

**widcorp**

water in drylands  
collaborative research program

# Annual Report 2006



# Foreword

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The Water in Drylands Collaborative Research Program (WIDCORP) is a group of peak organisations from the Wimmera Mallee and University of Ballarat working collaboratively to study the social, economic, cultural and environmental impact of this additional water on the community. Using the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline as a case study, this research focuses on identifying water uses and water values in a dryland region; how communities balance the competing demands for water; and how communities can best maximise opportunities made available as a result of the pipeline. Research is undertaken concurrently with the construction of the pipeline and forms the basis for an on-going research program at the Horsham Campus of the University of Ballarat.

This is the second annual report of the Water in Drylands Collaborative Research Program (WIDCORP). It reports on the achievements for the calendar year 2006.



Dr Tony Gregson, Board Chairman meeting with Dr Imogen Schwarz, Dr Pam McRae-Williams and Dr Megan Deutscher

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# Contents

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Foreword.....	ii
Contents.....	iii
Snapshot of 2006 .....	1
1. WIDCORP – our strategic plan.....	3
2. The year in review .....	5
2.1 Research .....	5
2.2 Building research capacity.....	8
2.3 Communicating research outcomes .....	9
3. Governance.....	11
3.1 Organisational structure.....	11
3.2 Board .....	12
3.3 Research Advisory Committee .....	13
4. Finance.....	14
4.1 Review of financial position .....	14
4.2 Financial report.....	15
5. Tracking performance and impact.....	16
5.1 Indicators of Performance and Impact .....	16
5.2 Important measures .....	18
5.3 Our Research and Australia’s National Research Priorities .....	19
6. Appendices .....	20
6.1 Appendix one- Research program at end of 2006.....	20
6.2 Appendix two- Project reports .....	22

Supplementary document  
WIDCORP Strategic Plan 2007-2010

# Snapshot of 2006

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WIDCORP has been very active over the past 12 months. John Young (Interim Research Director) together with Joel Epstein (Director, Institute for Rural and Regional Research and Innovation, University of Ballarat) and Paul O'Connor (Program Development Manager) began the year with two successful workshops where collaborating organisations were engaged in developing a WIDCORP research plan. This plan formed the basis for a substantial Australian Research Council (ARC) linkage application to fund research in WIDCORP till 2010.

WIDCORP has established a research base in Horsham with the appointment of two Research Fellows in March and Dr Pam McRae-Williams as Research Director in September. One PhD research project is underway with two more students to commence in early 2007. Two major research projects (Hindmarsh Shire and Northern Mallee Studies), were completed during the year and WIDCORP contributed to the Ministerial Taskforce State of the Southern Wimmera Mallee Region Report.

Further highlights of the year included WIDCORP attendance at the Crawford Fund conference in Canberra, presentations to GRDC and holding a successful research forum in collaboration with DPI.

The Board revised and endorsed the Strategic Plan late in 2006. The strategic direction of WIDCORP reflects a critical time in the Wimmera Mallee with the impact of the drought, the commencement of the pipeline project and the heightened focus on water regionally and nationally. At the end of 2006, WIDCORP is positioned to make a valuable contribution to the region and to deliver measurable benefits to Partner organisations and the wider community.



Researchers Dr Megan Deutsher and Dr Imogen Schwarz discussing research at BCG Expo



Research Forum participants Dr Paul Dalby University of Adelaide Water Research Cluster, Dr Pam McRae-Williams WIDCORP Research Director, Associate Professor David Chittleborough, University of Adelaide, Dr Megan Deutsher WIDCORP Research Fellow, Dr Bob Belford, Principal Scientist, Department of Primary Industries

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



2006 has been a year of building momentum, consolidation, building on and establishing relationships and commencing active research. We now have in place a very active Board and Research Advisory committee that is representative of our Governing parties and collaborating partners, a Research Director and Research Fellows.

Initiatives in 2006 included:-

- The development and endorsement of a Strategic Plan
- A research plan in place
- Briefings to community and collaborative partners and Local, State and Federal Politicians. Collaborations have been initiated with the Department of Primary Industries and other potential partners
- Bringing together of research and researchers in the Wimmera Mallee through a Research Forum
- Actively seeking research funding with significant funding applications submitted to Australian Research Council, Land and Water and Rural Industries Research Development Corporation
- Research commenced and completed :-
  1. The Hindmarsh Shire community attitudes and aspiration survey and Hindmarsh youth survey during March-August 2006 ;
  2. An understanding of Northern Mallee experience during July-September 2006;
  3. The impact of channel decommissioning during 2006-08;
  4. Desk based review of the impact of Drought on the Wimmera and Southern Mallee region during October-November 2006;
  5. Communication Strategy; and
  6. WIDCORP Knowledge Base needs analysis.

I take this opportunity to thank the Board and Research Advisory committee members for their proactive approach to the activities of WIDCORP and the research that will ultimately assist the Wimmera Mallee community and other dryland communities to make sound decisions in relation to the utilisation of water.

**Dr. Tony Gregson**  
**Chairman**  
**WIDCORP**

# 1. WIDCORP – our strategic plan

Collaborative research focusing on water and sustainable development in dryland regions is becoming increasingly important. In times of increased climatic variability where water is a critical resource, such research will contribute to water reform decision-making and exchange of knowledge across regional, national and international boundaries.

## **THE WATER IN DRYLANDS COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM**

**(WIDCORP)** is a collaboration of peak regional and State Government organisations - Catchment Management Authorities including Glenelg Hopkins, Mallee, North Central and Wimmera, GWM Water, Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, the University of Ballarat and Wimmera Uniting Care. WIDCORP will contribute to understanding the economic, environmental and social implications of changes in the regions water resources in terms of security of supply and improved water quality. It will build regional capacity and capability through alliances with other research organisations and agencies to deliver quality research outcomes for the Wimmera and Mallee communities. Ongoing investment in WIDCORP commits program partners to collaboratively work to identify and invest in high quality research that underpins, supports and promotes the economic prosperity, environmental sustainability and social wellbeing of the communities of the Wimmera Mallee region.

A Strategic Plan has been developed by WIDCORP as a statement of shared purpose and direction. It commits WIDCORP to provide quality research to support the Wimmera Mallee regional community and other stakeholders in managing the change and maximise opportunities that will result from the supply of reliable quality water through the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project.

### **Our VISION is.....**

For the Wimmera Mallee to be recognised regionally, nationally and internationally for quality 'water in drylands' research that supports and delivers beneficial environmental, economic and social outcomes to the benefit of the Wimmera Mallee regional community.

### **Our MISSION is .....**

To advance understanding of the value of water and its uses, to identify emerging opportunities for Wimmera Mallee dryland communities experiencing climatic variability and major water infrastructure change, and to provide stakeholders with knowledge to foster the regions capacity to adapt to change in order to achieve economic and social growth and environmental sustainability.

