



Professional and Educational Profile of the Social Work and Social Welfare Workforce in Western NSW



4 May 2010

Prepared for: Charles Sturt University

Disclaimer

Any representation, statement, opinion or advice, expressed or implied, in this publication is made in good faith, but on the basis that the Western Research Institute (WRI) or its employees are not liable (whether by reason of negligence, lack of care or otherwise) to any person for any damage or loss whatsoever, which has occurred or may occur in relation to that person taking (as the case may be) action in respect of any representation, statement or advice referred to above.

Acknowledgements

The WRI would like to acknowledge the assistance of the following people in developing the questionnaire and designing the survey: Col Sharp (Director of the Office of Planning and Audit, CSU) and Wendy Bowles (Associate Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, CSU).

The WRI also wishes to acknowledge Annette Smith (Director Child & Family - Riverina Murray, NSW Department of Community Services), Peter Humphries (Deputy National Manager, Social Work Services, Centrelink) and Milos Cvjeticanin (Social Work Services, Centrelink) for their support and assistance in distributing the survey to staff.

Furthermore, the WRI acknowledges and appreciates the participation of all social work / welfare professionals involved in the survey.

Contact Details:

Western Research Institute
ABN 76 090 089 991
C/- Charles Sturt University
Research Station Drive
Bathurst NSW 2795
Telephone: (02) 6338 4435
Facsimile: (02) 6338 4699
Email: wri@csu.edu.au

Social Work/reports/2009

CONTENTS



| | |
|--|----|
| Executive Summary | 05 |
| 1. Introduction | 07 |
| 2. What is already known about CSU Graduates? | 08 |
| 3. How was the study conducted? | 09 |
| 4. Who responded to the survey? | 10 |
| 5. What are the qualifications of regional professionals? | 11 |
| 6. In what capacity are regional professionals employed? | 15 |
| 7. From where do regional professionals originate? | 18 |
| 8. Do professionals stay in the regions? | 19 |
| 9. What motivates regional professionals to remain in the regions? | 21 |
| 10. What are the career aspirations of regional professionals? | 22 |
| 11. Where do regional professionals wish to work in the future? | 23 |
| 12. What future education do regional professionals wish to undertake? | 24 |
| 13. Conclusion | 25 |
| Appendix 1: Methodology | 26 |
| The Western Research Institute | 28 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Destination of On-Campus Graduates of Charles Sturt University studies conducted in 2004 and 2006 examined the relationship between studying internally (on campus) at CSU and initial employment location. In 2006, the results of the study showed that 60% of all internal students who graduated from CSU were initially employed in a regional location. Social work and social welfare graduates were amongst those included in the study and were found to have a high probability of contributing to the regional workforce following their graduation from CSU.

In 2009, the Professional and Educational Profile of the Social Work and Social Welfare workforce in Western NSW study was conducted to examine the impact of place of tertiary study on the workforce profile and to identify the ongoing educational needs of this workforce. The study surveyed employees of the NSW Government Department of Community Services (DoCS) and the Commonwealth Government agency Centrelink who worked in western regions of NSW.

Social work and social welfare professionals hail from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, and were therefore identified as any employee working in a role where a social work or social welfare degree is the most appropriate qualification. At the completion of the survey, a total of 135 survey records had been collected from an estimated possible 396 social work and social welfare professionals employed in the project region. For the overall sample, this provided a standard error of +/- 7% at the 95% confidence level.

Respondents to the survey held a variety of qualifications ranging from Certificates and Diplomas to Bachelor degrees and post graduate degrees awarded by a range of regional, metropolitan and international institutions. Key findings of the survey were:

- 36% of respondents had attained their base qualification from CSU, 30% from metropolitan universities and 16% from regional universities other than CSU.
- 46% of respondents who had graduated from 1995 onwards held a base qualification from CSU.
- 45% of postgraduate qualifications were awarded by metropolitan universities, followed by 39% from CSU.
- Graduates from regional universities other than CSU (81%) and CSU (71%) were more likely than their metropolitan university counterparts (39%) to have completed their HSC in a regional location.

- Just over one-third of all respondents (34%) and 22% of CSU graduates had worked in a metropolitan area at some stage of their career.
- An ongoing commitment to remain working in the regions over the short, medium and longer terms was also demonstrated by the locational preferences of respondents.

Respondents provided detailed profiles of their qualifications:

- Three quarters of all respondents held a Bachelor degree as their base qualification, while seven percent held a Diploma or Associate Diploma attained from a university, seven percent held a qualification obtained through TAFE or other RTO, and two percent held a Masters degree.
- Of Bachelor degrees held, 42% were Social Work degrees, 32% were classified as Social Science degrees, 15% were Arts degrees, ten percent were degrees in education and two percent were degrees in psychology.
- Twenty percent of respondents had completed post graduate study, most commonly Masters degrees and Graduate Diplomas in the areas of social science and social welfare; education; public administration and policy; social work; and psychology and counselling.
- Forty-five percent of respondents were interested in pursuing future education, with CSU nominated as the preferred provider. Masters degrees and social work options were the most popular.

Over half of the respondents (53%) were employed in caseworker / social worker positions. Nineteen percent were employed as managers, twelve percent as senior caseworkers / senior social workers and six percent as senior managers.

- CSU graduates filled the largest proportion of positions for directorial roles (2/3 roles); management and senior management roles (38% each); and caseworker / social worker roles (37%).
- Metropolitan university graduates provided the largest proportion of senior caseworker / senior social worker positions (50%).
- The majority of all respondents were in permanent full-time employment (88%).
- Overall, respondents had sought regional employment due to family (81%) and lifestyle (also 81%) reasons.

- Almost half of all respondents (47%) had experienced a rural placement or work experience that had encouraged them to pursue rural work opportunities.
- Practica also influenced career decisions regarding the specific area in which respondents were interested in working and the choice of employer.

Management positions formed the most common career aspiration of respondents over the short, medium and longer terms:

- Graduates of regional universities other than CSU were more likely to seek management or senior management positions in the short term than their counterparts from metropolitan universities and CSU.
- In the medium and longer terms, CSU graduates were more likely to seek management or senior management positions than their counterparts from metropolitan and other regional universities.

CSU, other regional universities and metropolitan universities have all made significant contributions in providing graduates to work for DoCS and Centrelink in the western regions of NSW. The study highlights, however, that the strongest contributor to this region has been CSU. In particular, this is evidenced by the level of supply of more recent graduates to the regional workforce, the significant contribution of CSU graduates to the diversity of roles within the workforce and CSU's status as preferred provider of future education for the workforce. Additionally, the results highlight the critical role that CSU and other regional universities play in transitioning members of the regional community into the social work and social welfare professions.



