

# Final report

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## WALRC Executive Officer and Secretariat Milestone 8

Project code: L.WAM.1902  
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## Abstract

The Western Australia Livestock Research Council (WALRC), and its northern beef equivalent, the North Australia Beef Research Council (NABRC) and Southern Australia Livestock Research Council (SALRC) are key industry-agency forums charged with the responsibility of advising on strategic requirements and operational priorities for research, development and adoption activities in Australia's beef and sheepmeat industries.

The WALRC Executive Officer-Secretariat is an important administrative and leadership role working with a cross section of producer groups, research, development and adoption (RD&A) agencies and industry representatives from Western Australia's sheepmeat and southern beef industries.

The WALRC EO-secretariat position combines both governance responsibilities of an Executive Officer, advocacy and leadership on behalf of the WALRC council, and an administrative function to ensure the smooth running of the operations of WALRC.

Bluesee Pty Ltd director Esther Jones was appointed as the secretariat/executive officer in *August* 2018. The governance and administrative functions performed under this contract have been completed to time and budget, with the WALRC committee of management endorsing the performance and deliverables. The WALRC committee of management is now undertaking to directly contract Bluesee for the FY 21-22 and FY 22-23 financial years, providing perhaps the best indication of satisfaction with the works performed.

## Executive summary

### Background

The WALRC EO-secretariat position combines both governance responsibilities of an Executive Officer, advocacy and leadership on behalf of the WALRC council, and an administrative function to ensure the smooth running of the operations of WALRC, which became an incorporated Association in 2017, just six months prior to the commencement of this contract.

As a start-up Association, the role required the development of systems and functions including the facilitation of (and reporting against) a strategic plan and an annual operating plan mapped to the strategy. The role also required some considerable variations to scope, including the complete re-write of the Association's constitution in order to accurately reflect the contractual obligations back to MLA.

- *The primary requirement of the role* is simply to ensure the professional management of the WALRC/MLA contract, providing executive services to the Chair, Committee of management and the Council members and a high performing reporting and accountability function back to the primary funder, MLA.
- *The main target audience are the* MLA Consultation team; the Tier 1, 2 and 3 members of WALRC and the red meat levy payers of southern WA.
- *The outcomes of the services are used to* accurately and transparently report back to MLA the priorities for research, development and extension in the southern portion of WA; to be considered the 'eyes and ears' of MLA on the ground in this region and to build relationships with key stakeholders.

### Objectives

The contract L.WAM.1902 lists 11 objectives for the consultant to achieve across the duration of the contract. These objectives have been mapped through from the [WALRC Strategic Plan](#), to the [annual operating plan](#) and then reported against in full within the [annual reports](#), for which the consultant is responsible. Completion of tasks against the operating plan are also reported quarterly to the Executive and MLA via a status report. The objectives have all been met.

### Methodology

Not applicable to this contract and associated report.

### Results/key findings

- Annual Report and annual financial report against annual operating plan and contract, accepted by members and MLA;
- Meeting agendas, minutes and actions completed and accepted by members and MLA; and
- Communications plan adopted and implemented, with evidence of increased awareness of WALRC's purpose and participation in its priority setting activities document.

### **Benefits to industry**

As a direct consequence of the services delivered via this contract:

- MLA is seen via WALRC as professionally represented at grass roots level, by a Council that listens and responds to local priorities and needs;
- Red meat producers in the southern half of WA have the capacity to impact research and extension priorities and associated investment choices;
- Via WALRC there is a direct conduit to WA stakeholders red meat producers, plus researchers, extension practitioners, government and other service providers, ensures an opportunity for MLA collaboration

### **Future research and recommendations**

- Based on the results of the project, WALRC committee of management has moved to take over the contract management of the executive officer/secretariat for the Financial Years 2021/22 and 2022/23

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## 1. Background

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- *The primary requirement of the role* is simply to ensure the professional management of the WALRC/MLA contract, providing executive services to the Chair, Committee of management and the Council members and a high performing reporting and accountability function back to the primary funder, MLA.
- *The main target audience are the* MLA Consultation team; the Tier 1, 2 and 3 members of WALRC and the red meat levy payers of southern WA.
- *The outcomes of the services are used to* accurately and transparently report back to MLA the priorities for research, development and extension in the southern portion of WA; to be considered the 'eyes and ears' of MLA on the ground in this region and to build relationships with key stakeholders.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives as per the contract with the Secretariat, and as requested and written by MLA, are detailed below. Evidence of each delivery can be supplied in the form of agendas, minutes, calendars, etc on request.