**Our OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY to achieve our vision are.....**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>STRATEGY</b>
<p><b>1. Advance and apply knowledge</b> of the value of water across all its uses to optimise economic, environmental, social and cultural outcomes for a sustainable Wimmera Mallee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Engage the wider community in researching the economic, environmental, social and cultural values of water and those factors that optimise opportunities created by new water infrastructure in the Wimmera Mallee.</li> <li>❖ Progress research that will provide a basis for valuing water across all its uses and optimise the adaptive capacity of the region and its communities as climatic variability and major water infrastructure change water availability.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Deliver quality research findings</b> to assist the Wimmera Mallee and other dryland rural regions to make considered decisions relating to major water infrastructure and water use in a changing environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Conduct quality research to inform communities, state, national and international agencies of the outcomes of investing in major water infrastructure as it relates to regional sustainability.</li> <li>❖ Provide high quality research outcomes that are innovative and relevant to stakeholders.</li> <li>❖ Align research programs with the research needs of the Wimmera Mallee region and with National priorities.</li> <li>❖ Deliver research outcomes through publications, presentations and hosting conferences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Build research capacity</b> in the Wimmera Mallee region through an innovative and responsive 'water in dryland' research program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Attract collaborative research partnerships and networks to the Wimmera Mallee to assist stakeholders to identify and maximise opportunities arising from the Wimmera Mallee pipeline project.</li> <li>❖ Build upon regional research strengths and capabilities by increasing knowledge of multi-disciplinary and collaborative research approaches.</li> <li>❖ Attract high quality regionally based higher degree researchers and foster national and international researcher exchange.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Attract research funding</b> sufficient to realise the objectives of WIDCORP.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Secure Governing party funding commitment for 2007/10.</li> <li>❖ Identify, target and secure appropriate funding for ongoing quality research.</li> <li>❖ Identify and attract new partners from government, industry and the private sector.</li> </ul>

# 2. The year in review

## 2.1 Research

### Developing the Research Program

In 2004, WIDCORP Partners and the University of Ballarat Research Centres identified four research themes. Priority research areas were formulated in 2005 in collaboration with Partner Organisations and end-users and were used as the basis for a workshop aimed at developing a detailed research program.

Two workshops were led by the Director of IRRRI, Dr Joel Epstein and the Interim Research Director, John Young at the Horsham Campus, University of Ballarat on February 1<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2006. These were integral in the development of an integrated research agenda and research program. Participants were from a range of organisations and agencies and exemplified the diversity and strength of the WIDCORP collaborative research program.

The collaborating organisations were well represented by credentialed participants from the University of Ballarat, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, Wimmera CMA, North Central CMA, Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Mallee CMA, Department of Primary Industries, Regional Development Victoria and the Wimmera Development Association.



Prof. Wayne Robinson, DVC (Academic and Research) addressing the workshop

The Research Program developed reflected the diverse set of research interests of Partner organisations and others. Two main themes emerged: ***Valuation of water in its uses and diffusion of innovation and change following the pipeline.***

Each theme included a number of research areas.

#### **Theme 1      *Valuation of water in its uses included research based around***

*Social approaches*

*Ecological approaches*

*Economic approaches*

*Information Technology approaches*

#### **Theme 2      *Diffusion of innovation and change following the pipeline***

This research will explore innovation and change associated with farm and community enterprises, services, processes and behaviour that will result from the radical change in infrastructure that the pipeline will bring.

In addition, the workshops identified initial research need. These included understanding the lesson learned from the previously constructed Northern Mallee Pipeline and understanding the attitudes and aspirations of the Hindmarsh Shire regarding the Wimmera Mallee pipeline. These two areas of research were seen to provide important baseline information for further research.

The Research Program is responsive to the research needs of the region and Partner Organisations and focuses on short, medium and long term projects that will have a significant impact on shaping the region. Appendix two depicts the programmatic and longitudinal nature of this program. Individual projects aim to actively engage local organisations and personnel, building up community capacity through research. This Strategic Plan requires that the Research Program be reviewed annually ensuring it remains relevant and focused to stakeholder needs.

Appendix one provides an overview of the research program and research progress at the end of 2006.

### Research Undertaken

Research projects in 2006 are summarised in the table below.

Project	Start date	Status at Dec 30 <sup>th</sup> 2006	Funding source	Comments
<i>Decommissioning the channels: Social and ecological values of ephemeral floodplain wetlands</i>	November 2005	Progress as expected Completion October 2008	WIDCORP stipend, University of Ballarat funded place	PhD project
<i>Hindmarsh shire community attitudes and aspirations: Perceptions of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline</i>	November 2005	Completed August 2006	WIDCORP	Commissioned project – Undertaken in collaboration with Centre for Regional Innovating and Competitiveness , University of Ballarat
<i>Hindmarsh shire youth attitudes and aspirations survey</i>	June 2006	Completed October 2006	WIDCORP	Commissioned project – Undertaken in collaboration with Centre for Regional Innovating and Competitiveness , University of Ballarat
<i>WIDCORP Knowledge Base</i>	April 2007	Ongoing	WIDCORP	Knowledge needs have been identified and design is being explored
<i>Communication strategy</i>	April 2006	Completed July 2006	WIDCORP	A communication strategy has been developed and is regularly updated
<i>The Northern Mallee pipeline: Exploring community perceptions of its impacts</i>	April 2006	Completed November 2006	WIDCORP	Preliminary investigation and compilation of secondary data has provided the basis for further research
<i>Desk-base review: State of the Wimmera-Southern Mallee Drought Report 2007</i>	October 2006	Completed November 2006	RDV	Consultancy research for Regional Development Victoria(RDV) and Wimmera Development Association

Appendix two provides detailed reports for these projects.

## Research funding

In 2006, the Partnership support for the WIDCORP research program totalled **\$358,608** and included support from G W M Water, Wimmera, Mallee, North Central, and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authorities, Wimmera Uniting Care, the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (South West Region), and the University of Ballarat.

Six competitive grant applications were submitted in 2006, two applications have been successful whilst the remaining 4 were unfunded in 2006 and several have been revised and resubmitted for 2007/8 funding. The applications for funding are outlined below.

Dept. Primary Industries & Regional Development Victoria - Provincial Victoria Fund  
*Maximising opportunities from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline*  
(WIDCORP was identified to contribute to this project). Notification of funding for this project to the value of \$66,000 was received in early 2007.

University of Ballarat, University of Ballarat Early Career Researcher Grant – Dr Imogen Schwarz. Notification of funding of \$10,000 was received in early 2007.

Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation (RIRDC) (3yr project)  
*Seizing Opportunities: How dryland communities respond to major water reform.*  
Partners in this application were G W M Water, Wimmera, Mallee, North Central, and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authorities, Wimmera Uniting Care, Department of Sustainability and Environment, and the University of Ballarat.

Australian Research Council (ARC) (4yr project)  
*Water in Dryland Communities: Maximising its economic, social and environmental use based on the value of water.*  
Funding partners included G W M Water, 4 Catchment Management Authorities (Wimmera, Mallee, North Central, and Glenelg Hopkins), Wimmera Uniting Care, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Department of Primary Industries, Wimmera Development Association, Birchip Cropping Group and the University of Ballarat.

Land and Water Innovation Call (1yr project)  
*Valuing Water for Sustainable Water Resource Management.*  
Funding partners included G W M Water, Department of Sustainability & Environment, Wimmera, Mallee, North Central & Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Authorities, Department of Primary industries, Birchip Cropping Group, Wimmera Uniting Care, Wimmera Development Association and University of Ballarat.