1. INTRODUCTION



The Charles Sturt University (CSU) mission statement outlines the institution's dedication to enhancing rural and regional communities in Australia through the provision of quality graduates across a range of professions.

In 2004 and 2006, the Western Research Institute (WRI) conducted studies on the Destination of On-Campus Graduates of Charles Sturt University, which monitored the initial employment location of CSU graduates. Graduates educated at CSU campuses have a strong likelihood of finding initial employment in regional areas¹, which in turn directly skills the regional workforce and boosts local economies.

In 2009 Col Sharp, Director of the Office of Planning and Audit at CSU, commissioned WRI to examine the educational and professional profiles of a number of professions and CSU's contributions to these professions in regional areas via four separate studies in the following fields:

1. Teaching
2. Accountancy
3. Nursing
4. Social Work and Social Welfare

This document reports the results of the survey of social work and social welfare professionals.

The aim of the survey was to gain insight into:

- the education of social work and social welfare professionals;
- the careers of social work and social welfare professionals following initial post-graduation employment;
- longer term regional retention of social work and social welfare professionals; and
- the future career and educational aspirations of social work and social welfare professionals.

The project was facilitated by the involvement of the project steering committee, which consisted of:

- Wendy Bowles, Associate Professor, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Charles Sturt University;
- Annette Smith, Director Child & Family - Riverina Murray, NSW Department of Community Services; and
- Milos Cvjeticanin, Social Work Services, Centrelink.

The project steering committee collaborated to finalise the survey instrument, review the outcomes of the pilot, review the progress of the data collection and review findings.

1 2004 and 2006 Destination of On-Campus Graduates of Charles Sturt University

2. WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ABOUT CSU GRADUATES?



The 2004 Destination of On-Campus Graduates of Charles Sturt University study examined the relationship between studying internally (on campus) at CSU and initial employment location. This report was updated in 2006, with the results of the study showing that 60% of all internal students who graduated from CSU were initially employed in a regional location.

For the purpose of this report social work and social welfare graduates have been defined as those students graduating from the following degree courses:

- BA (SocWelf)
- BA/ BSocWk
- BSocSc (SocWelf)
- BSocWk
- BSocWk (Hons)

Eighty-two percent of internal students graduating from the defined social work and social welfare degrees were classified as regional students, whilst 18% were classified as metropolitan students. The 2006 Destination of On-Campus Graduates of Charles Sturt University study found that:

- Eighty-two percent of regional students graduating from the defined social work and social welfare degrees found initial employment in a regional location; and
- Nineteen percent of metropolitan students studying the same degree courses found initial employment in regional areas.¹

1 Low numbers, therefore results should be used with caution.

These results demonstrate that social work and social welfare graduates have a high probability of contributing to the regional workforce following their graduation from CSU. This prompted the questions – what is the educational and professional profile of this workforce, and what is CSU's role in providing ongoing education for the workforce? To answer this, the 2009 Professional and Educational Profile of the Social Work and Social Welfare workforce in Western NSW study sought insight into the following issues:

- What are the education qualifications of social work and social welfare professionals?
- In what capacity are regional professionals employed?
- From where do regional professionals originate?
- What is the long term regional retention of professionals?
- What motivates professionals to remain in the regions?
- Do regional professionals have access to metropolitan opportunities?
- What are the career aspirations of regional professionals?
- Where do regional professionals wish to work in the future?
- What future education do regional professionals wish to undertake?

3. HOW WAS THE STUDY CONDUCTED?



WRI collaborated with the project steering committee to develop and administer a survey of social work and social welfare professionals currently employed across areas of regional NSW. The study was centred exclusively around employees of the NSW Government Department of Community Services (DoCS) and the Commonwealth Government agency Centrelink.

The geographical region of interest was defined with reference to the DoCS region - Western NSW. All DoCS employees within this region were invited to participate in the survey. This region is shown in the map below.

DoCS NSW regions



The DoCS Western NSW region definition was then provided to Centrelink, in order to develop a listing of Centrelink regional centres that would fall into the same geography. All Centrelink employees in these regional centres were also invited to participate in the survey.

The project was approved by the CSU School of Marketing and Management Ethics Committee on 5 March 2009 under protocol number 205/2009/15. This approval was tendered as an inclusion to the research request required by DoCS. Approval from DoCS was achieved on 18 June 2009.

No formal research approval was required by Centrelink, on the basis that the project was deemed very low risk and that the project had already been approved by CSU's School of Marketing and Management Ethics Committee.

Data collection was conducted via an online survey, developed and administered by WRI.

A pilot of the survey was conducted during September 2009, across both organisations. Feedback from the survey pilot was reviewed by the steering committee and used to finalise the survey instrument.

4. WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY?



Social work and social welfare professionals employed by DoCS and Centrelink come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. For this reason, DoCS and Centrelink management were asked to identify the potential participants to the survey as any employee working in a role where a social work or social welfare degree is the most appropriate qualification.

Social work and social welfare professionals were invited to participate in the survey via an email communication which explained the purpose of the survey and provided a link to the survey website. This message was disseminated by the steering committee members from each organisation. Follow up emails were also distributed throughout the data collection period. The closing date for the survey was 9 November 2009.

At the completion of the survey, a total of 135 survey records had been collected from an estimated possible 396 social work and social welfare professionals employed in the project region. For the overall sample, this provided a standard error of +/- 7% at the 95% confidence level.

Because of the difference in population size¹ for each of the organisations (DoCS and Centrelink), statistical reliability at this level varies considerably. For DoCS, the resultant sample produced a similar standard error to that for the overall sample, whilst for Centrelink, the standard error produced was much higher. For this reason, commentary within this report does not draw distinction between results for DoCS employees as opposed to those of Centrelink employees.