**By 14 September 2021, in collaboration with MLA and WALRC council, the secretariat will:**

1. **Delivered, as evidenced by documentation supplied in previous milestones and as per hyperlinked examples:**  
Objective - Develop [3-year strategy plan](#), and year-on-year work [\(operational\) plan](#) and communications plan in consultation with council to enable effective implementation and reporting.
2. **Delivered, as evidenced by documentation supplied in previous milestones and as per hyperlinked example of the FY 2021 budget.**  
Objective - Develop an [annual operating budget](#) for approval by WALRC executive or council. Maintain up to date financials of actual income and expenditure.
3. **Delivered, with a functionality now in place, supported by the revamped constitution, that provides details [of terms, tenure and appointment](#) of 8 producer members.**  
Objective - Facilitate with assistance of WALRC council the expansion and maintenance of the producer membership to 8 active members.
4. **Delivered, as evidenced by the AOP status report (with 4 2020 events being delivered via Zoom/hybrid to take into account Covid restrictions):**  
Objective - Organise at least 8 producer consultation forums per year with support from the WALRC Chair, co-investors and producer members in the region.
5. **Delivered, to the best extent possible (given original privacy restrictions on PDS data), with each producer member responsible for liaising with a local grower group and co-hosting a WALRC forum via that group.**  
Objective - Encourage and assist producer members to become leaders in their local grower group(GG) with support to establish at least one GG based extension project.
6. **Delivered, as evidenced by agendas, minutes, actions supplied to MLA per meeting**  
Objective - Organise at least four face to face WALRC council meetings per year including:
  - a. arrange meeting venues, accommodation and/or teleconference as required
  - b. developing meeting agendas
  - c. facilitate discussions
  - d. maintaining momentum in WALRC's out-of-session activities
7. **Delivered, as evidenced by agenda, minutes, actions supplied to MLA per meeting and referenced in Objectives 1 & 2.**  
Objective - Provide secretariat functions to WALRC council, executive committee and Chair
  - a. develop meeting agendas
  - b. manage the completion of action items and correspondence
  - c. draft with input from WALRC council the annual operating plan, communications plan and 3 year strategic plan.
  - d. Establish direct communications via occasional e-newsletter with producer database to inform about WALRC activities.

8. **Delivered, as evidenced by a monthly newsletter that has recorded a 150pc increase in subscription numbers since the contract started, the establishment of a revamped website; the establishment of a YouTube channel to share relevant research and extension discussions; quadrupled social media following subscription numbers and regular media articles.**

Objective - Develop, implement and report against a communication plan that has key deliverables specified, with primary target as WALRC being recognised by industry as a key forum to engage in directing RD&A investment for WA

9. **Delivered, as evidenced by the number of times WALRC chair and producer members are asked to contribute to key industry meetings, project planning and provide commentary on PDS development efforts.**

Objective - Develop and maintain effective relationships in coordination with WALRC Chair between key sheepmeat and southern grass fed beef RD&A stakeholders (agencies and industry groups) in WA including reporting to and/or liaising with the Peak Industry Councils (if requested by MLA as required).

10. Objective - In coordination with WALRC Chair, provide (apolitical) advocacy and leadership in relation to RD&A requirements, direction and value for Australia's sheepmeat and southern grass fed beef sectors by:

- a. leading the provision of WALRC input into RD&A programs and project milestones, deliverables, reporting and evaluation requirements in-line with agreed plans and objectives of Red Meat Advisory Committee (RMAC), if required.  
**Provided administrative support to this task, as required**
- b. participating in relevant discussions/industry workshops or events in Western Australia relating to RD&A program and project development, delivery and implementation in the sheepmeat and southern grass fed beef sectors  
**Regularly instigate and respond to as required, the provision of WALRC feedback at industry events**
- c. Assist Chair and Producer Chair in representing WA on the MLA Red Meat Panel to support the process of identifying the portfolio balance as a result of WA consultation processes and assist with promoting the annual open call process.  
**Not delivered, as subsequent to the contract, the secretariats are not invited to participate.**

11. **Delivered, as evidenced by calendar of appointments, phone call and email log of key red meat industry players contacting WALRC for input/support:**

Objective - Become recognised as a key red meat and livestock representative and contact point for WA levy payers wanting to know how their levy is spent, and provide knowledge and information on key MLA initiatives as required.



