

WESTIR LTD

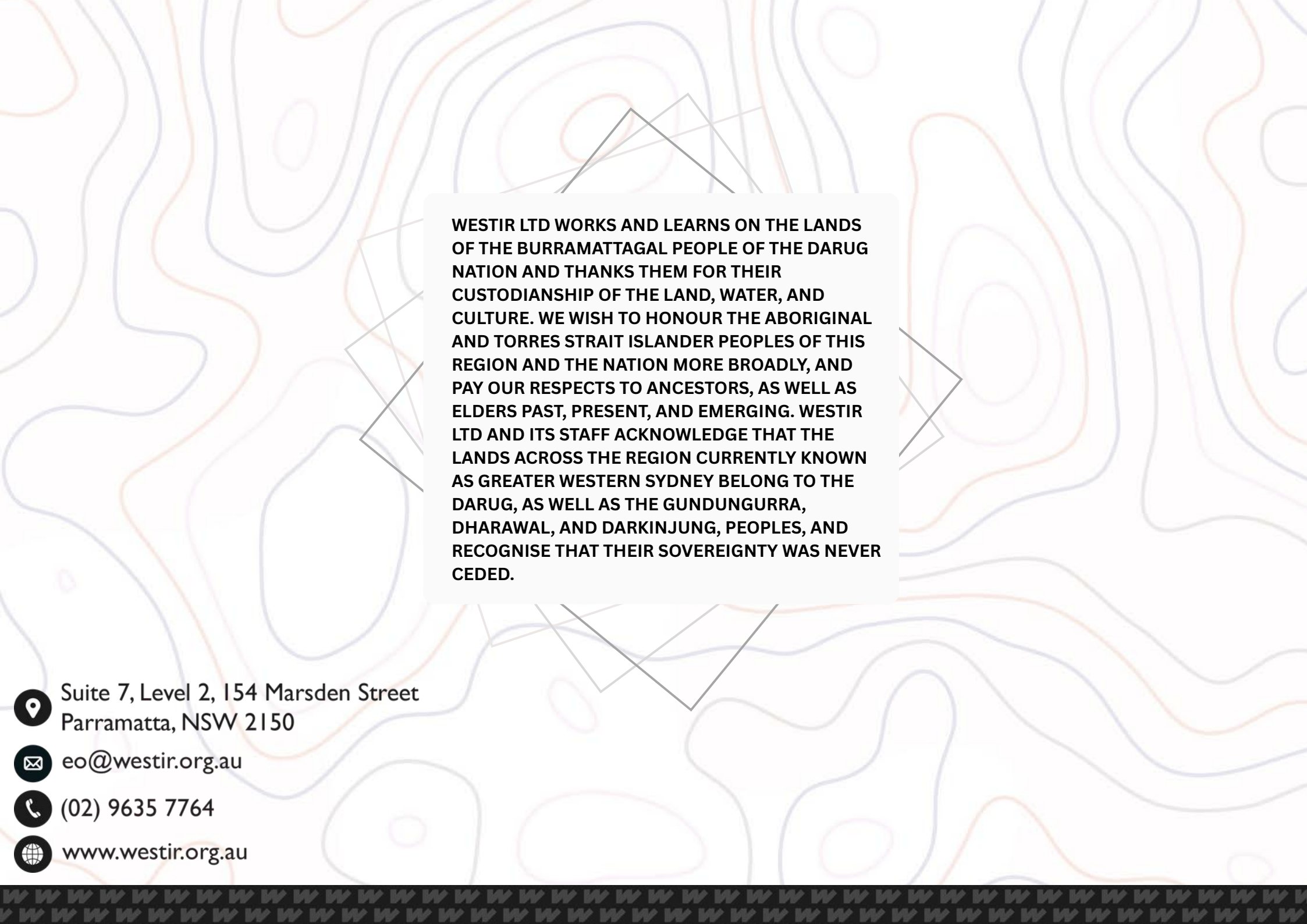
IMPACT STATEMENT

WESTIR Limited's forty-plus year history demonstrates a sustained commitment to data-driven social research in Greater Western Sydney. Established in 1980, the organisation has grown into a regional knowledge hub, producing census papers, factsheets, publications and newsletters. Through its collaborative ethos, ethical approach and focus on accessibility, WESTIR continues to contribute to shaping policy and practice in one of Australia's fastest-growing and most diverse regions.