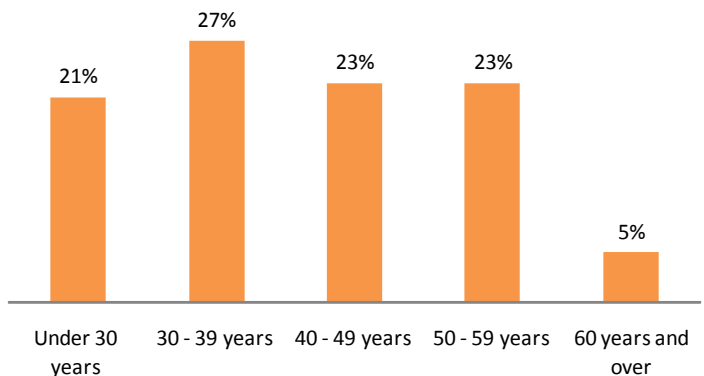
¹ population estimates provided by DoCS and Centrelink:
DoCS population – 361, Centrelink population – 35

Key sample characteristics:

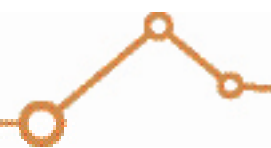
- Respondents were located in 30 different postcodes.
- Eighty-eight percent were employed by DoCS, whilst ten percent were employed by Centrelink. Two percent of respondents did not identify their employer.
- Over four-fifths (81%) of respondents were female.
- The highest proportion of respondents was aged between 30 and 39 years (27%). The proportion of respondents aged under 30 (21%), between 40 and 49 years (23%) and between 50 and 59 years (23%) was reasonably equivalent, whilst those aged 60 years and over comprised only five percent of respondents. Figure 1 below shows the distribution of respondents according to age bracket.
- Ten percent of respondents were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.

A detailed methodology of questionnaire design, piloting, sampling and analysis is included in Appendix 1.

Figure 1: Age distribution of respondents



5. WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF REGIONAL PROFESSIONALS?



Respondents held a variety of qualifications ranging from Certificate and Diploma level (attained via Technical and Further Education institutions or other Registered Training Organisation) to Bachelor degrees and post graduate degrees (attained via university).

5.1 Which providers are training regional professionals?

Education providers were categorised as follows:

1. CSU;
2. Regional universities other than CSU – this included La Trobe University (where regional campuses were specified), James Cook University, the University of New England, the University of Central Queensland and the University of Southern Queensland;
3. Metropolitan universities – this included the University of Western Sydney, Flinders University, the University of Newcastle, the University of Melbourne, the University of Sydney, La Trobe University (where city campuses were specified), Macquarie University, the Australian Catholic University, Monash University and the University of New South Wales;
4. International institutions including the University of Edinburgh Scotland, Victoria University New Zealand, Massey University New Zealand; or
5. Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions or other Registered Training Organisations (RTO) including TAFE NSW (Blacktown, Ultimo, Bourke, Taree locations as well as distance education via the Open Training and Education Network).

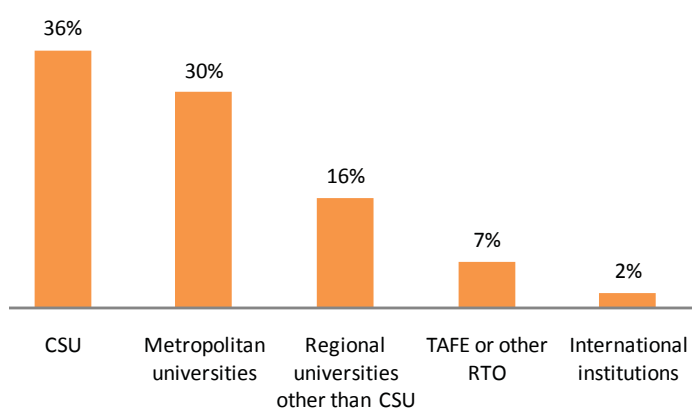
For the purposes of this study, no distinction is made between the names and status' of institutions over time. For example, Mitchell College of Advanced Education was incorporated into what is now known as CSU. Therefore in this report, qualifications from Mitchell College of Advanced Education have been classified as being awarded by CSU, and graduates from these institutions are classified as CSU graduates.

Survey respondents were asked to nominate the qualification (if they had entered more than one) that first enabled them to work in the social work / welfare sector. This qualification is referred to as the "base qualification" and is the subject of much of the subsequent analysis.

Survey results showed:

- Thirty-six percent of respondents obtained their base qualification from CSU, whilst 30% obtained their base qualification from metropolitan universities. A further 16% of respondents obtained their base qualification from regional universities other than CSU. Seven percent of respondents obtained their base qualification from TAFE or other RTO. Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents according to base educational institution.
- Forty-two percent of respondents had obtained at least one qualification from CSU.
- The average year of graduation from the base qualification for each education provider category was as follows:
 - CSU - 2000
 - Regional universities other than CSU - 2000
 - Metropolitan universities - 1995
 - TAFE and other RTO - 1993
 - International institutions - 1985

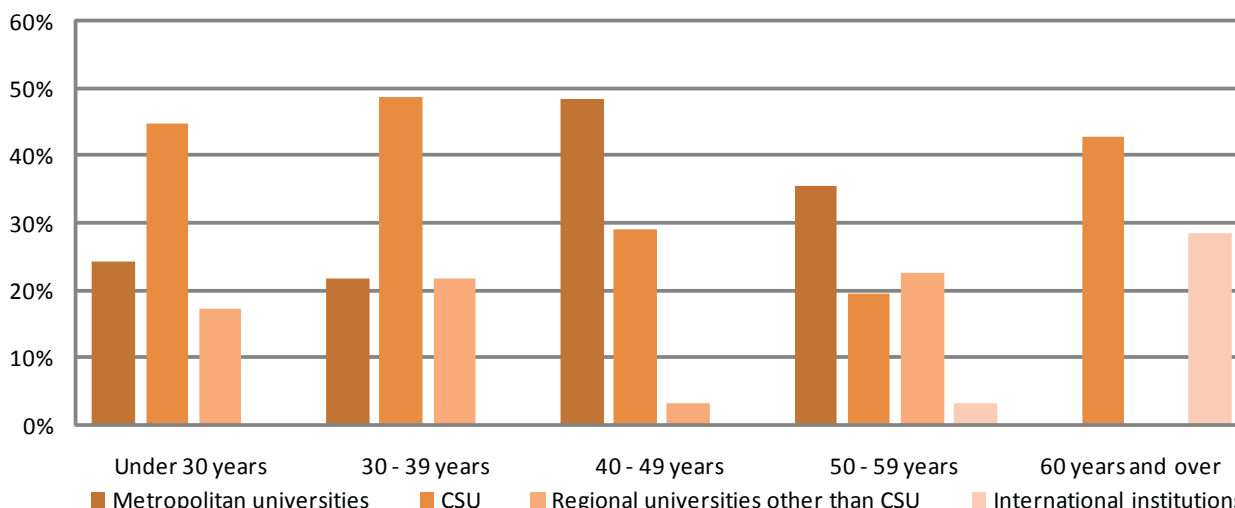
Figure 2: Base educational institution of respondents



Forty-five percent of all respondents under the age of 30, and close to half of all respondents aged between 30 and 39 years (49%) had obtained their base qualification from CSU. Metropolitan universities were more prominent in providing base qualifications

to those respondents aged between 40 and 49 years (48%) and those aged between 50 and 59 years (35%). Figure 3 below shows the distribution of educational institutions awarding base qualifications by respondent age group.