Raising National Water Standards (National Water Initiative) (2yr project)  
*Valuing and Managing Wimmera Mallee basin water: Water use and supply in a system undergoing significant changes in delivery and demand.*  
Funding partners included G W M Water, Department of Sustainability & Environment, Wimmera, Mallee, North Central & Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Authorities, Wimmera Uniting Care, International Water Management Institute, Colombo Sri Lanka; Institute for Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University; Water Cluster, University of Adelaide, Birchip Cropping Group, Birchip Victoria; Department of Primary Industries and the University of Ballarat.

## 2.2 Building research capacity

During 2006 WIDCORP began building research capacity with the appointment of two Research Fellows (April) and full-time Research Director (September). This has enabled WIDCORP to revise the research plan and begin active research.



WIDCORP research staff (left to right)  
Megan Deutscher, Imogen Schwarz and  
Pam McRae-Williams

### Research Director

Dr Pam McRae-Williams B.Ed.Env.Sci., M.Env.St., PhD

Pam was appointed in September. She has a background in environmental management and obtained her PhD from the University of Ballarat where her research was focussed on regional development. Dr McRae-Williams has achieved a high level of recognition in regional cluster development and sustainability.

### Research Fellows

Dr Megan Deutscher BA (Hons), PhD

Megan is a graduate of Swinburne University and holds a degree in psychology. She graduated with a PhD in 2006. Her research experience is in the field of psychology and social research working with community groups and clinical populations.

Megan has a vested interest in and dedication to the sustainability of the Wimmera Mallee regional communities as she lives in Stawell and is married to a local farmer. Megan's research focus is to understand the perceptions and behaviours of individuals and communities in response to major water infrastructure initiatives.

Dr Imogen Schwarz BAppSc. (Hons), PhD

Imogen is a graduate of Deakin University and holds a degree in health promotion. She graduated with a PhD in social science from the University of Ballarat in 2006.

Imogen has close connections to the Wimmera people having lived in the region for more than twenty years. Imogen's research focus is investigating the socio-economic impacts of water infrastructure change on rural dryland communities

Imogen completed the Early Career Research program conducted by the University's research office and was successful in her application for funding the research project developed during the program.

### Program Development Manager

Paul O'Connor. Paul has wide ranging experience in management and has been a keystone in the development of the profile research program. Paul commenced in 2005.

### **Higher Degree Researchers**

Dawn McBride BA (Hons) Soc.Sci. commenced her PhD in 2005. Dawn has a background in geography and her research is 'Decommissioning the Channels: Future Social and Ecological Values of Ephemeral Floodplain Wetlands'.

## **2.3 Communicating research outcomes**

WIDCORP is committed to communicating its research outcomes and has employed a number of strategies during 2006.

### **Web site**

Our Web site has been developed and provides a range of information including access to reports, research plans, and newsletters. [www.widcorp.com](http://www.widcorp.com)

### **WIDCORP Research Forum - 22nd Nov**

The Forum titled *Water In Dryland - maximising the value of water for a sustainable Wimmera Mallee* was organised in collaboration with DPI, Horsham. 35 people interested in or undertaking research throughout the Wimmera Mallee attended. The forum was informal where information was shared and potential research links explored across agencies.

Speakers included representatives from WIDCORP, Birchip Cropping Group, DPI, University of Melbourne, University of Ballarat's Centre for Regional Innovation and Competitiveness, No Till Cropping Systems, GWMWater and guest speakers from the University of Adelaide's Water Research Cluster.

Presentation topics placed water use, innovation and water infrastructure together and included climate variability, biodiversity, farming practices, agronomy and community aspirations and change. Productive discussions were had regarding the importance of collaborative research and research that is cognisant of a whole of system approach – multi-disciplinary and integrated.

The forum provided an opportunity for interaction between researchers across a range of research areas and agencies. The value of this was recognised and participants encouraged WIDCORP to continue to foster these opportunities. WIDCORP is beginning to plan a series of forums next year, addressing issues associated with water as a critical resource, the value of water and the implications of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline on the regions sustainability

### **Presentations**

Formal presentations were given to a number of key stakeholders outlining our research and research planning. These included presentations by Dr Joel Epstein and John Young to Wimmera, North Central, Mallee and Glenelg Hopkins CMA's, GWMWater and to the Grains Research Development Corporation (GRDC) and the University of Adelaide Water Research Cluster by Dr Pam McRae-Williams. Informal presentation also occurred in response to stakeholder interest and interests from researchers at the University of Ballarat.

### **Conferences attended**

2006 Crawford Fund conference "Water for Irrigated Agriculture & the Environment: Finding a Flow for All". This conference provided an excellent opportunity for researchers to meet with national and international leaders in water research and policy. This was a highlight of 2006.

*Reflections for WIDCORP research directions*

Attendance at the Crawford Fund conference expanded WIDCORP's research opportunity. It provided key contacts relevant to our current research themes and introduced the significance of research on water in agriculture nationally and internationally. Opportunities for collaboration and joint research programs and researcher exchange were identified. Meeting with Dr Frank Rijsberman (Director) and other members of International Water Management Institute (WMI), members of the Crawford fund, CSIRO and CRC research leaders were facilitated by Dr Tony Gregson Chair of the WIDCORP Board. WIDCORP has become a more widely recognised research program as a result.

#### BCG Grains Research Expo 2006: "Grain Matter"

WIDCORP had a stand at the Expo to promote WIDCORP, to circulate the two pilot surveys on the Northern-Mallee Pipeline project for community members and primary producers, and to generally network with the grains research community. This opportunity provided by Birchip Cropping Group (BCG) was instrumental in building stronger relationships and helping our new Research Fellows to meet with farmers and researchers. BCG also assisted us in the distribution of surveys at the Speed Fields Days later in the year.

#### DPI Climate Change Challenge for Victorian Agricultural Systems Project Workshops 1&2: Climate Change & the Grains Industry Impacts and Adaptations

The workshops focused on the development of an adaptive capacity index. The aim was to prioritise indicators to measure the adaptive capacity of the community and grains industry in the context of climate change. The audience rated economic, socio-cultural, and institutional & infrastructural indicators. WIDCORP researchers contributed in the workshops.

#### **Newsletters**

Four newsletters were produced in 2006 and distributed widely to stakeholders and made available via [www.widcorp.com](http://www.widcorp.com)

#### **Availability of reports**

Reports once completed and peer reviewed are made available via [www.widcorp.com](http://www.widcorp.com)

#### **Publications 2006**

McRae-Williams, P., Deutsher, M. & Schwarz, I. (2007) *Is the pipeline our lifeline? Water reform and sustainability in drought- affected dryland communities of rural Victoria*. Proceeding AWA Oz Water conference 2007, Sydney

McRae-Williams, P. & Lowe, J. (2006) Sustainable Water Supplies and Sustainable Small Towns, in *Renewing Country Towns*, M. F. Rogers & D. R. Jones (Eds), VURRN Press, University of Ballarat.

Deutsher, M. (2006) Poster presentation: *Is the pipeline our lifeline?* University of Ballarat Research Conference – 8<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2006

#### **Media releases**

Numerous media releases were generated during the year increasing WIDCORP's research profile and informing the community of research outcomes.

