

Comprehensive descriptions of the 2016 Northern Inland Innovation Award recipients:

Agriculture, Horticulture and Associated Services

Best Food Garden, Inverell [short blurb]

The BEST Food Garden has grown into a productive 2-hectare food bowl. Twenty partner organisations use it to provide a rewarding learning environment to disabled and long-term unemployed. The home-grown produce goes to over 100 low income elderly pensioners and Aboriginal Elders throughout Glen Innes, Inverell, Tingha and Moree.

GJ & MJ Manvell, of Tamworth

The Manvell's SSS BBQ Barns are able to offer extraordinary culinary specials, thanks to a unique paddock to plate innovation. Their local produce includes free range & pasture raised young Buffalo, boar goat, Saddleback & Berkshire Baby Pigs, Middle Eastern Dalmara Sheep, Herbs, pasture raised French Marans Chocolate coloured eggs, Draught Ginger Beer & Wines. From farm to restaurant, there's an innovative level of traceability, sustainability and distinction.

UWE's Currabubula Station

Breeding and producing premium Angus beef cattle, UWE's Currabubula Station has implemented tracking technologies that provide live-time feedback on the cattle's individual locations, weight gain from the date of tagging to slaughter. The data is uploaded to the cloud where it is easily accessible on any device including a phone app. The next step will cost-effectively deliver comprehensive data of individual animals over their lifetime, for buyers and end-consumers.

Graeme Rapp

Graeme Rapp, with his team at the Institute, are currently researching the optimisation of Indian Mustard crops to provide the building blocks of new industrial products, and grow alternative markets in North West NSW. Indian Mustard is a hardy, drought resistant species that also provides disease suppression in cereal crops.

Potential industrial products from Indian Mustard include fuels, lubricants, bio-plastics, pharmaceuticals, food products, and biological fertilizers. Graeme's research aims to establish new markets for a crop of high environmental, but relatively low market value. This potential growth in north-western NSW would have a flow on effect to other rotational species, like wheat and barley, due to Indian Mustard's biofumigation properties.

Best Food Garden, Inverell [long blurb]

When Connections Disability Services, now BEST Community Connections, approached BEST about the lack of practical work experience and community contribution opportunities for their intellectually disabled clients, the seeds of the BEST Food Garden innovation were sown. Clients were taught how to grow their own food and maintain their garden in a humble raised garden bed.

The BEST Food Garden has blossomed into a unique and inspiring community activity that is a productive 2-hectare food bowl. Another 19 partner organisations regularly use the

garden for therapeutic, training and social inclusion purposes. They assist with propagation, planting, and harvesting of vegetables – regardless of age or abilities, they grow as their garden does.

Produce, including fresh eggs, is distributed weekly by people with a disability, at no cost, to well over 100 low income elderly pensioners and Aboriginal Elders throughout Glen Innes, Inverell, Tingha and Moree.

The Best Food Garden is innovative in its' altruistic approach and multifaceted benefits, including genuine social inclusion and community engagement.

Since the BEST Food Garden's inception, participation in this rewarding activity has significantly grown to now incorporate four Shires and two Federal electorates.

The BEST Food Garden project is continuing to grow.

Manufacturing and Engineering

Weir Built, of Glen Innes

Long-established in steel manufacturing, the crane industry, motor vehicle body repair and earth moving equipment, Weir Built has engineered a revolutionary modular timber laminate bridge replacement option that is well under half the cost of a concrete bridge, yet has the same load bearing capacity. Designed for Glen Innes Severn Council, this innovation has far-reaching potential.

Wholegrain Milling Company, of Gunnedah [short blurb]

Wholegrain Milling Company of Gunnedah uses state-of-the-art stone mill and roller mill technologies. Vertically integrated, they farm, process, package and distribute. The ground-breaking innovation is their Certified Sustainable Food System. The traceable, chemical-free product appeals to conscientious consumers, without the costs and limitations of "Certified Organic" grain products.

Australian Recycled Plastics, of Narrabri

Nationally unique, Australian Recycled Plastics is a manufacturing operation that can process kerbside collected 442 plastics to produce PET and HDPE flake. Its' capacities are rare and innovative on a global level and it is proudly located just out of Narrabri. Employing 40 locals, it is a sustainable enterprise that is boosting the sustainability of the local economy and environment.