LET THE DATA RUN FREE

MAY 2026





WESTIR LTD WORKS AND LEARNS ON THE LANDS OF THE BURRAMATTAGAL PEOPLE OF THE DARUG NATION AND THANKS THEM FOR THEIR CUSTODIANSHIP OF THE LAND, WATER, AND CULTURE. WE WISH TO HONOUR THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES OF THIS REGION AND THE NATION MORE BROADLY, AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO ANCESTORS, AS WELL AS ELDERS PAST, PRESENT, AND EMERGING. WESTIR LTD AND ITS STAFF ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE LANDS ACROSS THE REGION CURRENTLY KNOWN AS GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY BELONG TO THE DARUG, AS WELL AS THE GUNDUNGURRA, DHARAWAL, AND DARKINJUNG, PEOPLES, AND RECOGNISE THAT THEIR SOVEREIGNTY WAS NEVER CEDED.

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Our Story So Far

The Western Sydney Regional Information and Research Service (WESTIR) was originally sponsored by the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC). The organisation was established, with funding, in 1980 and was jointly provided under the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme (WSAAS) and Youth & Community Services (now known as the Department of Communities & Justice).

The Area Assistance Scheme was a funding scheme introduced in 1979 through the NSW Planning Department to redress the lack of community services in the rapidly developing area of Greater Western Sydney (GWS). The history of the AAS is available in the book *'Planning, Funding, and Community Action-The Area Assistance Story'* (Bamforth, Gapps, Gurr, Howard, Onyx & Rawsthorne 2016).

WESTIR provided services across 10 local government areas in GWS. Primary focus in the early years was the development of a regional data bank of existing information and assisting local government in the provision of LGA level data for local social planning. In its initial stages WESTIR also worked with WSROC on the employment project run through Team West. WESTIR also had a major function in the analysis of government policies and programs. The motivation for providing this data and analysis was to identify issues and potential solutions for residents of GWS.

In 1989, all funding was moved to the Department of Community Services, which meant that funding

levels were reduced and the focus of WESTIR changed to meet local community information needs and supporting social services planning and identifying priorities. This new project was called the 'Data Liberation Front'. WESTIR became an organisation in its own right when it was registered as a company in 1989.

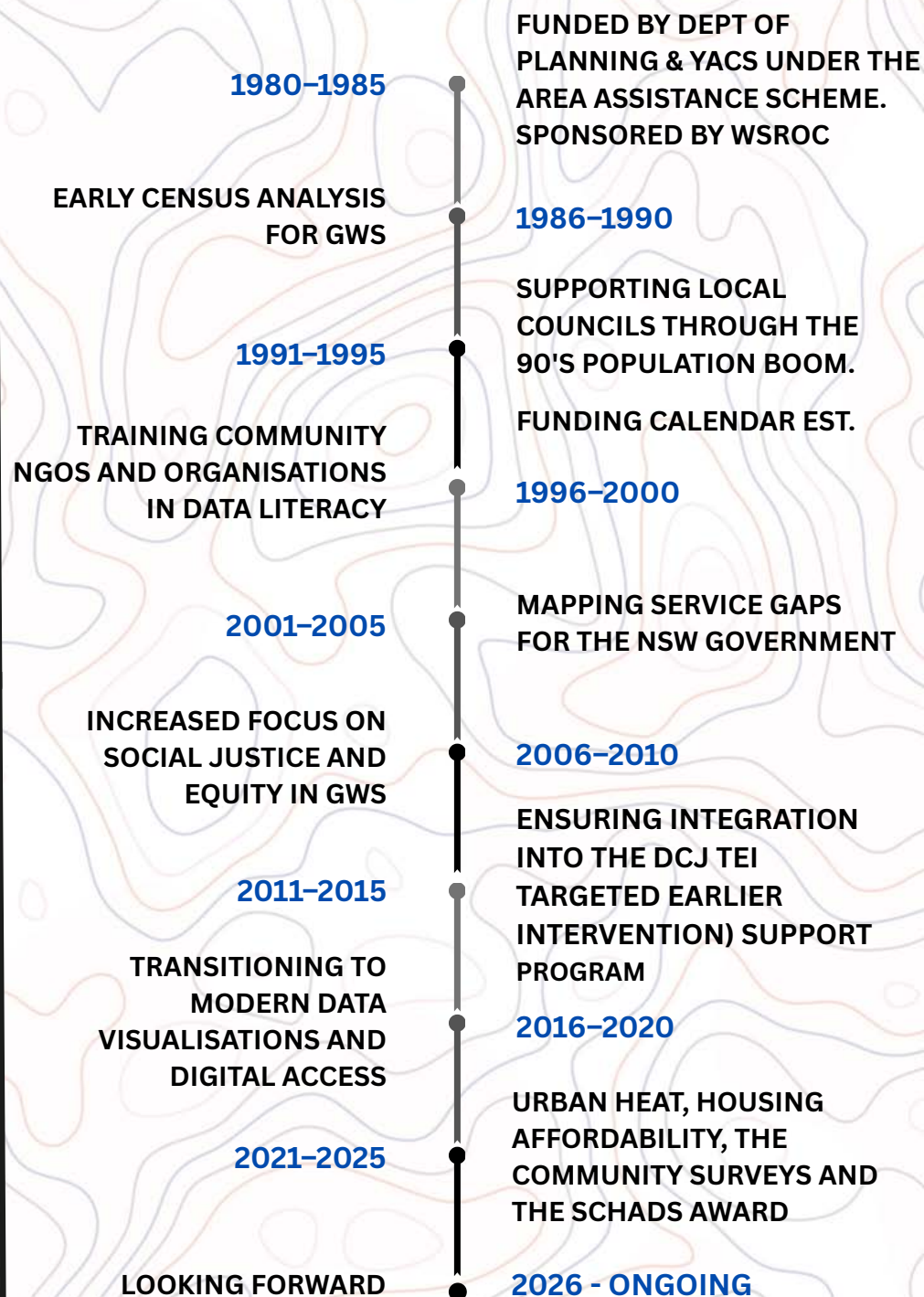
The delivery of services over the 46 years of WESTIR'S operations has always been responsive to the socio-economic changes across GWS. These include:

