts transport linkages have upon access to employment and training in the Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley local government areas. WRI engaged with 78 key stakeholders via surveys and interviews to produce a report that provided much needed detail on the specific issues the Far South Coast should address to ensure improved access for locals to employment and education opportunities."

DELIVERING OUTCOMES: INDUSTRY SKILLS IN NORTHERN NSW

THE PROJECT:

Transport for NSW commissioned the study across the Local Government Areas of Goondiwindi Regional Council, Gunnedah Shire Council, Gwydir Shire Council, Moree Plains Shire Council and Narrabri Shire Council to evaluate the impact of the Narrabri to North Star stage of the Inland Rail and the jobs growth opportunities across the 5 council areas over the next 5 years.

OUR ROLE:

WRI collated information on 64 major projects that were identified by the councils as likely to occur in the next 5 years and estimated the jobs by occupation that would be required to build the projects and then to operate the businesses that utilise the new developments.

The action plan identifies tasks that will build collaborative practices as the 5 councils contemplate the significant growth anticipated for the region and what skills residents will be required to hold.

Location quotient analysis was also used to illustrate the competitive advantage, and thus areas of easier growth, in each council area.

A business survey identified the issues locals are having recruiting currently and their thoughts on the impact of the expected major expansion likely to occur over the next 5 years.

OUTCOME:

By analysing the impacts of 64 major projects on labour market demand, the study area has a blueprint of what skills development pathways should be available to enable more local employment

DELIVERING OUTCOMES: WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

THE PROJECT:

Bathurst Regional Council sought WRI's skills to prepare a benefit cost analysis of infrastructure projects and to assess the economic impacts of water restrictions and water supply failure in Bathurst region.

Bathurst Regional Council is undertaking work with the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet to inform a \$27M funding application for infrastructure projects to improve water security within the Bathurst Local Government Area.

OUR ROLE:

WRI prepared a benefit cost analysis of the infrastructure projects and assessed the economic impacts of water restrictions and water supply failure in Bathurst Local Government Area.

Our methodologies provided analysis of the high level political, environmental, social and environmental impacts in addition to the assessment of the benefit cost analysis of the capital projects. Quantifiable impacts were estimated along with unquantifiable social, political and environmental impacts of drought and water restriction changes used as an indicator of the impacts of reduced access to water.

OUTCOME:

The project provided the information needed to illustrate the impact of changing water access to the agricultural sector and to the prosperity of the Bathurst region as a whole.

DELIVERING OUTCOMES: BALLARAT TECHNOLOGY PARK ECONOMIC IMPACT

THE PROJECT:

Returning clients Federation University and IBM Australia approached WRI to undertake an economic impact analysis of the impacts of the Ballarat Technology Park on the Local Government Area of Ballarat, the Central Highlands region, Victoria and Australia.




OUR ROLE:

WRI formulated the economic impact to illustrate how valuable the Ballarat Technology Park is to the region.

Data was gathered from 38 businesses and organisations at the technology park. The modelling provided a detailed picture of the direct and indirect fulltime equivalent jobs, household income and economic value. Deeper analysis of the key anchor tenant, IBM Australia, was also provided to enable the assessment of the company's impact on the region.

OUTCOME:

At a Victorian state level for the 2018–19 year, the Ballarat Technology Park is responsible for:

-  4,435 direct and indirect fulltime equivalent jobs
-  \$381 million in household income
-  Adding \$629 million in economic value

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020

SUPPORTING OUR REGION

As a not for profit organisation committed to the growth of regional Australia. WRI commits pricing and services to meeting the needs of our clients.

WRI also provides in kind assistance and advisory services where possible. In 2020 a total of \$13,100 was estimated in the provision of in kind services

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

“Work was successfully completed as the scope required. And, the interactions were supportive and positive. Staff were open to feedback and created an excellent collaborative feeling to the relationship.”

“WRI provided a rigorous and quality service, accurately addressing the project brief, clear project plans and excellent communication through the project life cycle. WRI are easy to work with, the benefits of a small regional organisation that delivers quality service and outcomes is ideal for regional projects.”

“Project completed in a timely manner at a reasonable cost”

“Provides access to great insights and research for Regional NSW”

WRI continues to engage with 2BS 95.1FM to conduct monthly interviews held on the first Tuesday of each month. We thank 2BS and their team for the support, interest and promotion of WRI.



Annual Skillset awards Bathurst: Heather Waters and Kathy Woolley, CEO

WRI's Administration Officer, Heather Waters was awarded the Joyce Hawkes Trainee of the Year