Wholegrain Milling Company, Gunnedah [long blurb]

The family owned Wholegrain Milling Company in Gunnedah uses state-of-the-art stone mill and roller mill technologies. Vertically integrated, they farm, process, package and distribute premium milled products. The ground-breaking innovation is their Certified Sustainable Food System. The traceable, chemical-free label appeals to conscientious consumers, without the costs and limitations of "Certified Organic" grain products.

Certified Sustainable is a fully audited and traceable food system that ensures all generated produce is tested chemical free. The Certified sustainable food system has been developed over seven years by Wholegrain Milling Company. It is unique and has the potential to create demand in the market. The system provides clear demonstration of plant health and chemical free status, beyond the standards of the 1.7 Billion dollar per year organic industry.

Grain that is grown, stored and milled with no chemical residue means a premium clean, green, natural product. The Certified sustainable food system satisfies consumers who make their health and well-being, as well as their environment's, a priority. Wholegrain Milling Company's Certified Sustainable sales have increased every month this year, doubling in six months. This quality regional Australian manufacturer employs over two dozen locals. After 30 years of hard work, Craig and Renee Neale are proud of what they have developed and the growth, nationally and internationally, that will likely grow from their Certified sustainable products.

Bethel Farm Mill

Specialising in dry-mix food primarily from pulses, Bethel Farm Mill, is the only company in Australia making vege-burger, cake, and biscuit products from bean flour. Also, their falafel spicy mix is the only one on the Australian market. They have spent the last 12 months developing healthy cakes and biscuit mixes. Thanks to the bean flour, they are also light, tasty, and an excellent substitute for gluten free diets. The use of pulses make all of their offerings extremely healthy, and a viable alternative for gluten free requirements. Most gluten substitutes are high on starch and low on fibre, however their pulse based foods are the opposite; making them a fantastic addition to almost any meal plan.

Health, Aged-care and Disability Services

Challenge Community Services, Tamworth

Challenge Community Services' Challenge Connexions program empowers people with a disability between the ages of 18 to 35. It's a modern alternative to traditional day programs for higher-functioning and more able bodied young adults with a disability. Participation is self-determined but supported by dedicated staff. The Connexions Community Centre and Café in Tamworth currently employs two participants as trainees while they complete their Certificate II in Hospitality. Activities include playing in a netball competition, driving lessons, group holidays and event excursions. Individual goals drive skill and personal development.

Youth InSearch

At Youth Insearch workshop camps throughout the region, up to 15 volunteering adults seek to empower around sixty 14 to 20 year-olds to deal with the issues that are adversely affecting their lives and address their negative behaviours. The innovation explores why they are using drugs or alcohol, being involved in anti-social behaviour, committing crimes and lacking the motivation to obtain employment or continue their education. Following the workshops, weekly support groups continue the process of positive change. The results have been inspiring.

Camp Quality [short blurb]

Camp quality takes the innovative approach that for optimum quality of life for kids with cancer, outside of clinical treatment, laughter is the best medicine. Local volunteers plan, organise and run creative fundraising initiatives to help cover the costs of getting seriously ill children to seriously fun camps. Camp Quality has now developed the "Offspring" program to assist children who have a parent with cancer, with a Kids Guide to Cancer App, Education Programs and Family Experiences.

Camp Quality Limited [long blurb]

Camp quality takes the innovative approach that for optimum quality of life for kids with cancer, outside of clinical treatment, laughter is the best medicine. Local volunteers plan, organise and run creative fundraising initiatives to help cover the costs of getting seriously ill children to not-so-seriously fun camps.

In keeping with the organisation-wide approach, Lyn Poulter and her group of Armidale Camp Quality volunteers know their efforts help kids in their local area to experience joy in the face of their traumatic battle with cancer.

Camp Quality is Australia's most trusted children's charity, yet it continues to innovate. Their research identified a lack of resources for children suffering indirectly from cancer. Camp Quality has now developed the national "Offspring" program to assist children who have a parent with cancer. This assistance includes a Kids Guide to Cancer App, Education Programs and Family Experiences. The Offspring Program furthers the reach of Camp Quality, providing much needed resources, support and respite for children of parents afflicted by cancer. This assists the whole family with their cancer battle.

The Camp Quality Puppet Program recently toured regional NSW schools with children affected by a cancer diagnosis in their family. Camps and Family experiences are held throughout the year in locations such as Armidale, Tamworth, Inverell and Glen Innes.