- development of the Funding Calendar (initiated in 1992) and was the first collection of available grant funding to organisations and was published to 2004.
- the Western Sydney Quarterly Bulletin; Western Sydney Letter, which is now sent out digitally as a Newsletter.
- an extensive library that has been used by researchers to support WSAAS planning and other community development work in Western Sydney.
- the change from the original 10 LGAs to now 15 LGAs.
- researched local issues, such as Peri-Urban Land Usage; Food Security, and a large piece of work into Institutional Child Sexual Assault and the Redress Scheme.
- supporting WESTIR employees through their doctoral candidacies, with many now holding positions in universities.
- representation by WESTIR employees on governance and advisory boards, which continues to this day.
- Identifying emerging issues supporting collaboration.

- the Census and data reports since 1989 for public usage. WESTIR adapted to the changes to Census delivery over time, moving to using products that could map data and break down LGA data. Census data has been used extensively by organisations for planning, funding, and to monitor the changes in their local area. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has often consulted with WESTIR over the Census questions and was successful in campaigning for a question to be retained. The ABS used WESTIR in a filmed promotion for a previous Census.
- fee for service project work. When work was outside the program funding guidelines, WESTIR would provide services at effective pricing for services, undertaken for local councils and organisations. This work has included evaluations, surveys, suburb profiles, and many projects that cannot be published as they are proprietary work and remain confidential.
- extensive partnerships with local councils and organisations across GWS and with our founding organisation, WSROC.
- Special mention should be made that since its inception there has been representation on the WESTIR board by various academics from the now Western Sydney University.

WESTIR is a not for profit community organisation and is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not Profit Commission.





GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

IMAGE GENERATED USING GOOGLE GEMINI



Greater Western Sydney

GWS is a large region of the metropolitan area of Greater Sydney and is located to the west of the city of Sydney. GWS is land in the custodianship of family clans of the Dharug and other language group First Nations peoples, who have lived here for 50,000 years. *(All language families are noted on the inside cover page.)* GWS is now home to around 2.6 million people and holds diverse populations with the most multicultural suburbs in the country.

The GWS region has the third largest population in Australia, with Parramatta, Penrith, Blacktown and Liverpool, as the major cities. The growth, in GWS, has been so rapid over the last decades that the provision of social and other infrastructure is falling behind in servicing this growth. GWS is the third largest economy behind the Sydney CBD and Melbourne.