Figure 3: Base educational institution by respondent age



The Bachelor of Social Work degree was first offered at CSU in 1991, with the first cohort graduating at the end of 1995.

The results presented in Figure 3 suggest that the introduction of CSU's Bachelor of Social Work degree took over the role of metropolitan universities in providing graduates to work for DoCS and Centrelink in the western regions of NSW. This conclusion is supported by the fact that 46% of respondents who graduated from 1995 onwards attained their base qualification from CSU.

An analysis of the average graduation year of respondents by age bracket is provided in Table 1 opposite.

The alignment of a more recent average graduation date for respondents in the 30 - 39 years age bracket with CSU's significant contribution as base educational institution for this age bracket also highlights the impact of the introduction of the Bachelor of Social Work degree.

Table 1: Average year of graduation by respondent age bracket

| Age bracket | Average graduation year |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Under 30 years | 2005 |
| 30 - 39 years | 1999 |
| 40 - 49 years | 1995 |
| 50 - 59 years | 1992 |
| 60 years and over | 1995 |

5.2 What base qualifications do regional professionals hold?

Respondents identified a variety of base qualifications:

- Three quarters of all respondents identified a Bachelor degree as their base qualification and a further seven percent identified a Diploma or Associate Diploma attained from a university.
- Seven percent of respondents identified a qualification obtained through TAFE or other RTO as their base qualification whilst two percent identified a Masters degree.
- Thirty-eight percent of respondents held more than one qualification, whilst 27 percent of respondents held more than one degree of Bachelor level or above.

Ten respondents identified a TAFE / RTO qualification as their base qualification, most commonly Certificate IV, Associate Diploma and Diploma levels. Content areas ranged from social work, community welfare, youth work and social studies to training and assessment, child care and business administration.

101 respondents identified a Bachelor degree as their base qualification. Of the Bachelor degrees held by respondents:

- Forty-two percent were Social Work degrees;
- Almost one-third (32%) were classified as Social Science degrees. These included degrees in social science, behavioural science and social welfare;
- Fifteen percent were Arts degrees including specialisations in social work, welfare studies and psychology;
- Ten percent were degrees in education including specialisations in early childhood and general education, and also including Bachelor of Teaching degrees; and
- Two percent were degrees in psychology.

Seven respondents identified a Diploma or Associate Diploma as their base qualification. Content areas ranged from health science (nursing and mental health) to social work and welfare and early childhood teaching.

Post graduate qualifications formed the base qualification for five respondents. Two post graduate Diplomas (education and psychology) and three Masters degrees (early childhood, child and adolescent welfare and social work) were identified.

5.3 What post graduate qualifications do regional professionals hold?

Twenty-seven respondents (20%) had completed post graduate study with a total of 33 post graduate qualifications provided. Of these:

- Nineteen had completed a Masters degree;
- Eleven had completed a Graduate Diploma;
- Two had completed a Graduate Certificate; and
- One had completed a PhD.

Of the post graduate qualifications held by respondents:

- Forty-five percent were awarded by metropolitan universities, 39% by CSU.
- Regional universities other than CSU and international institutions awarded six percent of post graduate qualifications each, with a further three percent being awarded by other institutions.

The most common content areas for post graduate qualifications included:

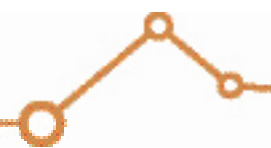
- Social science and social welfare subject areas including child and adolescent welfare, child protection and sociology;
- Education including specialisations in adult education, early childhood and vocational education;
- Public administration, policy and government and international relations;
- Higher degrees in social work; and
- Psychology and counselling.

Key findings:

- Overall, 36% of respondents had attained their base qualification from CSU, 30% from metropolitan universities and 16% from regional universities other than CSU;
- 46% of respondents who had graduated from 1995 onwards held a base qualification from CSU;
- 42% of respondents held at least one qualification from CSU; and
- 45% of postgraduate qualifications were awarded by metropolitan universities, followed by 39% from CSU.



6. IN WHAT CAPACITY ARE REGIONAL PROFESSIONALS EMPLOYED?



6.1 What positions do respondents hold?

Respondents were asked to provide their current job title. Over half of the respondents (53%) were employed in caseworker / social worker positions. The remainder were employed as:

- Managers (19%);
- Senior caseworkers / senior social workers (12%);
- Senior managers (6%);
- Directors (2%); and
- Administrative positions at casework level (1%).

Seven percent of respondents did not provide their current title.

When job titles are matched to qualifications, the results are:

- Of those respondents currently employed as caseworkers / social workers, 37% obtained their base qualification from CSU, followed by 30% from metropolitan universities and 21% from regional universities other than CSU. Just over two-fifths (41%) of respondents employed in such roles had obtained at least one qualification from CSU.
- Half of the senior caseworkers / senior social workers in the sample obtained their base qualifications from metropolitan universities, followed by 19% each from CSU and other regional universities. Just under one-third (31%) of respondents employed in such roles had obtained at least one qualification from CSU.
- Of those respondents currently employed as managers, close to two-fifths (38%) obtained their base qualification from CSU, followed by just under one-third (31%) with base qualifications from metropolitan universities. Twelve percent each obtained their base qualification from other regional universities or TAFE / other RTOs. Forty-six percent of respondents employed in such roles had obtained at least one qualification from CSU.

- Close to two-fifths (38%) of senior managers obtained their base qualification from CSU, followed by one quarter from metropolitan universities. A further one quarter of respondents identifying themselves as senior managers chose not to disclose the educational institution from which they obtained their base qualification. Half of the respondents employed in such roles had obtained at least one qualification from CSU.
- Two out of the three respondents currently employed as directors had obtained their base qualification from CSU. The remaining one director did not disclose his / her base educational institution.

Table 2 below presents the average year of graduation (from base qualification) from the main educational institution classifications by current job title. The findings include:

- Graduates from CSU and other regional universities filling caseworker / social worker roles had typically graduated within the last ten years, whilst those from metropolitan universities had graduated over ten years ago.
- Graduates from regional universities other than CSU filling senior caseworker / senior social worker roles had typically graduated within the last 15 years, whilst those from CSU and metropolitan universities had graduated over 15 years ago.
- Graduates from CSU filling lower management roles had typically graduated within the last 15 years, whilst those from metropolitan and other regional universities had graduated over 15 years ago.
- Graduates from metropolitan universities filling senior management positions tended to have graduated more recently than those from CSU.

