

ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

WESTIR LTD

INFORMING YOUR COMMUNITY

Our purpose is to respond to current and potential issues affecting the people of Western Sydney by gathering, analysing and interpreting information and ensuring that such information is easily accessible to the community.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The past year has seen several advances for WESTIR, both in service provision and development of the company.

Our small staff team has continued to deliver high quality information and research in response to the needs of the community and the human services sector in Greater Western Sydney. Although few in number, our staff covered a wide variety of information and research projects, and they invariably delivered them with professionalism and skill. They supported both government and community service agencies, and assisted in the development and planning of efficient and well-focussed human services for the Greater Western Sydney region. Outputs from these activities are itemised in the report that follows.

One of the strengths that we have always prided ourselves on is the ability to work effectively with other organisations to achieve the best outcomes possible for human service development and deliver in the region. In particular, this year, we have been especially pleased with collaborations with the Aboriginal Family Planning Circle, various Councils, the Department of Family & Community Services, and several small community-based agencies.

On the financial front, WESTIR delivered a small surplus this past year, and Margaret, Peter and our bookkeeper, Charles, were commended by our auditor for turning around last year's deficit via an increase in revenues and tight controls on expenditure. The Board acknowledges their fine efforts.

Anxiety about the future of WESTIR [and other community sector resourcing agencies] was alleviated somewhat during the year with the Ministerial announcement of an assured three-year funding cycle, to allow for a full revamp of the Targeted Earlier Intervention Program to take effect. Staff have been heavily involved in the development and planning for this new TEIP program in the District. This will continue over the next several years, until the final program is in place by 2019.

We have also continued to support the consolidation and organisation of WESTIR's policy base during the year. We are committed to continuing this process during the forthcoming year.

One disappointment for us in the past year was the stalling of discussions with Western Sydney Community Forum regarding unification of the two organisations. It is unclear as to whether the process will revive during the forthcoming year. Whatever the outcome, we are committed to working with other regional peak agencies to achieve the best for our region.

Finally, I would like to again commend our staff for their continuing efforts and expertise during the past year, and also acknowledge the ongoing support given our Board of skilled and experienced directors. They are invaluable to our continuing success.

Ron Alder
Chairperson

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

As we reach the end of another year, it is with much pleasure that I look back on a year of success and positive outcomes for WESTIR.

Much of the year was taken up with waiting for more detail about the future of our funding and the services that we provide. With delays and uncertainties coming from funding agencies about the future direction and ultimate shape of our Targeted Earlier Intervention Program [TEIP], it was often difficult to cut through and focus on the services for which we are funded. This was a common issue for many other agencies in the sector. It was certainly a lively topic of discussions in many of the forums and seminars that WESTIR staff attended throughout the year. The announcement by the Minister of assured funding until 2019, eased many fears that people had been feeling, allowing us to get on with providing quality, human services for our communities, and being involved in the development of a revamped program.

In terms of research and information services provided, this year WESTIR has continued to develop the evaluation services [for both programs and organisations] that have become more of a focus for us in recent times. This has ranged from simple advice on setting up an evaluation process, to conduct of full evaluations. We have also continued to develop an online presence for WESTIR, with reports being regularly posted to our website and more frequent posts to the Facebook page. Some of the reports posted to our website have summarised evaluations undertaken, but they have also included results of independent research on the impact of community gardens on settlement of recent arrivals; literature reviews; reports of conferences and seminars attended; substantial compilations of information on crime in the region and on the ageing workforce; along with many other topics of interest to the Greater West.

Right at the end of the year, the first results from the 2016 Census were released. This is always one of the highlights of WESTIR's activities, occurring every five years, and we are always very excited by the prospect of new, comprehensive data emerging for us to analyse. It freshens up our understanding of what is happening in the fast-growing Western Sydney region, and often reveals several surprising developments over the previous five year cycle. Despite the concerns about the Census and issues with its conduct, most Australians complied with the Census program and the Bureau of Statistics is confident that the results continue to provide the highest quality information. We will continue to publish summary data revealed by the Census about the region.

Last, but certainly not least, I gratefully acknowledge the strong, mutually supportive team that we have built at WESTIR. It makes an Executive Officer's role so much easier when you can be confident of reliable and skilled support from the team, of both staff and Board members. I thank you all for another successful year, and look forward to the year ahead.

Peter Rogers
Executive Officer

Enhanced and more equitable access to statistical and other information for people and organisations, especially those in Western Sydney.

Opposition to negative discrimination and prejudice based on race, colour, creed, gender, age, sexuality, disability/ability, marital status, income, social & political associations, geographic location and position in society [both actual and perceived].

The potential for constructive and well-resourced planning to improve the quality of life in Western Sydney.

Provision of high quality and timely service to our clients.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Socially inclusive practices, including affirmative action and equal employment opportunity.

Ethical and non-exploitative research practices.

Collaboration, not competition, with like-minded organisations and individuals, especially in planning for, and activities in, the Western Sydney region.

Improved and more equitable access to human services and physical infrastructure for the Western Sydney community.

