SOcio-economIc analYsis

about ISF

The Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) is a research and consulting organisation at the University of Technology, Sydney. We work with industry, government, non-government organisations and the community to help our clients create sustainable futures.

Our excellent and fast-growing reputation across Australia and internationally is for conducting innovative, solution-focused and transdisciplinary research and consultancy projects. The key to our approach is integration across the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainability. We develop and apply a range of practical, tailored assessment tools and methods, informed by our ongoing engagement with decision-makers, stakeholders and the wider community.

We work in a number of different research areas using a variety of approaches. This capability statement outlines our expertise in socio-economic assessment and analysis. Capability statements for the other areas we work in are available from our web site.

what we offer

ISF staff have expertise in economic analysis, social research, and socio-economic assessment across a range of policy and sustainability areas, including:

- Integrated resource planning and best practice asset and options costing
- Water cycle management and water resources policy
- Climate change and energy policy
- Waste management, materials use and consumption
- Planning for the built environment
- Natural resources and ecosystem management

ISF team members bring extensive, applied understanding of the engineering, ecological, regulatory, policy and social dimensions underlying socio-economic assessments. Our approach to socio-economic assessment and analysis is unique in that we integrate knowledge across a wide range of disciplines to customise analytical tools and techniques to specific contexts and client objectives.

We help clients make sustainable investment and policy decisions by analysing and comparing the outcomes and impacts of projects, programmes and policies. Our assessments consider society-wide and life-cycle sustainability impacts, market and non-market costs and benefits, multiple stakeholder perspectives, and distributional and social equity issues.

We apply techniques of cost-effectiveness analysis, cost-benefit analysis and financial evaluation to options assessment. The ISF team has applied valuation techniques, such as contingent valuation and deliberative valuation, to measure a wide range of impacts and changes, including ecosystem services, climate change impacts, and other production and consumption externalities.

ISF’s approach reflects the premise that comprehensive stakeholder engagement is vital to ensuring the best outcomes for clients, stakeholders and the wider community. By providing insight into stakeholder values and drivers, our socio-economic research helps clients identify and leverage opportunities to develop the best strategies, policies and technologies.

The ISF team has expertise in social research methods and participatory processes, including interviewing, survey design, focus groups, citizens’ juries, participatory decision-making and deliberative valuation. We use these methods to supplement conventional dollar-based frameworks.
RECENT SUCCESSES

Some of our current and recent project highlights are listed here. Details of other projects can be found on our website.

**Value-based contaminated site remediation** – CRC for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment.
This project will investigate opportunities for contaminated site remediation to generate economic and sustainability benefits for communities and countries involved. ISF will work with governments, industry and community in four sites across the Asia-Pacific region.

ISF is consulting with industry, government and other stakeholders to conduct a cost-benefit analysis.

**Cost-effectiveness of the Water Efficiency Labelling & Standards (WELS) Scheme** – Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.
Compared WELS to other urban water options by modelling and valuing impacts including water savings, energy and greenhouse impacts, administration costs and compliance costs.

Developed practical advice for decision-makers on the best principles and tools for ensuring cost-effective, sustainable urban water outcomes, by bringing together emerging theory and practice from economics, risk management, and systems thinking.

Demonstrated methods to value urban water externalities, including a contingent valuation survey of residents’ willingness to pay for river health, deliberative valuation and multi-criteria analysis through a citizen’s jury approach.

**Independent Review of Container Deposit Legislation in NSW** – NSW Environment Minister.
Analysed the environmental, economic and social costs and benefits of establishing a NSW deposit and refund system for used containers.

**Lochiel Park Development** – SA Land Management Corporation.
Developed indicator framework to demonstrate the value of the residential development to various stakeholders. Analysed the costs and benefits of sustainability initiatives including stormwater recycling, water efficiency, energy efficiency, and 7-star Accurate building design.

**Pricing Impacts on Rural Communities** – Public Interest Advocacy Centre.
Examined the impact of NSW water pricing guidelines on rural communities. Involved extensive interviews and surveys with key stakeholders in local government and the community welfare sector.