Beyond this urban growth, GWS maintains many areas of pristine bush and natural beauty, has retained some peri-urban lands to include food security and provides education and employment for the residents of the area.

THERE ARE 15 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS (LGAs) IN GWS



2.1% OF GWS RESIDENTS IDENTIFY AS ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

40.0% OF GWS INDIGENOUS RESIDENTS LIVE IN THE PENRITH AND BLACKTOWN LGAS



40.1% OF HOUSEHOLDS ARE COUPLES WITH CHILDREN

12.0% ARE ONE-PARENT FAMILIES

20.4% ARE COUPLES WITHOUT CHILDREN



THE POPULATION OF GWS WAS 2,606,544 IN 2021, AND IS PROJECTED TO BE 3,664,123 BY 2041¹



5.8% OF GWS RESIDENTS LIVE WITH A DISABILITY²

AT THE END OF 2025, GWS HAD 77,124 ACTIVE NDIS PARTICIPANTS, BEING 34.4% OF THE NSW TOTAL³



IN 2025, 4.5% OF GWS RESIDENTS WERE UNEMPLOYED, WHILE 25.2% WERE NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE⁴

UNEMPLOYMENT WAS LOWEST IN THE OUTER WEST & BLUE MOUNTAINS (1.2%) AND HIGHEST IN THE OUTER SOUTH WEST (5.9%)



54.0% OF GWS RESIDENTS WERE BORN IN AUSTRALIA

INDIA (5.4%) AND CHINA (3.6%) ARE THE TOP OVERSEAS BIRTHPLACES



SEVEN OUT OF 15 GWS LGAS ARE RELATIVELY DISADVANTAGED

EIGHT OUT OF 15 GWS LGAS ARE RELATIVELY ADVANTAGED



45.7% OF GWS RESIDENTS SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME

48.3% OF THE POPULATION SPEAKS ONLY ENGLISH AT HOME



69.2% OF GWS DWELLINGS ARE SEPARATE, LOW-DENSITY HOUSES

59.8% OF HOMES ARE OWNED; 33.1% ARE RENTED

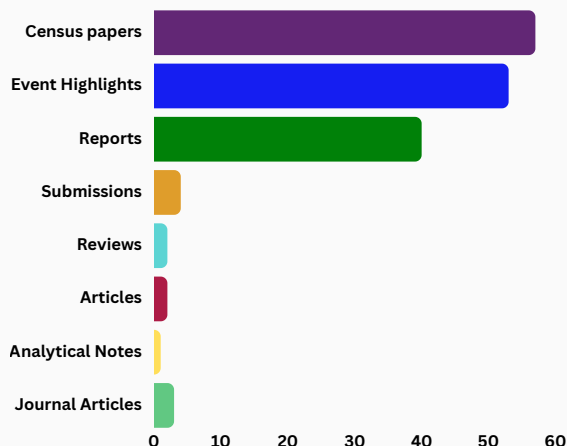


GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY INCLUDES:

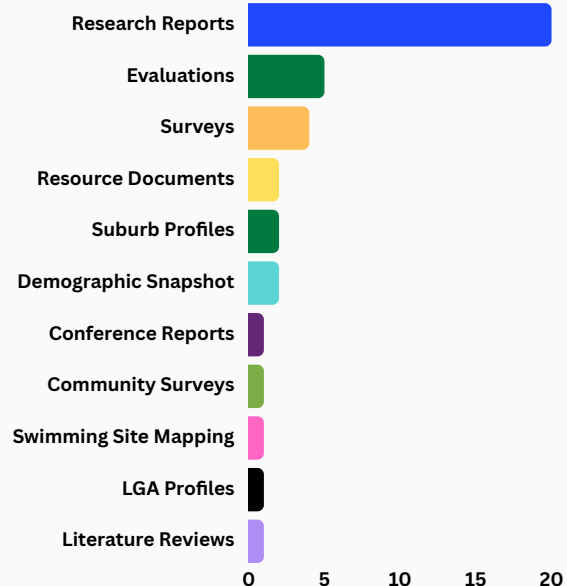
- Blacktown City Council
- Blue Mountains City Council
- The Council of Camden (Camden Council)
- Campbelltown City Council
- Canterbury-Bankstown Council
- Cumberland City Council
- Fairfield City Council
- Hawkesbury City Council
- The Hills Shire Council
- Liverpool City Council
- City of Parramatta Council
- Penrith City Council
- Wollondilly Shire Council
- Lithgow City Council
- Wingecarribee Shire Council