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Community Sector Capacity Building

WESTIR Information Requests – 325 occasions of service



Skills / Training Program

Fairfield Emerging Leadership Program – community profile skills training & presentation of evaluation focus group outcomes

Panel presentation on 'Urban Liveability' to Tract Forum

Training on research skills & project development to Macquarie University Social Science students

Food Security Panel presentation – Blacktown City Council

Presentation of results of Community Gardens Research to participant groups

Data presentations to local & Western Sydney District Targetted Earlier Intervention Program Groups

Presentation of evaluation results to Aboriginal Family Planning Circle group

Resources Developed

WESTIR website [www.westir.org.au] – 45,697 unique visitors [July 2016 – June 2017]

WESTIR Facebook page – average reach = 236 persons

Culture, Community & Sustainable Community Gardens, Blacktown – blog on progress + final research report

'Place-based Services Planning' - literature review

'Understanding Crime & Crime Statistics in Western Sydney' – research report

'An Ageing Workforce in Greater Western Sydney' – research report

'Local Community Grants Programs in Western Sydney' – information paper

Research Briefs & Reports:

Report on Australian Institute of Family Studies [AIFS] Conference 2016

Report on Food Governance Conference 2016

Report on Blacktown Community Services Conference 2016

Report on Leading with Presence: Storytelling workshop, August 2016

Notes on 'Keep Them Safe Outcomes Evaluation' seminar – June 2017

Reference Materials for 2016 Census of Population & Housing

A First Look at the 2016 Census Data – June 2017



BOARD MEMBERS

RON ALDER
MARGARET TIPPER
ERICH WELLER
MICHAEL DARCY
CHARLES CASUSCELLI
SUE COLEMAN [resigned, April 2017]

WESTIR STAFF

PETER ROGERS	EXECUTIVE OFFICER
BARBARA BEARD	RESEARCH OFFICER
AMY LAWTON	RESEARCH OFFICER
OLIVIA HAMILTON	RESEARCH OFFICER
VINCE SUAREZ	IT COMMUNICATIONS

Advice on Research and / or Data

Local Community Services Association [LCSA]
'Connecting Communities' Annual Conference + Masterclass

Mt Druitt Place-based Services Workshop

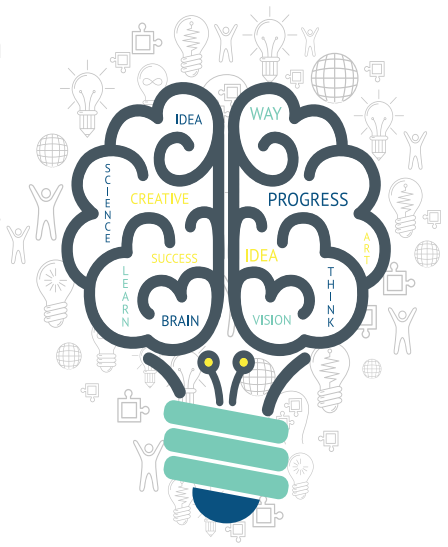
Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils [WSROC] seminar on 'Putting People in the Plan for Western Sydney's Future'

WentWest Planning Group for Mental Health Overview Plan

Australian Social Value Banking Masterclass on social value banking assessment

Blacktown City Council & Urban Futures [UNSW] seminar on 'Overturning Perceptions: Migration, Renewal & the New Western City'

Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission seminar on 'Evaluation of the Keeping Them Safe Program'



Partnership Projects

7th ZEST Western Sydney Community Service Awards – Bronze Partners

Targeted Early Intervention Program:

Western Sydney District Reference Group [including District planning & briefings]

Local Sector Planning Groups [Cumberland / Blacktown & The Hills / Nepean & Blue Mountains]

Western Sydney District Collective Leadership Group

Local Community Services Association [LCSA] Regional Group

LEEP Community Net

WESTIR / Western Sydney Community Forum [WSCF] Unification Committee

Blacktown City Social Profile – final report & launch

Listening @ Lakemba II – for Canterbury Community Centre, with Bankstown TAFE students [planning]

Aboriginal Family Planning Circle – follow up evaluation

Evaluation of Governance & Collaboration Training for Community Resource Network

Supplementary Analysis of Federal Election [2016] Youth Attitudes Survey data for Youth Action

Evaluation of Blacktown Memories Project for Blacktown City Council Library Service

Community Gardens and Settlement Research Project with University of Technology Sydney

LCSA Member Survey – in planning phase

2016 Census Network Profiles for Department of School Education – in development

Neighbourhood Centre Outcomes Assessment & Quantification for Graceades Cottage – in development

Fairfield Emerging Leadership Program – evaluation program development & preliminary results report

Blacktown Sustainable Energy Project – analysis & presentation of research data for WSCF and Office of Environment & Heritage

Penrith City Council Community Services – advice on local planning data

Western Sydney District of Family & Community Services [FACS] Service CoDesign Project – Hotspot analysis

Parramatta City Council – involvement in Cultural Plan Focus Group process

NSW Council of Social Services [NCOSS] – development of Data Seminar Program [ongoing]

Communities 4 Children [Fairfield] – advice on data & program evaluation

Blacktown Youth Services Association [BYSA] – advice on development of in-house data collection & evaluation

Parramatta City Council – advice on data sources & data collection