# 3. Governance

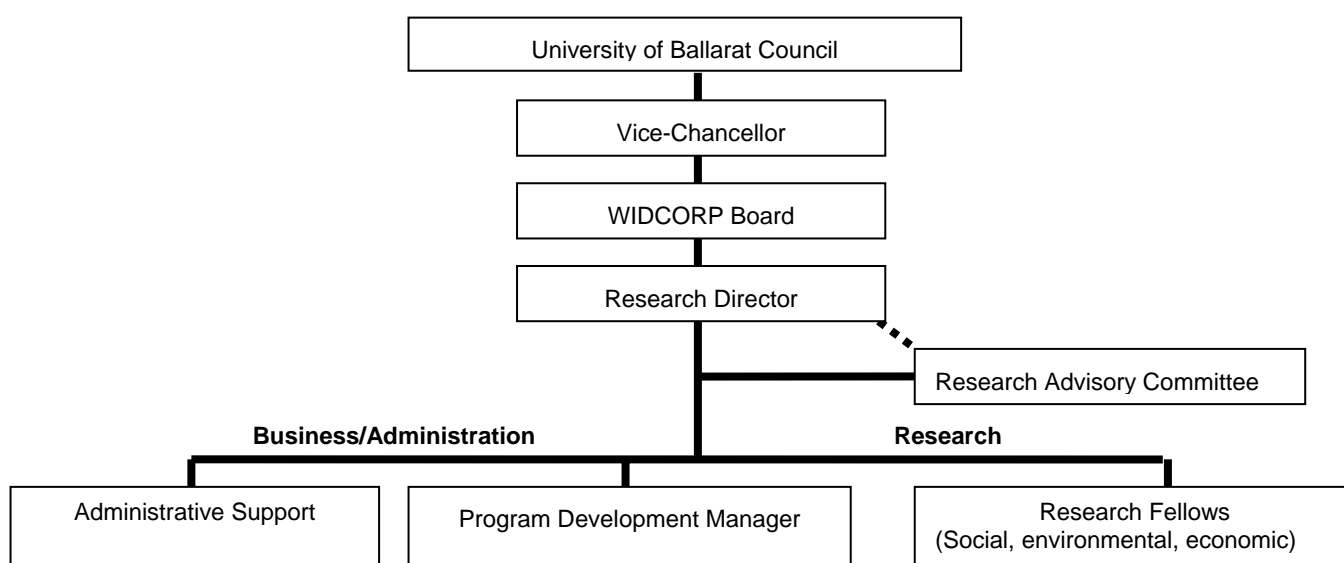
The following is the governance management structure for WIDCORP. It is anticipated this structure, and roles contained within it, will evolve over time.

The Governance Parties are those organisations that were identified by the WIDCORP Interim Steering Committee as being integral in the first instance, to the establishment and success of WIDCORP. These parties included:

- Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Authority
- A Consortia of the following Catchment Management Authorities
  - Wimmera
  - Mallee
  - North Central
  - Glenelg Hopkins
- Wimmera Uniting Care
- Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (South West Region), and
- University of Ballarat

Program Partners will be involved in the formulation and refinement of the research; be actively involved in research activities; be the first recipients of research findings; and will receive regular updates on the status of the research.

## 3.1 Organisational structure



## 3.2 Board

The Board provides high-level leadership for the Water in Drylands Collaborative Research Program (WIDCORP). The Board endeavours to make WIDCORP relevant to regional communities, the University of Ballarat, and other stakeholders and manage WIDCORP so that all participants and stakeholders can add to and gain value from the research undertaken within the Program.



### **Dr Tony Gregson—Chairman**

Dr Gregson is a grain grower from Warracknabeal in the Wimmera. He has an extensive science and corporate research management background. Dr Gregson is Chairman of the CRC for Molecular Plant Breeding, Chairman of the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute based in Rome, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering



### **Professor Wayne Robinson**

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Research) University of Ballarat. Professor Robinson has developed his profile as an academic and as an academic leader at several universities including Ohio State, Murdoch, Queensland and Deakin and has published more than 130 papers



### **Mr Keith Jackson**

Manager Regional Projects  
Department of Sustainability & Environment



### **Mr Peter Jackson**

Engineering Manager, Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project, GWMWater



### **Mr Marc Thompson**

CEO – Wimmera Catchment Management Authority



### **Ms Jo Bourke**

Community representative, GWMWater Pipeline Project Development Officer and a member of the Research Advisory Committee



### **Mr Robert Irvine**

Head of Western Campuses  
University of Ballarat



### **Ms Jackie Kerr**

Community representative. Jackie has a broad public policy and community sector background and is currently undertaking law degree studies



### **Dr. Joel Epstein**

Director of the University of Ballarat's Institute for Regional and Rural Research and Innovation. Chairman of the Research Advisory committee

The Board normally meets at the University of Ballarat Horsham Campus however during 2006 several meetings were held at partner organisation offices including at GWMWater, the University of Ballarat Mt Helen Campus in Ballarat and in Jeparit where the public was invited to attend and the Board was hosted to a tour of the region by Hindmarsh Shire councillor Michael Gawith.



Members of the WIDCORP Board at Jeparit as part of a tour of the Hindmarsh Shire in August with Hindmarsh Shire Councillor Mr Mick Gawith.

### 3.3 Research Advisory Committee

The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) is a committee of the Board and its role is to lead, guide and monitor the research activities of WIDCORP. Its responsibilities include facilitation of collaborative and multi-disciplinary research, knowledge transfer and dissemination of research findings to appropriate audiences. The RAC provides regular reports to the Board and advises the Board on research proposal and directions.

RAC Memberships:

**Dr Joel Epstein**, Chairman, Director Institute for Rural and Regional Research and Innovation, University of Ballarat

**Dr Pam McRae-Williams**, WIDCORP Research Director

**Ms Jo Bourke**, Community Representative

**Dr John McDonald**, Director Centre for Health Research and Practice (CHRP), University of Ballarat

**Professor Julian Lowe**, Director Centre for Regional Innovation and Competitiveness (CRIC), University of Ballarat

**Mr John Martin**, Manager Technical Services GWMWater

**Mr. Stuart McLean**, Board Member North Central CMA

**Mr Terry Lewis**, Community Relationships Manager Department of Primary Industries

**Mr Eddie Lee**, Board Member Mallee CMA

**Mr Philip Sabien**, Executive Director Wimmera Development Association

**Ms Alexandra Gartmann**, CEO Birchip Cropping Group

Other contributors contribute to the RAC from time to time to provide advice and expertise in areas of particular research interest.

## 4. Finance

The Consolidated Financial Report is a general purpose Financial Report prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, Relevant Urgent Issue Group Consensus Views, other authoritative pronouncements of the PSASB/AASB, the Guidelines for the Preparation of Annual Financial Reports for the reporting period by the Australian Higher Education Institutions issued by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), the requirements of the *Financial Management Act 1994* and applicable Directions issued thereunder. The Financial Report consists of the Financial Statements of the University and the consolidated accounts of the economic entity comprising the University as parent entity and the entities it controlled at the end of, or during the financial year.

The Minister for Finance has determined pursuant to Section 6(2) of the *Financial Management Act 1994* that the period ending at midnight of 31 December is the financial year for Universities.

### 4.1 Review of financial position

The financial position of WIDCORP is secure at the end of 2006.

A carry over balance of \$462, 873 with Partner contributions of \$308,608 and expenditure of \$421,053, leave a surplus at year end of \$350,428. Expenditure, particularly salary expenditure will increase in 2007 and Partner contributions will be reviewed. This will require additional funds to be secured in 2007.