Our Publications (since 2011)

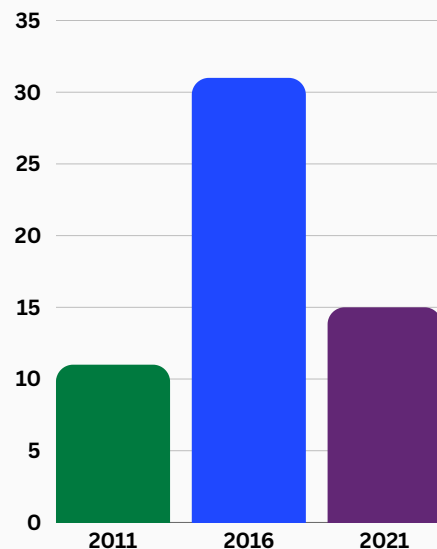
Types of Publications (total: 160)



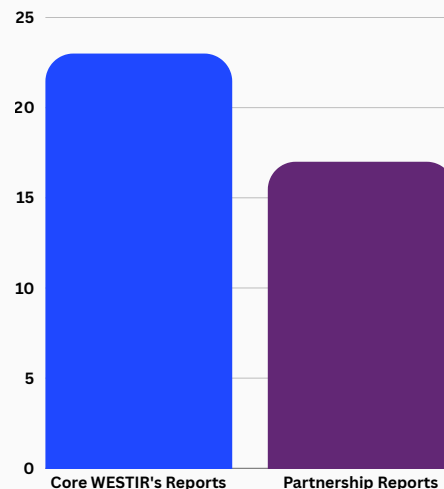
Types of Published Reports (total: 40)



Census Papers (total: 57)

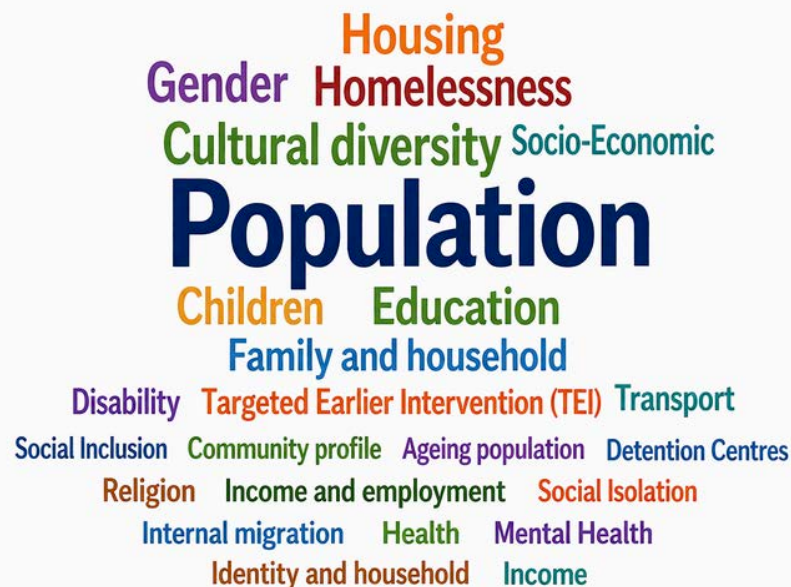


Reports (total: 40)



WESTIR has a long history of publications since its establishment. Through Census papers, research reports, collaborative and proprietary studies, as well as factsheets, informing the GWS community has remained central to WESTIR. WESTIR has played a key strategic role in supporting NGOs and communities in GWS to plan and advocate for social equity and effective service delivery. WESTIR's work has contributed to building one of the most comprehensive community-sector evidence base on the demographics and social conditions of Greater Western Sydney.

CENSUS PAPER THEMES



The word cloud highlights the most common issues and themes mentioned in our publications, with "population" being the most frequent.

Research Themes

Research has been an integral component of WESTIR's work, with studies conducted across 19 distinct research areas. These have been consolidated into reports addressing a range of broader thematic issues.