Rebloom Flower Recyclers

The founders of this non-profit organisation keep hearing ‘Why hasn’t anyone done this before?’

- and it’s for good reason! This meaningful community service accepts donations of flowers after an event or function, then re-packages and re-purposes them, for people in need. Flower donations are distributed around aged care facilities, hospitals and other organisations; creating an innovative use for flowers headed for the rubbish pile. Donors can select where their flowers are sent, or they can leave it up to the wonderful women at Rebloom Flower Recyclers. A simple innovation makes can make somebody’s day.

Professional and Government Services

Tamworth Regional Council [short blurb]

The Tamworth Community Playground is a social inclusion achievement. Funded through a council site sale, grants and business contributions, it is innovatively sustainable, comprehensive and fun for all ages.

Clever design has created a facility that is fun and much more.

Horsanity

Horsanity is a professional service that innovatively uses horses in workshops for personal and team development. The introduction of horses to the coaching of leadership and team skills is innovative, emotionally and mentally engaging and has been effective in the Northern Inland region.

Uralla Shire Council

Uralla Shire Council’s Main Street Access Project supported local businesses in improving their accessibility. A training program was developed, as was a Mobility Map and branded shop-front signage promoting access options. The Map is in hardcopy or can be accessed digitally via a Q-R code on Access Friendly Stickers adorning main street buildings.

Tamworth Regional Council [long blurb]

Tamworth Regional Council completed construction of the \$2.2 million Tamworth Regional Playground in 2015, providing an innovative facility for all ages.

It is separated into zones that suit toddlers, juniors and seniors. It features a unique to the Southern Hemisphere “skywalk”, three giant slides, a bike track, junior and senior fitness circuits, duel flying foxes, sandpit, rhythm wall, torchwood totems, spinner and climbing equipment, together with a range of swings. Distinctive gardens boast vegetables and natives. The playground serves as a comprehensive rest-stop, with an on-site café / restaurant that allows for playground supervision while enjoying a cuppa.

The Tamworth Community Playground is a social inclusion win for the community and is also the city’s newest drawcard. All aspects of the design are innovative, as were the collaborative partnerships and sustainable funding model that made the playground something council and community can be proud of – now and into the future.

Lighting, parking and waste monitoring use the latest technology, ensuring the playground is safe and accessible twenty four / seven.

This free community facility is in many ways, an innovative enhancement of the liveability and family appeal of Tamworth. Yet, for kids and their parents it is just good fun.

Regional Finance Solutions

This cutting edge financial services firm has created specialised software and systems; ensuring service and relationships are at the forefront of their business. Information is stored centrally, allowing lending specialists to consult with clients in their homes after hours. All the information is at their fingertips and, in most cases, decisions can be made in hours instead of weeks, reducing the anxiety of borrowers and lenders alike. As an added bonus, the firm employs mature staff with an average age of 50; who are learning that laptops aren't just for their grandchildren.

Research and Education

HealthWise New England North West

The HealthWISE New England North West "Sounds good to me" Program aims to improve education, which reduces poverty and improves health. It trains Early Childhood Educators and teachers to include listening, book awareness and phonological awareness activities in their school readiness programs. It includes training workshops, a resource pack with tools, links, Apps and resources needed to run the program in an early childhood centre or school. The program's development was grant funded but now fees ensure it is sustainable.

Macintyre High School, Inverell [short blurb]

Macintyre High School recognised that some students are not academically inclined and become disengaged but must reluctantly remain in school until they are 17. A flexible curriculum approach and programs that keep those students engaged with practical, rural career-orientated training have been successful.

Z-Net Uralla

Community volunteers are integral to the innovative Zero Net Energy Town Uralla (Z-NET Uralla) project. They are working to reduce energy use at the same rate that they aim to increase renewable power generation – 30 percent over five years. Resources have been developed and innovative approaches undertaken to assist home owners, renters and business owners, looking at practical areas like curtains and refrigeration.

Macintyre High School, Inverell [long blurb]

Macintyre High School has recognised that some students are not academically inclined and become disengaged but must reluctantly remain in school until they are 17. For those who want an agricultural career, a flexible curriculum approach has maintained interest and delivered relevant training and qualifications.