Table 2: Average year of graduation by educational institution and current job title

| Current job title | Educational Institution | | |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | CSU | Regional (Non-CSU) | Metropolitan |
| Director | 1995 | N/A | N/A |
| Senior manager | 1993 | N/A | 1995 |
| Manager | 1999 | 1993 | 1994 |
| Senior caseworker / senior social worker | 1994 | 1997 | 1992 |
| Caseworker / social worker | 2002 | 2002 | 1996 |

6.2 What is the nature of their employment?

The majority of all respondents are in permanent full-time employment.

- Eighty-eight percent of respondents were employed in permanent full-time positions;
- Seven percent were employed permanent part-time;
- Two percent filled temporary full-time positions; and
- One percent filled temporary part-time positions.

No respondents were employed casually.

Overall, sixteen respondents were not in permanent full-time employment, with family circumstances cited as the most common reason for this (eleven out of the sixteen respondents). A further two respondents reported that their employment status was due to the flexibility and variety afforded by a non permanent full-time position. Two respondents also reported that they were waiting for a permanent full-time opportunity to arise in their current location.

6.3 What are their supervisory and remuneration levels?

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff they supervised.

- Approximately two-thirds of respondents (68%) did not have any supervisory capacity;
- 22% supervised between one and five FTE staff; whilst
- Eight percent supervised between six and ten FTE staff.

The remainder did not identify their supervisory capacity.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents who obtained their base qualification from a metropolitan university currently held a supervisory role. This compares to 29% of respondents from a regional university other than CSU and one fifth of respondents from CSU.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their gross annual salary in the last financial year.

- The most common salary band was between \$55,001 and \$75,000 (45% of respondents);
- Thirty percent of respondents earned between \$75,001 and \$95,000;
- Thirteen percent of respondents earned between \$35,000 and \$55,000;
- Five percent earned under \$35,000; and
- A further five percent of respondents earned over \$95,000.

The remainder did not identify their salary level.

Over four-fifths (82%) of respondents who obtained their base qualification from CSU had earned over \$55,000 in the last year. This compares to 78% of respondents from metropolitan universities and 76% from regional universities other than CSU.

Figure 4: Salary band by base educational institution

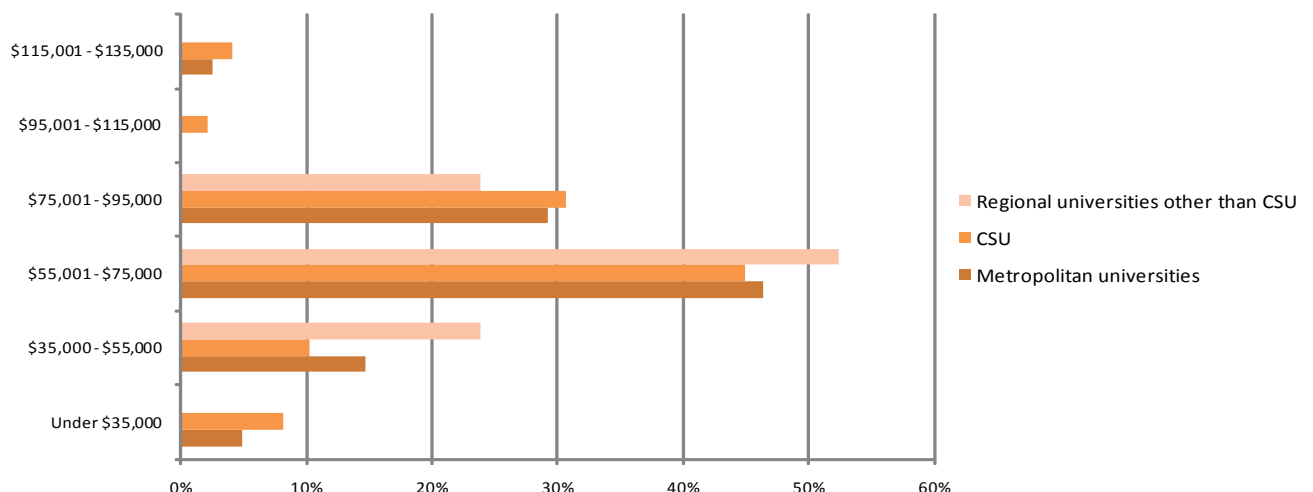


Figure 4 below shows the distribution of salaries across the key base educational institutions

CSU filled the largest proportion of positions for:

- Directorial roles (2/3 roles);
- Management and senior management roles (38% each); and
- Caseworker / social worker roles (37%).

Metropolitan universities provided the largest proportion of senior caseworker / senior social worker positions (50%).

6.4 How did practica influence the employment choices of respondents?

Almost half of all respondents (47%) had experienced a rural placement or work experience that had encouraged them to pursue rural work opportunities.

Seventy-one percent of respondents who graduated from CSU were encouraged to pursue rural employment opportunities after completing a rural practicum. This compares to almost half of the respondents who graduated from regional universities other than CSU (48%) and less than one quarter of respondents who graduated from metropolitan universities (24%).

By comparison, only three percent of respondents overall had experienced a rural placement or work experience that had discouraged them from pursuing rural work opportunities.

Practica also influenced career decisions regarding the specific area in which respondents were interested in working and the choice of employer. Comments included:

"The scope of work I undertook on placement in regional / rural areas influenced me to travel back to the country - need to be creative to come up with practical solutions and supports for clients"

"Being isolated can sometimes be the greatest reward as the breadth of work undertaken falls outside the scope of everyday normal processing"

"I liked the lifestyle and, at the time, the opportunities to expand my field of knowledge and skills"

"It made me aware of the plight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in remote communities and hardened my resolve to help put right this situation"

"Decided I did not like hospital based work settings but was interested in research and community work"

7. FROM WHERE DO REGIONAL PROFESSIONALS ORIGINATE?



As an indication of origin, respondents were asked whether they completed their Higher School Certificate (HSC) or equivalent in a regional¹ or metropolitan location.

Overall, 57% of the respondents indicated a regional HSC location, 30% a metropolitan location and 13% did not disclose the location.

Just over four-fifths (81%) of professionals who graduated from regional universities other than CSU and 71% of CSU graduates had completed their HSC in a regional location. As expected, this was notably higher than for graduates of metropolitan universities (39%).