## 4.2 Financial report

### Financial statements year ended 31 December 2006

	\$
<b>Accumulated Balance January 1, 2006</b>	462873
<b>Income</b>	
University of Ballarat	150000
Department of Sustainability & Environ	50000
Catchment Management Authorities	50000
GWMWater	50000
Wimmera Uniting Care	2500
Wimmera Development Association	6108
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>771481</u>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Salaries	222068
Independent Contractor	16313
Salary On-costs	47878
<b>Total salary expenses</b>	<u>286259</u>
<b>Non-Salary expenses</b>	
Equipment/Furniture & Fittings	8820
Recruitment	16530
Marketing/Printing	6087
Materials inc equip < \$1000	13488
Travel	14592
Meals & Catering	4401
Research students	20000
Research projects	42950
Staff Development	4014
Telephone/AARnet	2902
Postage/photocopying	787
Misc and other charges	223
<b>Total Non-Salary expenses</b>	<u>134794</u>
<b>Total expenses</b>	421053
<b>Surplus 31/12/06</b>	<u><u>350428</u></u>

# 5. Tracking performance and impact

## 5.1 Indicators of Performance and Impact

The Strategic Plan 2007-2010 clearly outlines how WIDCORP will measure its **performance and impact**.

This provides the framework for developing performance indicators and measures to report against. The measures for performance and impact have been identified and are listed below however the measurement mechanisms are yet to be fully developed. Therefore, this report includes only some indicators and measures.

<b>Performance measure</b>	<b>Performance in 2006</b>
Achieving recognition as a leading research program that delivers quality research outcomes to end users throughout the Wimmera Mallee community	WIDCORP is increasingly recognised particularly in social research seeking to understand non-market valuation of water, perception of communities to changes in water supply. Research commenced in 2006 and to date is establishing base-line information. This research has provided valued information to partner organisations. Given the preliminary nature of this research, the quality and significance of this research has not been tested.
Undertaking research activities that are collaborative and involves the participation of end users	Researchers have worked collaboratively with key community members and agencies on all projects.
Establishing strategic collaborative relationships between researchers and the community	Formalisation of a strategic relationship with DPI is being planned.
Attracting significant funding for the financial support of WIDCORP and related research projects	Research funding applications have been unsuccessful in 2006.
Producing and disseminating relevant multi-disciplinary research related to the objectives and the activities of WIDCORP	Reports and presentations have been produced from several areas of research including ecology and social sciences reflecting the objectives of the program
<b>Impact measure</b>	
Increasing the adaptive capacity of the region through identifying new opportunities for Wimmera Mallee communities	Measures have not been developed to assess the impact of research on the community. The base-line research to date will provide a basis to establish these measures.
Influencing decisions relating to major water infrastructure and the utilisation of water in a changing environment	Measures have not been developed to assess the impact of research on decision making. The base-line research to date will provide a basis to establish these measures.
Increasing the capacity of the region in research and knowledge exchange	Research capacity in the region has been increased with the appointment of research fellows and a research director. A successful forum and numerous presentations of research within the region have also expanded the research focus and knowledge exchange in the region.
Raising the profile of research at the University of Ballarat, Horsham Campus	WIDCORP has raised the profile of research at the Horsham campus in 2006 with the appointment of 2 research fellows and a Research Director.

## 5.2 Important measures

### Partners and Collaborators

Collaborating Partner	Level of support 2006	Funding 2006	Advisory support
<b>Partner organisations</b>			
University of Ballarat	Active/ongoing	Yes	Yes
GWMWater	Active/ongoing	Yes	Yes
DSE	Active/ongoing	Yes	Yes
Wimmera CMA	Active/ongoing	Yes	Yes
Mallee CMA	Active/ongoing	Yes	Yes
North Central CMA	Active/ongoing	Yes	Yes
Glenelg Hopkins CMA	Active/ongoing	Yes	Yes
Wimmera Uniting Care	Active/ongoing	Yes	Yes
<b>Collaborations</b>			
BCG	Active/ongoing		Yes
WDA	Active/ongoing	Yes	Yes
RDV	Active/ongoing	Yes	Yes
Hindmarsh Shire	Active/ongoing		Yes
DPI	Active/ongoing		Yes
Charles Sturt University	Active		Yes
International Water Management Institute	Active		Yes
Stawell Gold Mine	Active		Yes

### Staff

	Admin	Researchers	Students
<b>2005</b>	1	0	1
<b>2006</b>	1.2	3	1

### Funding applications submitted

	Applications	Success	Total Value
<b>2006</b>	6	4 unfunded 2 funded early	5,266,000 76,000
		2007	

### Publications, reports and presentations

	Publications	Reports	Papers/Presentations
<b>2006</b>	2	4	1

### Summary of WEB site statistics:

	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Hits
<b>2006</b>	596	961	21265

## 5.3 Our Research and Australia's National Research Priorities

WIDCORP's research program attempts to answer many of the questions posed by the collaborating organisations responsible for water resource management in the Wimmera Mallee region. It aims to inform the guiding principles for water resource management associated with the Wimmera Mallee pipeline project. Longer-term, the outcomes of the research program are expected to contribute to the sustainability of the communities and ecosystems of the Wimmera Mallee region and be a model for dryland communities elsewhere in Australia and globally.

The research will contribute to the following National Priority areas and priority goals.

### **Environmentally Sustainable Australia:**

- **Water – a critical resource:** The research program informs the governance principles of water resource management.
- **Transforming existing industries:** The research will explore sustainable opportunities which leverage the agricultural base of the Wimmera Mallee region.
- **Sustainable use of Australia's biodiversity:** The research will identify value and propose processes to secure riparian ecosystems in the region, and identify ecotourism and recreational activities based on these ecosystems.
- **Responding to climate change and variability:** This research will examine the consequences (constraints) of long-term, prolonged dry periods and the implications for water resource management over multi-year timeframes.

### **Promoting and Maintaining Good Health:**

- **Strengthening Australia's social and economic fabric:** The proposed research seeks to build knowledge to inform water resource management and improve the sustainability (in social and economic terms) of rural and regional dryland communities.

### **Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australian Industries:**

- **Promoting an innovation culture and economy:** The proposed research seeks to understand the factors that lead to the nurturing of entrepreneurship and the successful adoption of innovation in a rural and regional environment.

# 6. Appendices

## 6.1 Appendix one- Research program at end of 2006

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Initial Project Status</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community aspirations (Hindmarsh Shire Study) – Completed</li> <li>Lessons from the Northern Mallee and WARMPlan – Initial study completed</li> <li>State of Region desk top study – Completed</li> <li>Build structured knowledge base - Needs identified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparative studies of other channel system infrastructure projects</li> <li>Build structured knowledge base – web site knowledge base to be developed and managed</li> <li>Follow-up research Hindmarsh Study – Intensive livestock opportunities, Valuation of water across different communities</li> <li>Follow-up research Northern Mallee study –</li> </ul>			
<b>RESEARCH AREA</b>				
<i>Sustainable systems – Develop a whole of system approach – linking all water sources ground, surface and variable rainfall with innovation, social and public good, adaptation and regional advancement</i>				
<b>Research Themes</b>				
<b>1. Valuation of Water in its Uses -</b>				
<i>Social Approaches</i>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social drivers; Changing social values of water; Perceptions by different interest groups and communities of the costs and benefits of piped water <b>(Post-doctoral, PhD)</b></li> <li>- social implications of industry reconfiguration</li> </ul>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How water, as a feature of the physical and cultural landscape, shapes relationships within and between communities <b>(Post-doctoral; PhD)</b></li> </ul>			