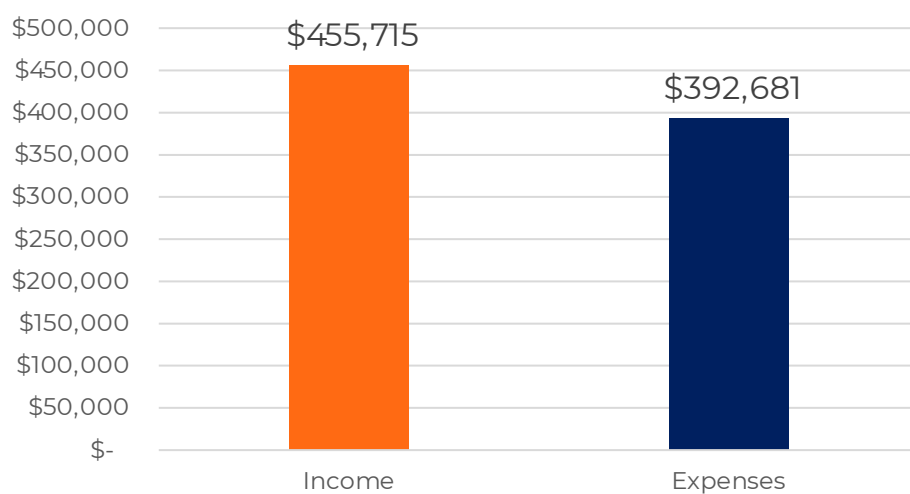
FINANCIAL RESULTS

2020 was a challenging year for all business due to the nature of the year. However, WRI was fortunate to gain a surplus to wrap up the financial year.

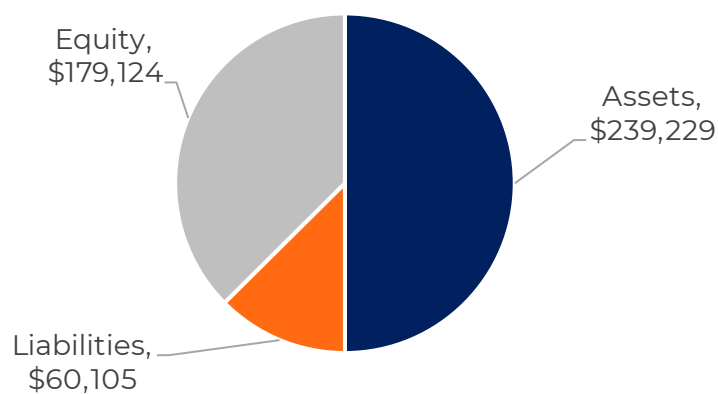
2020 saw upgrades to our software and hardware so that our staff can work more efficiently and be able to work remotely during COVID-19 lockdowns.

Subscriptions to a number of key tools were upgraded during the year to offer a higher level of service to our clients.

Profit and Loss



2020 Financial position



CLIENTS AND RESEARCH

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

Research Projects of 2020
Water Infrastructure - Bathurst Regional Council
Labour force capabilities report and practical resources guide - Bega Valley Shire Council
Economic profile - Cabonne Council
Market testing scope - Catholic Education Diocese Bathurst
Market testing research phase - Catholic Education Diocese Bathurst
Review of strategic planning documentation on water infrastructure - Central NSW Joint Organisation
Tourism Strategy refresh - participation as advisor - Central NSW Joint Organisation
WRI Tourism Model 2020 - Central NSW Joint Organisation
Community sentiment survey - CSA Mine
Saleyards strategy facilitation - Dubbo Regional Council
Water and Sewerage survey - Dubbo Regional Council
Awareness survey assessing Christmas Spree campaign - Hilltops Council
Ballarat Technology Park economic impact - Federation University and IBM Australia
Illawarra Coal economic impact - Illawarra Regional Information Service
Pool kiosk benefit business case - Maitland City Council
Aquatic Centres business case - Narromine Shire Council
Aquatic Centres tender contract documents - Narromine Shire Council
Benefit Cost Analysis - Blayney motel - Premise Consulting Pty Ltd/Rovest
Interview panel - Public Works Advisory
Transport Landscape and Connections - Regional Development Australia Far South Coast
December 2019 results confirmation - Super Investor
12 months of results confirmation - Super Investor
Industry Skills in Northern NSW - Transport for NSW
Grants opportunities - Westhaven
Monthly analysis local economic position - 2BS

OUR TEAM



Kathy Woolley
CEO

Kathy joined the WRI team in February 2018 having previously worked on a variety of boards and senior management roles across sectors including media, health, education, regional development, government, event management, research and sales.

For a number of years Kathy also ran a consultancy specialising in services for not for profit entities, focusing on best practice techniques in management and governance.

With formal qualifications in change management, company directorship, community engagement, economics and training, and well developed skills in human resources, information technology, finance and economic development, Kathy offers a unique skill set to assist with most business needs.

Kathy is a member of the Australian Institute of Internal Auditors and has developed internal audit and process improvement frameworks for a number of organisations.



Dale Curran
Senior Research
Officer

Dale is the senior researcher at WRI and has worked with the organisation across many roles and projects over the past 10 years. Her expertise in research centres around consultation processes, her keen eye for detail and quality assurance. She has also managed the executive support, finance, management of the Board of Directors and maintenance of policies functions in the organisation and understands how businesses work.

Dale has extensive experience in administration, financial management, corporate governance and design. Dale brings a high level of organisational skill and efficiency to her role.



Chris Mullen
Research
Officer

Chris is an Economics graduate from the University of New England and is currently undertaking a Master of Economics course. Chris has a great interest and passion for macroeconomics and microeconomics, policy analysis and regional development economics.

Throughout his undergraduate degree Chris has gained skills in benefit cost analysis, business statistics and economic modelling. Having grown up on a property on the mid-north coast, Chris has a strong understanding of life in regional Australia and the issues rural communities face.



Heather Waters
Administration
Officer

Heather brings strong skills in customer service from her experience working in the retail industry. She provides all the administrative support and is responsible for the creation of desktop published reports where required.

Heather is currently enrolled in Certificate IV Business. Heather is passionate about building strong rural communities

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