¹ Regional location defined as having a population of less than 250,000



8. DO PROFESSIONALS STAY IN THE REGIONS?



8.1 What is the long term regional retention of the workforce?

On average, respondents currently employed in a regional location graduated from their base qualification 12 years ago. The overall range of graduation dates varied from 1971 to 2009.

- Almost two-thirds of all respondents have remained exclusively employed in a regional area since graduation.
- Seventy-eight percent of CSU graduates and 86% of graduates from regional universities other than CSU have remained exclusively employed in a regional area since graduation, compared to 37% for graduates of metropolitan universities.

8.2 Do regional professionals have access to metropolitan opportunities?

- Just over one-third of all respondents (34%) had worked in a metropolitan area at some stage of their career.
- Over one-fifth (22%) of CSU graduates had worked in a metropolitan area during their career.
- Fourteen percent of graduates from regional universities other than CSU had also gained metropolitan experience.
- As expected, the majority of graduates from metropolitan universities (63%) had gained metropolitan experience.



9. WHAT MOTIVATES PROFESSIONALS TO REMAIN IN THE REGIONS?



Family (81%) and lifestyle (also 81%) were the two most common reasons for current regional employment. This was followed by the cost of living (60%) and promotions and/or job opportunities (30%). A further six percent of respondents noted reasons regarding a sense of community, home town or length of stay in the region and two percent remained in the regions because of their partner's job.

- CSU graduates were most likely to nominate family reasons (88%) for maintaining current employment in a regional area, followed by lifestyle issues (84%).
- Metropolitan graduates remained employed in a regional location due to family reasons and lifestyle issues (73% each).
- Graduates of regional universities other than CSU were most likely to nominate lifestyle issues (86%), followed by family reasons (81%).
- CSU graduates were less likely to be motivated by promotional and/or job opportunities (24%) than their metropolitan (41%) or other regional university counterparts (29%).
- The cost of living was an important factor for both graduates of CSU (71%) and other regional universities (76%), whereas only 44% of metropolitan graduates identified this as a factor.
- Respondents aged less than 30 years old were most likely to be working in a regional location for family reasons (79%), followed by lifestyle (76%) and the cost of living (69%).
- Family and lifestyle reasons were of equal importance to respondents in all other age brackets:
 - those aged between 30 and 39 years (84% each);
 - those aged between 40 and 49 years (also 84% each);
 - those aged between 50 and 59 years (77% each); and
 - those aged 60 years and over (86% each).
- Over three-quarters (76%) of respondents aged between 30 and 39 years considered the cost of living a factor in remaining employed in the regions compared to 69% of those aged under 30 years, 58% of those aged between 40 and 49 years, 42% of those aged between 50 and 59 years and only 29% of those aged 60 years and over.
- Forty-three percent of respondents aged 60 years and over considered job opportunities or promotions a factor in remaining employed in the regions. This compares to 35% for those aged between 50 and 59 years, 26% for those aged between 40 and 49 years, 27% for those aged between 30 and 39 years and 31% for those aged under 30 years.

10. WHAT ARE THE CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF REGIONAL PROFESSIONALS?



Respondents were asked about their career aspirations over the short, medium and longer terms.

In the short term (one to two years):

- The most common career goal amongst respondents was a management position (25% of respondents), followed by a continuing role as a caseworker or social worker (16%).
- Team leader positions were the goal of five percent of respondents.
- Senior casework / senior social work positions and senior management positions were the goal of four percent each of respondents.
- Positions involving specialised knowledge such as Joint Investigative Response Teams (JIRT), disaster recovery or child protection were the goal of three percent of respondents.
- Over one quarter (26%) of CSU graduates sought to be promoted or to continue in management and senior management positions, compared to 27% of metropolitan graduates and 33% of graduates from regional universities other than CSU. Two-thirds of graduates with a base qualification from TAFE sought management positions in this timeframe.
- One third of respondents did not identify any career goals in this timeframe.

In the medium term (two to five years):

- The most common career goal amongst respondents was a management position (23% of respondents), followed by a senior management position (7%).
- Positions involving specialised knowledge such as counselling, psychology or community development were the goal of six percent of respondents.
- Caseworker / social worker positions were the goal of five percent of respondents as were team leader positions, followed by four percent seeking senior casework / senior social work positions.
- Three percent of respondents sought self-employment options.
- Three percent of respondents sought to continue in or be promoted to directorial positions whilst one percent of respondents aimed to retire within this timeframe.

- Forty-one percent of CSU graduates sought to be promoted or to continue in management and senior management positions, compared to 24% of metropolitan graduates and 29% of graduates from regional universities other than CSU. One-third of graduates with a base qualification from TAFE sought management positions in this timeframe.
- Over one third of respondents (37%) did not identify any career goals in this timeframe.

In the longer term (over five years):

- The most common career goal amongst respondents was a management position (16% of respondents), followed by a senior management position (9%).
- Seven percent of respondents sought self-employment options.
- Four percent of respondents aimed to retire within this timeframe.
- Positions involving specialised knowledge such as psychology or child protection were the goal of two percent of respondents.
- One percent of respondents sought to continue in or be promoted to directorial positions.
- Thirty-four percent of CSU graduates sought to be promoted or to continue in management and senior management positions, compared to 22% of metropolitan graduates and 14% of graduates from regional universities other than CSU. One-third of graduates with a base qualification from TAFE sought management positions in this timeframe.
- Close to half of all respondents (47%) did not identify any career goals in this timeframe.

11. WHERE DO REGIONAL PROFESSIONALS WISH TO WORK IN THE FUTURE?



Respondents were asked to give their locational preferences for work over the short, medium and longer terms and were able to nominate more than one location for each timeframe.

Ninety-three respondents gave their locational preferences for work in the short term (one to two years). Fifty-nine percent nominated a large regional location, followed by 41% nominating a small regional location and 35% a rural area. Fourteen percent of respondents nominated a metropolitan location.

- This preference was consistent across graduates from CSU, other regional universities and metropolitan universities.
- Those respondents with a base qualification from TAFE more commonly nominated small regional locations, followed by rural locations and large regional locations.

Eighty-four respondents gave their locational preferences for work in the medium term (three to five years). Fifty-nine percent nominated a large regional location, followed by 39% nominating a small regional location and 27% a rural area. Twelve percent of respondents nominated a metropolitan location.

- This preference was consistent across graduates from CSU, other regional universities and metropolitan universities.
- Those respondents with a base qualification from TAFE gave equal preferences for large regional, small regional and rural locations.