They are:

DISABILITY

EMPLOYMENT

**COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT**

JOURNEYS

URBAN HEAT

**PHOTOGRAPHY AND
COMMUNITY RESEARCH**

WORKPLACE

**INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS**

AGEING

**GOVERNMENT
CONTRACTS**

ETHICS

**CHILD ABUSE AND
INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE**

**DEMENTIA AND
CALD**

CRIME

**COVID-19
IMPACTS**

HOMELESSNESS

CALD

**COLLECTIVE
IMPACT**

LAND USE

METHODOLOGIES

INEQUALITY

Factsheet Themes

DISABILITY

SOCIO-ECONOMIC

CHILDREN

YOUNG PEOPLE

MENTAL HEALTH

HOMELESSNESS

YOUNG MOTHERS

**CULTURAL AND
LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY**

Funded and Proprietary Work

18
PAID
PROJECTS

14
TEI
PROJECTS

3
RETENTION
FUNDS TEI
PROJECTS

WESTIR LTD HAS COMPLETED A NUMBER OF PROPRIETARY PROJECTS FOR COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERS. OUR BESPOKE AND PROPRIETARY WORK IS CONDUCTED FOR SOME ORGANISATIONS WHICH CAN BE PAID OR UNPAID PROJECTS.

This work has ranged from public reports such as the longitudinal Listening@Lakemba project to large-scale analyses of specific hospital and Local Health District functioning and funding, prepared for confidential, internal client use. Of the 35 commissioned works, 10 were published and 25 are confidential.



North West Community Services Inc. (NCWS) commissioned WESTIR to create an evaluation report as one of the components of The Wellbeing Project. This is an example of how WESTIR can support place-based organisations to address community needs before, during, and after disasters.

TEI Contract Data (DEX)

From July 2020 to December 2025

OUR REACH

WESTIR HAS PUBLISHED **44 NEWSLETTERS** COVERING A RANGE OF TOPICS ACROSS GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY. THESE COMMUNICATIONS CONSISTENTLY DEMONSTRATE HIGH ENGAGEMENT, ACHIEVING AN AVERAGE **OPEN RATE OF 41.77%**

OVER THE RECORDED REPORTING PERIODS, THE WEBSITE HAS GARNERED **OVER 290,000 UNIQUE VISITORS**, ALONGSIDE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF COMBINED DIGITAL ENGAGEMENTS OVER THE YEARS. WESTIR'S WEBSITE SERVES AS A **CRUCIAL DIGITAL HUB FOR THE COMMUNITY SECTOR**, PROVIDING EQUITABLE AND AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO REGIONAL AND LOCAL DATA AND RESEARCH.

	36 EVALUATIONS
	15 CENSUS PAPERS
	68 PUBLICATIONS
	10 JOURNAL ARTICLES INCL ENGAGEMENTS/EDITS
	44 NEWSLETTERS
	24 ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES
	2,347 INFO/ADVICE/REFERRAL

WESTIR has served as an indispensable strategic pillar and the primary "engine room" for data-driven decision-making in GWS, under various contract types since 1980. This DEX data was the measurement tool, which WESTIR reported to, under the Targeted Earlier Intervention Program granted by the Department of Communities and Justice.

Through our 36 evaluation initiatives, it has transitioned the regional sector from simple reporting to impact measurement, strengthening Targeted Early Intervention services. This is anchored by 15 dedicated Census projects and 10 formal research articles, which elevate local data to a rigorous level through academic partnerships. By translating complex datasets into accessible infographics and analysis, WESTIR provides the essential evidence for its 24 advocacy actions, including direct ministerial engagements and formal submissions to state and national enquiries.

Since 2020, this research is operationalised through a significant scale of support, including over 2,300 instances of Information, Advice, and Referral. Through WESTIR's 68 publications and participation in over 230 professional engagements, WESTIR has given access to regional data, legislative updates that provide tools for local organisations. These efforts ensure the diverse needs of GWS are consistently prioritised in state and federal policy discussions, empowering community organisations to build robust cases for funding and infrastructure.

Through this multi-layered approach, combining high-level research with extensive frontline support, WESTIR has, for well over 4 decades, demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advocating for the resources, recognition, and infrastructure necessary for a thriving GWS.

TEI Engagements

From July 2020 to December 2025

EVALUATIONS

60

CENSUS

31

PUBLICATIONS

68

CONFERENCE
PRESENTATIONS

144

JOURNAL
PUBLICATIONS

4

ADVOCACY

69

INFORMATION/
ADVICE/REFERRAL

2,347

DCJ ENGAGEMENTS

266

Please note that this data is representative of the work that WESTIR accomplished and does not cover all work since 1980.