<i>Ecological Approaches</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biodiversity and community values of ephemeral wetlands associated with existing channel system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decommissioning the Channels: The Future Wetlands of the Yarriambiack/Dunmunkle Creeks Floodplains (current <b>PhD</b> project)</li> <li>- Optimising biodiversity outcomes in a piped system (pending <b>Masters</b> project)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, manage and monitor ephemeral wetlands associated with the river systems (<b>Post-doctoral</b>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tie-in with community values and use (community &amp; cultural values, recreation, ecotourism) (pending PhD project in ecotourism)</li> <li>- Climate constraint scenarios</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<i>Economic Approaches</i>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and use of valuation methods based on experienced utility (<b>PhD</b>)</li> <li>• Understand and inform stakeholders on issues of water trading / pricing and allocations</li> </ul>		
<i>Information Technology Approaches</i>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operations research modelling and decision support tools (<b>PhD</b>)</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Diffusion of Innovation and Change –</b>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of innovation in Agribusiness and Primary Industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frameworks, models, policies and structures for successful take-up (<b>Post-doctoral; PhD</b>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Tie-in with community capital; attracting people to the region, employment migration opportunities</li> <li>o Tie-in with community base, aspirations, drivers and capacity for change</li> <li>o Adaptive capacity, realignment, industry adjustment and climate variability</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and social innovation (<b>PhD</b>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Includes the long-term impact of innovation and change associated with pipeline construction</li> <li>o Tie-in with community capital; attracting people to the region, employment opportunities</li> <li>o Tie-in with community base, aspirations, drivers and capacity for change</li> <li>o Behavioural change in changing supply and demand situations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

## 6.2 Appendix two- Project reports

<b>Project title</b>	<i>Decommissioning the channels: Social and ecological values of ephemeral floodplain wetlands</i>
<b>Project leader</b>	Dr S Florentine, Principle Supervisor
<b>Project staff PhD candidate</b>	Dawn McBride
<b>Project timeline</b>	November 2005 – October 2008
<b>Project objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand how socio-ecological values and water regimes influence the spatial and temporal integrity of ephemeral floodplain wetlands</li><li>• Determine the landscape, channel, ecological and social values of an ecotope</li><li>• Define an ecotope and develop an ecotope scale to measure and assess high, medium or low landscape, ecological or social values</li><li>• Conduct a predictive analysis of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project socio-ecosystem ecotope values of the study areas based on an integrated understanding of the present WMSDSS landscape.</li></ul>

### **Progress against agreed milestones:**

Confirmation of candidature on 22 February 2007. Milestones clearly identified and research on track.

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### **Successes and disappointments:**

N/A

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### **Envisaged outcomes:**

Timely completion of PhD.

Provide socio-ecological input to the management of wetlands associated with decommissioning of channels and dams.

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### **Level of interaction with partners/collaborators:**

Very high

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### **Technology transfer plans/achievements:**

Presentation at research advisory committee.

Presentation and paper for UB annual research conference.

Upcoming poster presentation for Oz Water 2007.

Project brief presented to the North Central Landcare Group.

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### **Graduate students, their supervisors, and a brief project synopses:**

PhD (Full Time).

Principle supervisor: Dr Singarayer Florentine.

Associate supervisors: Dr Pam McRae-Williams, Dr Patrick Gratz.

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### **Project budget, with approximate breakdown of cash expenditure and proportion on each task:**

Stipend and field expenses to the value of: \$20, 000 pa (WIDCORP).

Funded place provided by School of Science and Engineering.

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### **Reference panel activity (Research Advisory Committee):**

High

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### **List of publications:**

None to date

<b>Project title</b>	<b><i>Hindmarsh shire community attitudes and aspirations: Perceptions of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline</i></b>
<b>Project leader</b>	Centre for Regional Innovation and Competitiveness
<b>Project team</b>	Dr Steven McEachern, David Lynch, Dr Patrice Braun, Professor Julian Lowe, CRIC CATIA team, Dr Pam McRae-Williams
<b>Project timeline</b>	November 2005 – August 2006
<b>Project objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide a base line study prior to construction of the Wimmera Mallee pipeline and to examine expectations, perceived impacts and potential aspirations of residents relating to the Wimmera Mallee pipeline's development</li> <li>• Identify the major characteristics of the economy and social structure of the Hindmarsh and adjacent Shires</li> <li>• Identify community's needs and aspirations with regard to the economy, social fabric and environment within the region</li> <li>• Identify the gaps between the present characteristics and the community's needs and aspirations</li> <li>• Identify awareness, understanding and expectations of Hindmarsh residents associated with the Wimmera-Mallee pipeline</li> <li>• Identify which gaps between the current and aspired economic, social, or environmental status are relevant to the availability of an increased, reliable and high quality water supply</li> </ul>

**Progress against agreed milestones:**

- Designed and conducted telephone survey with Hindmarsh residents
- Analysis and write-up of the findings and final report

---

**Successes and disappointments:**

Successes:

Well developed survey that engaged partners.

Delivered outcomes that were well received.

Disappointments:

Lower than expected response rate.

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**Envisaged outcomes:**

Provided a baseline that will inform future research.

Delivered on aims of research.

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**Level of interaction with partners/collaborators:**

Very high

Several visits to Hindmarsh Shire Council CEO and Mayor to discuss distribution of survey, promotion and dissemination of results.

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**Knowledge transfer plans/achievements:**

An information sheet was posted on the widcorp.com website under the "news and media".

Full report and executive summary is accessible on the website.

Radio interviews with local ABC.

Presentation of results at WIDCORP research forum.

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**Graduate students, their supervisors, and a brief project synopses:**

N/A

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**Project budget**

\$43,850 - work completed within budget.

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**Reference panel activity (Research Advisory Committee):**

Very high – RAC provided input into this project at all major stages.

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**Publications / Reports:**

CRIC, & WIDCORP (2006) *Hindmarsh Shire Community Attitudes and Aspirations: Perceptions of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline, August 2006*. Report no. 2/06.

<b>Project title</b>	<b><i>Hindmarsh shire youth attitudes and aspirations survey</i></b>
<b>Project leader</b>	CRIC
<b>Project staff</b>	Dr Steven McEachern, David Lynch, Dr Megan Deutscher
<b>Project timeline</b>	June 2006 - October 2006
<b>Project objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To investigate the attitudes and aspirations of Hindmarsh Shire youth in relation to the perceived impacts of the pipeline and more generally for the region</li> <li>• This survey follows on from the Hindmarsh survey of residents aged over 18 to obtain a youth perspective</li> </ul>

**Progress against agreed milestones:**

- Designed and distributed a self-administered survey to local high schools to year 10, 11, and 12 students
- Analysis and write-up of the findings and final report

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**Successes and disappointments:**

Successes:

Good working relationship between WIDCORP research team, WIDCORP research advisory committee and CRIC to develop questionnaire and administer survey.

Identification of a number of themes regarding youth attitudes and aspirations.

Disappointments:

Very low response rate to survey ( N = 10).

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**Envisaged outcomes:**

Develop some preliminary insight into youth aspirations for the Hindmarsh Shire region and in relation to the pipeline.