Seventy-three respondents gave their locational preferences for work in the longer term (over five years). Forty-six percent nominated a large regional location, followed by 38% nominating a small regional location and 26% a rural area. Sixteen percent of respondents nominated a metropolitan location.

- Once again, this preference was consistent across graduates from CSU and other regional universities.
- Graduates of metropolitan universities gave a slightly higher preference to small regional locations over large regional locations.
- Those respondents with a base qualification from TAFE gave equal preferences for large regional, small regional and rural locations, however some preference for metropolitan locations was also nominated.

Management positions formed the most common career aspiration:

- Graduates of regional universities other than CSU were more likely to seek management or senior management positions in the short term (33%) than their counterparts from metropolitan universities (27%) and CSU (26%); and
- CSU graduates were more likely to seek management or senior management positions in the medium and longer terms (41% and 34% respectively) than their counterparts from metropolitan (22% and 24%) and other regional universities (29% and 14%).

The current workforce demonstrates an ongoing commitment to the regions in the short, medium and longer terms.

12. WHAT FUTURE EDUCATION DO REGIONAL PROFESSIONALS WISH TO UNDERTAKE?



Sixty-one respondents (45%) indicated interest in pursuing future education, and provided details of 80 courses they wished to undertake. Of these courses:

- Thirty-nine percent were post graduate qualifications:
 - Masters degree (23%);
 - Doctorate (six percent); and
 - Other post graduate (10%).
- Over one fifth (21%) were university level qualifications of an un-specified level whilst eight percent were Bachelor degrees.
- Eight percent were TAFE qualifications;
- Five percent were a variety of miscellaneous courses; and
- Twenty percent were not able to be classified by level.

The most common course content areas nominated were as follows:

- Social work (23% of courses specified);
- Psychology (16%);
- Management (13%);
- Child and adolescent welfare / protection (11%); and
- Education (10%).

Other areas included counselling / family therapy, alternative dispute resolution / conflict resolution, community development, alcohol and other drugs.

Preferred course provider information was also provided by respondents as follows:

- For just under half (49%) of the courses nominated, CSU was identified as the preferred provider.
- Metropolitan university providers were nominated for eight percent of the courses specified.
- Regional universities other than CSU were nominated for a further six percent of the courses specified.
- TAFE was nominated as the provider for a further eight percent of the courses specified, whilst other miscellaneous providers were nominated for four percent of courses specified.
- For just over one quarter (26%) of the courses specified, no provider was nominated.

The findings indicate that CSU is the preferred provider of further education for the regional workforce with Masters degrees and social work options the most popular.

13. CONCLUSION



The Professional and Educational Profile of the Social Work and Social Welfare workforce in Western NSW study was conducted to gain insight into the educational and career profiles of professionals working in regional NSW. The study was centred exclusively around employees of DoCS and Centrelink working in the geographic region defined by the DoCS Western region. The study collected primary data via an online survey distributed on behalf of WRI by the management of both organisations.

In total, 135 professionals responded to the survey. Overall, 36% of respondents had attained their base qualification from CSU, 30% from metropolitan universities and 16% from regional universities other than CSU. Of respondents who had graduated from 1995 onwards, 46% had attained their base qualification from CSU. Forty-two percent of all respondents held at least one qualification from CSU whilst 39% of post graduate qualifications held had been awarded by CSU. The majority of respondents (57%) had completed their HSC in a regional location, with 71% of those with a base qualification from CSU having completed their HSC regionally.

On average, it had been 11 years since respondents had graduated, and just over half (53%) were currently employed in caseworker / social worker positions. One quarter of respondents were employed in management and senior management positions (19% and 6% respectively). CSU graduates currently filled the largest proportion of positions for directorial roles (2/3), management and senior management roles (38% each) and caseworker / social worker roles (37%). Metropolitan universities currently provided the largest proportion of senior caseworker / senior social worker positions (50%). CSU graduates currently employed in management positions had typically graduated more recently (average graduation year 1999) than their counterparts who had graduated from metropolitan (1994) and other regional universities (1993).

Just over one third (34%) of all respondents had worked in a metropolitan area at some stage of their career. Twenty-two percent of CSU graduates had worked in a metropolitan area during their career. The key reason for seeking employment in the regions was family and lifestyle (each 81%) and the majority of respondents wished to remain in rural and regional areas in the short, medium and longer terms.

Management positions formed the most common career aspiration in the short, medium and longer terms. In the short term, graduates of regional universities other than CSU were more likely than their metropolitan and CSU counterparts to seek management or senior management positions. In the medium and longer terms, CSU respondents were more likely to hold ambitions for management and senior management positions. Forty-five percent of respondents indicated an interest in pursuing future education, with university courses the most popular. CSU was nominated as the preferred provider for almost half of the courses (49%) elected.

CSU, other regional universities and metropolitan universities have all made significant contributions in providing graduates to work for DoCS and Centrelink in the western regions of NSW. The study highlights, however, that the strongest contributor to this region has been CSU. In particular, this is evidenced by the level of supply of more recent graduates to the regional workforce, the significant contribution of CSU graduates to the diversity of roles within the workforce and CSU's status as preferred provider of future education for the workforce. Additionally, the results highlight the critical role that CSU and other regional universities play in transitioning members of the regional community into the social work and social welfare professions.

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY



Project steering committee

A project steering committee was established to finalise the survey instrument, review the outcomes of the pilot, review the progress of the data collection and assist with completion of the final report by reviewing draft findings. The project steering committee consisted of:

- Wendy Bowles, Associate Professor, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Charles Sturt University
- Annette Smith, Director Child & Family - Riverina Murray, NSW Department of Community Services
- Milos Cvjeticanin, Social Work Services, Centrelink

Undertake ethics approval processes

The project was approved by the CSU School of Marketing and Management Ethics Committee on 5 March 2009 under protocol number 205/2009/15. This approval was tendered as an inclusion to the research request required by the New South Wales Department of Community Services (DoCS). Approval from DoCS was achieved on 18 June 2009.

No formal research approval was required by Centrelink, on the basis that the project was deemed very low risk and that the project had already been approved by CSU's School of Marketing and Management Ethics Committee.

Development of the survey instrument

WRI collaborated with the project steering committee to develop a survey instrument to be implemented as an online survey housed in a sub-domain of the WRI website. Extensive testing of the questionnaire was performed to ensure clear understanding and interpretation by the respondent. The original questionnaire was approved in December 2008 and was included in the ethics approval documents for both CSU and DoCS. Minor changes to the wording and sequence of questions were implemented and approved prior to the pilot phase in October 2009.