Looking Ahead - LET THE DATA RUN FREE

WESTIR, like most community organisations, has relied on State government funding for its operations. The original WESTIR funding was Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme, this then moved to the Community Services Grants Program. In 2010, the funding became Community Builders; and then moved to the Targeted Earlier Intervention Program, which ran for 5.5 years to December 2025. The next funding model announced was the Community and Family Support Program and funded services were advised by the Department of Communities and Justice that 4% of contracts would not be renewed. WESTIR was one of these services. Therefore, as one of the originally funded services, after 46 years, WESTIR no longer receives a State government grant.

The original State government funding was allocated to WESTIR to provide research and data analysis to respond to the exponential growth of Greater Western Sydney. There has also been a loss of funding in real terms and a withdrawal of programs that focus on community development, at a time when it is needed even more. Therefore, the original rationale for the establishment of WESTIR still exists today. It is obvious that there has been exponential population growth across Greater Western Sydney but without a comparable growth in community project funding. In fact, the funding scheme in its various iterations has not had real growth since 2010.

WESTIR believes that the resilience of the communities in GWS and the services that support and collaborate with them will continue to achieve wellbeing outcomes far into the future.

WESTIR would like to thank all those who have supported us since our inception in 1980. We have played an integral role in supporting the community development of the suburbs across Greater Western Sydney. Thanks go to all our Board Directors, Employees, the Community Sector and the Communities that we have worked with and to those that have used the information supplied by WESTIR to benefit their lives and work. We would like to acknowledge our Life Members - Peter Rogers (deceased) and Ron Alder.

Document prepared by: Margaret Tipper-Executive Officer; Vince Suarez-IT Comms Officer; and Social Researchers - Rajesh Bhusal and Christina Klassen. (May 2026).

Data sources:

Data from the page containing a snapshot overview of facts about Greater Western Sydney (p.2) is taken from Census 2021 data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), using TableBuilder, unless otherwise noted using superscripted numbers. The sources for these facts are outlined below:

1. The Greater Western Sydney 2021 population data and projected population data for the region in 2041 were sourced from the NSW Government Department of Planning website: <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/data-and-insights/population-projections/explore-the-data>.
2. The presence of a disability is represented by the ABS variable, 'Need for Assistance with Core Activities (ASSNP)' as this is the only variable used by the ABS to collect the data on disability. According to the ABS (2021), the need for assistance with core activities records the number of people with a profound or severe core activity limitation. It further states that 'people with a profound or severe core activity limitation are those needing assistance in their day-to-day lives in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility, and communication. This may happen as a result of a long-term health condition (lasting six months or more), a disability (lasting six months or more) or due to old age (ABS, 2021)'. More details on disability in the Greater Western Sydney area can be found in WESTIR's 2021 Census topic paper, 'Disability in Greater Western Sydney', at the following URL: <https://www.westir.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/dgws.pdf>.
3. Data on NDIS participation was sourced from the NDIS "Explore Data" website and calculated using Q2 FY 2025-26 data on the 15 Greater Western Sydney LGAs on NDIS participation rates, as well as NSW state totals: <https://dataresearch.ndis.gov.au/explore-data>.
4. Data on labour force participation was sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Education and Work 2025, TableBuilder. The decision was made to use this more recent data to be as current as possible, rather than 2021 Census data on labour force participation. However, the Education and Work 2025 dataset uses Statistical Areas Level 4 (SA4), leading to slightly different boundaries than those created by coming the 15 Greater Western Sydney LGAs. The SA4s included for our purposes were: Sydney - Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury, Sydney - Blacktown, Sydney - Outer South West, Sydney - Outer West and Blue Mountains, Sydney - Parramatta, and Sydney - South West. The decision was made to exclude Sydney - Inner South West because, although it includes parts of the Canterbury-Bankstown LGA, it also contains a significant area outside of this LGA that is outside of the Greater Western Sydney area. It is also important to note that unemployment rates were calculated using the total number of residents in the labour force as the denominator.
5. 'Planning, Funding, and Community Action-The Area Assistance Story', Bamforth, Gapps, Gurr, Howard, Onyx & Rawsthorne. Common Grounds Publishing 2016.