In touch with local and industry needs, additional short courses cover areas like safety and first-aid. Agriculture students attend shows all over Australia, exhibiting stud sheep and cattle and participating in individual judging and parading events.

In the Rural Operations subject, students receive a Certificate 1 in AgriFoods Operations in Years 9 and/or 10 and Primary Industries in both Year 11 and 12, resulting in a Certificate 2 in Agriculture, with Certificate 3 in Agriculture also possible. The students who successfully complete Rural Operations in year 9 can be targeted for early commencement in Primary

Industries in Year 10. This means that by the time they reach 17, they will have achieved this qualification and if they desire to leave school they will have at least one qualification.

Students are also offered the chance to do School based Traineeships and Apprenticeships in agriculture, in occupations like stock and station agents and farmhands. Part of this is the AgriBusiness Careers and Professions or AGCAP program, which includes a day per week paid employment and an optional pathway into higher education with TOCAL Agricultural College or the University of New England.

Macintyre High School's flexible curriculum has added a significant area of distinction for the school. Major accolades won by an AGCAP and a trainee student recently add to that.

Macintyre High School's agriculture students gain a considerable head-start in their chosen industry or tertiary education because their school's innovative approaches work to put them, their rural interests and career directions first.

The TAFE NSW, Transport and Logistics Industry Liaison Unit

The Unit has created a modern suite of training products to attract young people to the transport industry, and encourage growth for the sector. Their training products exceed current industry offerings, as well as creating new qualifications for students. Opportunities have been generated for both trainees and businesses thanks to streamlined processes for education and training. The Unit has enjoyed engagement from over 300 industry representatives nation-wide in support of its new approach and training products.

Retail, tourism and leisure

The Ashford Salami Festival

The Ashford Salami Festival delivered big positives to a small town affected by socio-economic negatives. The Festival celebrates the Italian culture that was strong in the area when the tobacco industry was. The event achieved brand awareness for the local organising company, 2 Rivers, together with event management and social media promotion experience. Over 2,000 people were entertained and their taste buds satisfied.

New England High Country Councils [short blurb]

The New England High Country Councils of Walcha, Uralla, Armidale Regional, Glen Innes Severn, Tenterfield and Inverell innovatively collaborated to produce the My Favourite Corner Motor Cycling Campaign. This tourism effort is innovative in its focus, targeting recreational and touring motor cyclists with specialised magazine features and videos.

Why Leave Town Promotions, Narrabri

This initiative from Narrabri continues to innovate. From a town-based EFTPOS gift card that encourage shoppers to buy local, the team has expanded the program to facilitate charity fundraising with *That Fundraising Card*. It can only be redeemed in those sponsoring businesses that have donated to the fundraiser, improving business benefits.

New England High Country Councils [long blurb]

Council officers work to increase visitor numbers to their communities but working together they can achieve more. The New England High Country Councils of Walcha, Uralla, Armidale Regional, Glen Innes Severn, Tenterfield and Inverell innovatively collaborated to produce the My Favourite Corner Motor Cycling Campaign. This tourism marketing effort is innovative in its focus, targeting recreational and touring motor cyclists with specialised magazine features and videos.

The campaign is breaking new ground in the New England North West by being multi-faceted, incorporating a series of high quality videos, TV advertising in to metropolitan areas (Sydney and Melbourne), digital marketing, print and social media.

The creation of a budget large enough to enable the campaign to cut through in a highly competitive market was also innovative and vital to effectiveness.

The Local Councils involved pooled resources to then work with a media partner of the size of Bauer Media, taking a bold commercial step in regional tourism. Bauer Media not only matched the LGA's dollars but also had ownership of the assets which allowed the marketing message to be delivered in a cost effective and highly targeted approach. Those assets included industry leading motor cycling publications, associated social media and on-line channels as well as relationships with industry stakeholders including bike manufacturers. BMW provided nine new bikes to be used in the making of the three niche videos.

The My Favourite Corner campaign proved to be an effective way to promote highlights from all New England High Country Council areas. It also showcased the entire region as a motorcycling destination, emphasising the mix of roads, scenery and cultural experiences.

Blackart Welding

Specialising in handcrafted unique metal artwork, Blackart Welding, makes people think outside the box for gifts and memorials. There are no computers in these designs, everything is created by hand with the scars to prove it. From garden screens to metal firepits, wall art through to property signs and beyond, this innovative artwork not only makes people smile but can serve a purpose.