Pilot phase

A pilot of the survey was conducted during September 2009, involving participants from both DoCS and Centrelink. There were twelve participants in the pilot phase, 6 from each organisation.

The purpose of the pilot was threefold:

- to identify any remaining issues with the content of the questionnaire;
- to identify any issues with aspects of the online delivery of the questionnaire (such as readability and sequencing of questions, interpretation of questions, length of survey, ease of navigation and general look and feel); and
- to assess the level of participation in the pilot.

Feedback from the survey pilot was reviewed and recommendations made to the steering committee to implement a few minor changes to finalise the survey instrument. Pilot phase results were also used to fine-tune aspects of the distribution of the survey.

Data collection

Data collection was conducted via an online survey, developed and administered by WRI.

Steering committee members from each of the participating organisations were sent a prepared email introduction message to use in inviting participation in the survey. The message introduced the survey, summarised the aims of the study, addressed privacy considerations, provided contact details for problems or queries and provided a survey completion date. Data collection commenced on 6 October 2009 and concluded on 9 November 2009.

Sample

At the completion of the survey, a total of 135 survey records had been collected from an estimated possible 396 social work and social welfare professionals employed in the project region. For the overall sample, this provided a standard error of +/- 7% at the 95% confidence level. The estimated population size for the social work and social welfare workforce employed by DoCS (361) was significantly larger than that for Centrelink (35). Because of this, the statistical reliability of the sample for each organisation varies considerably. The standard error produced for each organisation is shown below in Table 3:

Table 3: Sample

| | Population | Sample | Standard Error |
|----------------|------------|--------|----------------|
| DoCS | 361 | 119 | +/- 7% |
| Centrelink | 35 | 14 | +/- 21% |
| Not identified | | 2 | |
| Total | 396 | 135 | +/- 7% |

THE WESTERN RESEARCH INSTITUTE



The WRI is a non-profit economic, business and social research organisation located on the Bathurst campus of Charles Sturt University. The WRI holds a wealth of knowledge on employment, business development and investment issues affecting regional Australia. It has worked with Commonwealth, State and Local Governments and industry groups on numerous investment and development programmes in regional areas. The WRI has strong credentials in business and commercial market consulting and applied economic modelling including input-output analysis, shift-share, agribusiness and regional socio-economic surveys and analysis.

The Research Team

WRI has built a dedicated team of professional research staff and associates with the expertise necessary to provide our clients with robust and reliable research solutions. All staff at WRI have extensive experience in data collection, analysis and reporting. WRI has a team approach to its projects and allocates work to members of the research staff as appropriate.

Mr Tom Murphy – Chief Executive Officer

BEd. (Hons I) MSc. (Econ) Lancaster

Tom is currently Chief Executive Officer of WRI and has held this position since its inception in February 1999. Under Tom's leadership WRI has completed over 300

projects for all levels of government and government departments, industry groups such as Australian Pork and the Tourism Taskforce, businesses such as Delta Electricity and V8 Supercars, financial institutions such as Westpac and Perpetual Regional Infrastructure Fund, regional development boards and community groups, and educational institutions including universities, TAFE and schools in NSW, Victoria and Queensland.

Tom has previously held academic positions as senior lecturer in Economics and Director of the Regional Economics Research Unit in the Faculty of Commerce, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst and positions at the University of New England and Macquarie University. He has also held the positions of Economic Analyst with



the Office of National Assessments in Canberra, with responsibility for the ASEAN economies and Senior Consultant with KPMG Peat Marwick Management Consultants.

Tom's particular expertise is in regional economics and labour markets, and he has published in a wide range of economic subject areas in refereed and non-refereed articles, books and textbooks. Tom has a high local media profile in Western NSW for economic and social commentary and also features regularly on national radio particularly in connection to the quarterly agribusiness survey conducted for Westpac Australia wide.

Ms Kathy Sloan – Research Manager

BAppSc (Geography) UC, GDip InfoSys CSU

Kathy is responsible for the overall management of projects for WRI, which includes allocating resources, ensuring timeframes and budgets are met and monitoring compliance with the quality

assurance system. Kathy has extensive experience in designing and conducting surveys most recently developing the national Westpac / CSU Agribusiness Index. She has a background in data analysis and research working with the ACT Government and Charles Sturt University and has developed and delivered a wide range of training for TAFENSW – Western Institute and the local community college.



Ms Kathy Woolley – Business Development Officer

BCom (Economics), CMQ (AGSM), Cert Public Participation (IAP2)

Kathy has worked in the private and public sectors holding senior management positions for over 20 years. Her diverse career has included work within the media, events management, economics research, information management, retail and local government sectors. Kathy has an economics undergraduate degree and postgraduate qualifications in change management and public consultation.



Ms Lesley Arthur – Senior Research Officer

BSc. Bio Sc (Hons), MSc Tech Ec.

Lesley is an experienced researcher with particular expertise in the areas of inter-industry modelling, including input-output analysis, statistical analysis, market analysis and forecasting. Since joining WRI Lesley has been involved in a diverse range of projects encompassing a variety of industry sectors. Her strengths are in strong analytical skills and in the preparation of concise reports. Prior to joining WRI, Lesley was a Director with KPMG Peat Marwick Management Consultants in Australia and Malaysia.



Ms Dale Rogers – Executive Officer

BA ANU

Dale is responsible for all administrative processes at WRI including executive support, finance, management of the Board of Directors and maintenance of policies. She has worked in a variety of roles at WRI, including Fieldwork Supervisor and Research Assistant, and has worked on several community and business surveys. Dale brings a high level of organisational skill to her role as Executive Officer.



Ms Danielle Ranshaw – Senior Research Officer

BEc&Fin NSW

Danielle's experience in project management in the information technology sector combined with qualifications in economics and finance provides a solid background for WRI projects. With skills in systems design and development, Danielle has been able to extend WRI's capability in developing robust and increasingly complex systems to support research fieldwork. Additionally, Danielle has extensive experience in business process analysis, performance planning and review, report writing and project planning.



Ms Rachel Jackson – Research Officer

BEquineBusMgt (Hons)

Rachel has a strong focus on regional and rural Australia with a particular interest in agribusiness. Prior experience in regional media, agriculture and hospitality industries brings a sound understanding of the unique needs of regional business to her role at WRI. Rachel's strengths lie with survey design, administration and sampling, which have been supplemented by study with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Marketing and Social Research Society.





Western Research Institute
c/- Charles Sturt University
Research Station Drive
Bathurst NSW 2795
Phone: 02 6338 4435
Email: wri@csu.edu.au
Web: www.wri.org.au