### 3. Methodology

Describing the methodology of the secretariat function is not relevant to this report. The Secretariat uses what is considered best-practise meeting management and governance systems with regard to:

- Timely and accurate minutes
- Current and transparent financial reporting
- Systematically filed records, stored in drop box with full access by chair and committee to eliminate key person risk
- Regular internal and external communication
- Timely and responsive actions to support the chair, MLA and committee

### 4. Results

#### 4.1 Governance

- Annual Report and annual financial report against annual operating plan and contract, accepted by members and MLA;
- Three year Strategic plan delivered and accounted for, with WALRC now ready to prepare its second x 3-year strategic plan (November 2021)
- Meeting agendas, minutes and actions completed and accepted by members and MLA, with all minutes delivered back to committee within 2 working days of completed meeting
- Quarterly finances reported to and accepted by committee of management and MLA within three weeks of the quarter ending; and BAS lodged on time each quarter
- Funds managed to, or slightly under budget.
- A [new constitution developed](#) to accurately reflect the requirements of the MLA contract, in particular in relationship to membership structure, producer members' tenure and appointment procedures.
- The broadening of the T3 membership base to include up to three T3 members;
- A clear and accountable system now in place to record tenure of WALRC producer members and manage rotation of terms to ensure fresh opportunities for new members are provided each year.

## 4.2 Secretariat

- Communications plan adopted and implemented, with evidence of increased awareness of WALRC's purpose and participation in its priority setting activities document.
- The establishment of a WALRC YouTube Channel to support the organisation's communication efforts, with significant participation and watch times evidenced (well over 1000 views average watch time 12 minutes, for a series of WALRC recordings)..
- 8 WALRC-hosted or co-hosted forums completed each year, with growing attendance and profile
- Profile significantly grown as both WALRC chair and WALRC executive officer regularly asked to host/chair industry meetings in their WALRC capacity.
- Chair supported to grow strategic relationships with key stakeholders including T1 members, future potential T1 members.

## 5. Conclusion

The Secretariat function has benefited from the cohort of highly supportive and engaged Tier 1, 2 and 3 members, who enjoy a constructive and mutually beneficial relationship. There have been many opportunities to grow the scope of works that WALRC conducts and this came into its own during the COVID restrictions of 2020. WALRC used the COVID opportunity to establish a series of remote/electronic communication channels enabling meetings, forums and YouTube engagements to drive a broader understanding of WALRC activities.

### 5.1 Key findings

- An efficient secretariat function is essential to the effective running of the Research Council
- The Committee of Management have adopted a proposal to directly engage the secretariat from FY 21-22 onwards.

### 5.2 Benefits to industry

- MLA is seen via WALRC as professionally represented at grass roots level, and as a Council that listens and responds to local priorities and needs;
- Red meat producers in the southern half of WA have the capacity to impact research and extension priorities and associated investment choices;

- Via WALRC there is a direct conduit to WA stakeholders red meat producers, plus researchers, extension practitioners, government and other service providers, ensures an opportunity for MLA collaboration.

## **6. Future research and recommendations**

- The WALRC committee of management will take on the direct contracting and management of the secretariat role from July 2021, as is consistent with the strategic priority of the research councils increasing their independence and autonomy.
- The WALRC primary role of identifying RD&E priorities can only be enhanced by greater responsibilities for both the organisations and the individual councillors. A greater synergy with the Adoption team at MLA would assist with this.

## **7. References**

References are not applicable to this final report

## **8. Appendix**

There are no appendices however throughout this report, relevant documents are hyperlinked in order to provide evidence of claims.