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**Level of interaction with partners/collaborators:**

High

Visits to local secondary schools in the Hindmarsh shire to brief them on participation and administration of the survey.

Program partners were involved in initial development of research questions as members of the Research Advisory Panel.

Program partners were advised of the results of this research at a RAC and board meeting.

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**Knowledge transfer plans/achievements:**

Due to the inconclusive nature of this survey, the report remains an internal document.

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**Graduate students, their supervisors, and a brief project synopses:**

N/A

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**Project budget**

Included in Report no. CP1.

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**Reference panel activity (Research Advisory Committee):**

N/A

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**Publications and reports :**

CRIC & WIDCORP (2006) *WIDCORP Hindmarsh Shire Youth Attitudes and Aspirations Survey, October 2006.*

<b>Project title</b>	<b><i>WIDCORP Knowledge Base</i></b>
<b>Project leader</b>	Imogen Schwarz
<b>Project staff</b>	Imogen Schwarz, Paul O'Connor
<b>Project timeline</b>	April 2007 – ongoing
<b>Project objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build a structured knowledge base trial project</li> <li>• To provide an overview of relevant background information in order to build a structured knowledge base to capture the knowledge-needs of the various audiences of WIDCORP to improve and maximise information flows and linkages across this community of practice</li> <li>• To identify the knowledge needs of one of WIDCORP's three main audiences – the WIDCORP members (ie. program partner organisations and WIDCORP research team)</li> <li>• To develop three possible design options for the knowledge base, one is selected the 'trial project'</li> <li>• To identify recommendations in order to guide the development of the knowledge base</li> </ul>

**Progress against agreed milestones:**

- Knowledge base background paper and proposed project plan was complete in June 2006, as set out in the 2006 research program timelines
- A tender submission by CECC was made outlining deliverables and costs for the various options
- At the next board meeting, recommendations within the report were discussed and Option 3: Advance interactivity was selected by the board to use as a design for the 'trial project'
- The progress of the project was timely up until this point, however stalled towards the end of 2006 due to limited staff resources, issues about cost of project, and need for a second quote. The trial project, according to 2006-2010 research program timelines was proposed to be completed by end of 2006. The trial project is currently under development (February 2007) with UB web services

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**Successes and disappointments:**

This project is in developmental phases.

UB web services is expected to construct similar deliverables as outlined in Option 3 at a very competitive price, as this is an internal UB service for UB staff and departments.

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**Envisaged outcomes:**

To provide an electronic platform to collect and collate a vast amount of background resources, from both the local community, nationally and internationally, to contextualise the research program.

To improve the information flow between collaborative research team, our program partners, and other community stakeholders and members (our community of practice) through interactive features on the knowledge base.

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**Level of interaction with partners/collaborators**

WIDCORP program partner organisations were invited to participate in the project to convey their ideas on information which was of value to them from WIDCORP, from locally relevant sources, and from the affiliated water industry and other key sources. In total there were 11 participants.

The WIDCORP board (which includes program partner members) were briefed on the results of this initial consultation process and audit, and made an executive decision on which option to select.

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**Technology transfer plans/achievements:**

See *envisaged outcomes*

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**Project budget, with approximate breakdown of cash expenditure and proportion on each task:**

N/A

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**Reference panel activity (Research Advisory Committee): High**

**List of Publications:**

Schwarz, I. (2006), *WIDCORP Knowledge Base: Background paper and proposed project plan – DRAFT*. June 2006. Report no. 1/06, Version 1.

Centre for Electronic Commerce and Communications (2006), *WIDCORP Knowledge Base: Proposal for delivery of online services*, August 2006.

<b>Project title</b>	<b><i>The Northern Mallee pipeline: Exploring community perceptions of its impacts</i></b>
<b>Project leader</b>	Dr Megan Deutscher
<b>Project staff</b>	Dr Megan Deutscher, Dr Imogen Schwarz
<b>Project timeline</b>	April 2006 – November 2006
<b>Project objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explore the impact of the pipeline on the Northern Mallee community in order to understand how a change in water infrastructure impacts on the community and more specifically on farming and natural resource management practices</li> <li>• To investigate whether the major social and economic structure of the Northern Mallee region has changed due to the introduction of the pipeline</li> <li>• To understand the community perceptions of the economic, environmental and social impacts of the Northern Mallee pipeline on the community and farming</li> <li>• To provide a basis for further longitudinal research into the impacts of the Northern Mallee and Wimmera Mallee pipeline projects</li> </ul>

**Progress against agreed milestones:**

The project brief was to capture lessons learnt from the Northern Mallee and WARMPlan in relation to conversion from a channel to piped water system. The project aims were completed in the timelines proposed.

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**Successes and disappointments:**

Success: The project provides valuable baseline data on the perceived impact of the Northern Mallee Pipeline. The project collated data from a variety of sources and provides a valuable resource for further research. Disappointments: Small response rate for survey.

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**Envisaged outcomes:**

The project provides important, though preliminary, information for water managers and the community in relation to the benefits and disadvantages of decommissioning channels with replacement of pipelines for water delivery. In addition, this research will provide significant baseline data for further longitudinal research on the impacts of the Northern Mallee and Wimmera Mallee pipeline projects.

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**Level of interaction with partners/collaborators:** High.

Secondary data was sourced from GWMWater and some of the CMAs.

Program partners were able to comment on this project through WIDCORP board interaction and the research advisory committee. Progress of the projects was readily reported through significant phases of the research.

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**Technology transfer plans/achievements:**

Reports have been posted onto widcorp.com website for internal users and for public users under "news and media" title, "Research into pipeline project completed".

Project findings were presented at the WIDCORP Research Forum: *Water in Dryland*, November 2007, Grains Innovation Horsham.

Findings from this research will also be presented at the OzWater 07 Conference, March 2007.

A summary report of this project has been published on our website.

This study has been publicised through local radio interviews and media releases in local newspapers.

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**Reference panel activity (Research Advisory Committee):** High

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**List of Publications:**

WIDCORP (2006) *The Northern Mallee Pipeline Project: Exploring community perceptions of its impact: Full report*, November 2006. Report no. 3/06.

WIDCORP (2006) *The Northern Mallee Pipeline: Exploring community perceptions of its impacts: Summary report*, November 2006. Report no. 3/06.

McRae-Williams, P & Deutscher, M. (2007) *Is the pipeline our lifeline? Water reform and sustainability in drought-affected dryland communities of rural Victoria*. Presented at Oz Water 2007. Sydney 5-7 March 2007.

<b>Project title</b>	<b><i>Desk-base review: State of the Wimmera-Southern Mallee Drought Report 2007</i></b>
<b>Project leader</b>	Imogen Schwarz
<b>Project staff</b>	Dr Imogen Schwarz, Dr Pam McRae Williams, Paul O'Connor
<b>Project timeline</b>	October 2006 – November 2006
<b>Project objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prepare a desk-based review of current drought responses and initiatives, social, economic and water resource impacts of drought in the Wimmera-Southern Mallee. This report prepared for the State of the Wimmera-Southern Mallee Drought Report 2007</li> <li>• Collate available reports and other secondary data relevant to the regions economic and social situation between 2001 and the present</li> <li>• Discern 'hard data' from anecdotal accounts of changes across the region</li> <li>• Prioritise and review this data to corroborate its validity</li> <li>• Draw together those key pieces of information that best reflect the affect of the current drought situation</li> <li>• Document the types and extent of economic and social support available across the region</li> <li>• Identify any critical gaps in the available information used to inform decisions about drought management</li> </ul>

**Progress against agreed milestones:**

The review was finished within the specified timelines and compiled local, regional state and national resources to provide information on the current social, economic and water-resource impacts of the drought in the Wimmera-Southern Mallee region. The report included key findings from the best available evidence and reported recommendations that reflected the critical gaps in knowledge.

**Successes and disappointments:**

Successes: The review was completed within the timelines allocated.

This is possibly the first review that has been done within the region to draw together the social, economic, water-resources impacts of drought. There are possibilities to further this research agenda, with WIDCORP, as the lead agency to develop an integrated research program to compile qualitative and quantitative information on the impacts of climate variability on the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the regions through a co-ordinated multi-agency approach.

**Envisaged outcomes:**

To establish credibility of WIDCORP as a research unit with local regional agencies.

To engage in regional research in order to benefit the sustainability of the Wimmera-Mallee region.

To form basis in part of state government report on drought within the Wimmera-Mallee region.

**Level of interaction with partners/collaborators:**

Very High Communication with program partners, Regional Development Victoria, and executive during data collection and presentation of findings.

Attendance at State of the Region executive meetings to provide updates on desk-based review, present final report, and to provide advice/feedback.

**Technology transfer plans/achievements:**

The final report and summary was presented to RDV in mid February.

The final report was disseminated to members of the executive committee. The report was recognised as a valuable resource for the region.

**Project budget, with approximate breakdown of cash expenditure and proportion on each task:**

\$6000 desk based review (WDA)

\$3500 final report (WDA)

**Reference panel activity (Research Advisory Committee):** Moderate input

**List of Publications:**

WIDCORP (2006). *Desk-based review 20 November 2006.*

WIDCORP (2006). *Summary of Desk-based review 20 November 2006.* Prepared for the Wimmera-Southern Mallee Drought Report 2007. November 2006. Report no. 5/06.

## **Strategic Plan – 2007 -2010**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Collaborative research focusing on water and sustainable development in dryland regions is becoming increasingly important. In times of increased climatic variability where water is a critical resource, such research will contribute to water reform decision making and exchange of knowledge across regional, national and international boundaries.

**THE WATER IN DRYLANDS COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM (WIDCORP)** is a collaboration of peak regional and State Government organisations—Glenelg Hopkins, Mallee, North Central and Wimmera Catchment Management Authorities, Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, GWM Water, the University of Ballarat and Wimmera Uniting Care. WIDCORP will contribute to understanding the economic, environmental and social implications of changes in the regions water resources in terms of security of supply and improved water quality. It will build regional capacity and capability through alliances with other research organisations and agencies to deliver quality research outcomes for the Wimmera and Mallee communities. Ongoing investment in WIDCORP commits program partners to collaboratively work to identify and invest in high quality research that underpins, supports and promotes the economic prosperity, environmental sustainability and social wellbeing of the communities of the Wimmera Mallee region.

This Strategic Plan has been developed by WIDCORP partners as a statement of our shared purpose and direction. It commits WIDCORP to provide quality research to support the Wimmera Mallee regional community and other stakeholders in managing the change and maximise opportunities that will result from the supply of reliable quality water through the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project.

### **2. VISION**

For the Wimmera Mallee to be recognised regionally, nationally and internationally for quality ‘water in drylands’ research that supports and delivers beneficial environmental, economic and social outcomes to the benefit of the Wimmera Mallee regional community.

### **3. MISSION**

To advance understanding of the value of water and its uses, to identify emerging opportunities for Wimmera Mallee dryland communities experiencing climatic variability and major water infrastructure change, and to provide stakeholders with knowledge to foster the regions capacity to adapt to change in order to achieve economic and social growth and environmental sustainability.

#### 4. KEY OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

The Key Objectives of WIDCORP for the next four years to achieve its vision are:

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGY
<p><b>1. Advance and apply knowledge</b> of the value of water across all its uses to optimise economic, environmental, social and cultural outcomes for a sustainable Wimmera Mallee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Engage the wider community in researching the economic, environmental, social and cultural values of water and those factors that optimise opportunities created by new water infrastructure in the Wimmera Mallee.</li> <li>❖ Progress research that will provide a basis for valuing water across all its uses and optimise the adaptive capacity of the region and its communities as climatic variability and major water infrastructure change water availability.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Deliver quality research findings</b> to assist the Wimmera Mallee and other dryland rural regions to make considered decisions relating to major water infrastructure and water use in a changing environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Conduct quality research to inform communities, state, national and international agencies of the outcomes of investing in major water infrastructure as it relates to regional sustainability.</li> <li>❖ Provide high quality research outcomes that are innovative and relevant to stakeholders.</li> <li>❖ Align research programs with the research needs of the Wimmera Mallee region and with National priorities.</li> <li>❖ Deliver research outcomes through publications, presentations and hosting conferences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Build research capacity</b> in the Wimmera Mallee region through an innovative and responsive ‘water in dryland’ research program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Attract collaborative research partnerships and networks to the Wimmera Mallee to assist stakeholders to identify and maximise opportunities arising from the Wimmera Mallee pipeline project.</li> <li>❖ Build upon regional research strengths and capabilities by increasing knowledge of multi-disciplinary and collaborative research approaches.</li> <li>❖ Attract high quality regionally based higher degree researchers and foster national and international researcher exchange.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Attract research funding</b> sufficient to realise the objectives of WIDCORP.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Secure Governing party funding commitment for 2007/10.</li> <li>❖ Identify, target and secure appropriate funding for ongoing quality research.</li> <li>❖ Identify and attract new partners from government, industry and the private sector.</li> </ul>

## 5. GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCING

WIDCORP will achieve these objectives through:

- **Governing Board:** provides overall leadership, coordination and research direction and the implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- **Research Advisory Committee:** prioritises, monitors, and evaluates all WIDCORP research projects.
- **Research Director:** leads, develops and manages the research activities and profile of WIDCORP.
- **Program Development Manager:** leading role in the ongoing development of WIDCORP.
- **Research Fellows:** lead and conduct quality research.
- **Post graduate students:** conduct and produce quality research for WIDCORP in achieving their post graduate degrees.

## 6. PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT

WIDCORP will measure its **performance** by:

- Achieving recognition as a leading research program that delivers quality research outcomes to end users throughout the Wimmera Mallee community
- Undertaking research activities that are collaborative and involves the participation of end users
- Establishing strategic collaborative relationships between researchers and the community
- Attracting significant funding for the financial support of WIDCORP and related research projects
- Producing and disseminating relevant multi-disciplinary research related to the objectives and the activities of WIDCORP

WIDCORP will measure its **impact** through the successful uptake of research outcomes across the region by:

- Increasing the adaptive capacity of the region through identifying new opportunities for Wimmera Mallee communities
- Influencing decisions relating to major water infrastructure and the utilisation of water in a changing environment
- Increasing the capacity of the region in research and knowledge exchange
- Raising the profile of research at the University of Ballarat, Horsham Campus

## 7. REVIEW

This Strategic Plan sets out the overall objectives and strategy for WIDCORP over the next four years and will be reviewed annually. It is supported by separate Research and Operational Plans which will be responsive to our stakeholders and be reviewed annually.