**Redevelopment of Carlton United Brewery site** – Frasers Property.
Assessed the feasibility, costs and benefits of water, energy and waste management options for improving the sustainability at this site.

Analysed the cost-effectiveness of restrictions in meeting supply-demand water balance during drought across major Australian metropolitan centres.

**Urban Water Catchments as Assets** – CRC for Water Quality and Treatment.
This project will develop a framework for evaluating control measures for urban source waters, measure catchment values across Australian case study sites, and inform investment in catchment management.

**Water demand after drought** – Barwon Water.
Projected future water demand after an extended period of drought restrictions, considering changes in behaviour and technologies, and the impact of new pricing tariff structures and levels.

**UTS Abatement Cost Curve** – University of Technology, Sydney.
Developed a greenhouse gas abatement cost curve for the University of Technology, Sydney. The cost curve was used to identify the most cost-effective measures for achieving a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
Stuart White
As director of the Institute, Professor Stuart White has specialist expertise in least-cost planning for utilities, and in innovative approaches to community engagement in the valuation of market and non-market goods and services. His research in socio-economic analysis aims to improve decision-making for public policy outcomes in resource use and infrastructure, including energy, waste, water and transport. Stuart has led many projects involving the identification and analysis of externalities, including greenhouse gas emissions, impact on other parts of the water cycle, river health, biodiversity, and groundwater saline intrusion.

Roel Plant
Dr Roel Plant is a Research Director with expertise in ecological economics, environmental valuation, and bio-physical modelling (land use change, nutrient cycling in agro-ecosystems, carbon sequestration in soils). Roel has applied input/output and Ecosystem Services concepts to estimate the value of water use for irrigation in the Goulburn-Broken Catchment. His expertise also includes the identification and valuation of catchment externalities associated with urban water supply.

Joanne Chong
Joanne Chong is an economist with expertise in applying economic analysis to a wide range of sustainability, environmental management and policy issues. Jo brings extensive experience in regulatory, policy and institutional analysis and stakeholder consultation, from previous economist roles with the Australian Government and IUCN, the World Conservation Union. Jo’s recent projects at ISF include analysing the costs and benefits of a wide range of market and sustainability impacts of urban water and drought management policies, water pricing, catchment management approaches and residential housing developments.

Emma Partridge
Emma Partridge is a social researcher whose work has included various forms of community consultation, engagement and liaison, and negotiation with key stakeholders for the purpose of policy development and implementation. Emma has practical experience in a wide range of consultative methodologies, including surveys, focus groups, workshops and in-depth interviews. Her work has included analysis of the key drivers of consumer behaviour and responses to water prices.

Jade Herriman
Jade Herriman is a social researcher with experience in change management, policy review, cost-benefit analysis and participatory processes. She has particular interest in organisational and social aspects of sustainability. Jade has worked on projects involving a range of social research methods and on participatory process design and deliberative democracy.

Cynthia Mitchell
Professor Cynthia Mitchell is a transdisciplinary researcher who combines her expertise and training in quantitative and qualitative methods to estimate and assess material flows and their implications. The outcome is collaboratively developed advice for action for the water and development industries in Australia and the distributed water sector internationally. Cynthia led the Costing for Sustainable Urban Water Outcomes project, which is now being adapted for use in the developing world through an AusAID funded project in Vietnam.

Simon Fane
Dr Simon Fane is a Research Director with expertise in the economic analysis of sustainable water and wastewater systems as part of total water cycle management. Simon contributed to Costing for Sustainable Outcomes in Urban Water Systems and led an investigation into the feasibility of re-use in Leichhardt council.

Chris Riedy
Dr Chris Riedy is a Research Director with particular expertise in energy policy, climate change response, water policy and the social dimensions of sustainability. He has written or presented on diverse issues, including sustainability science, energy and transport futures, public participation, social justice and the ethics of climate change response. Chris uses ecological economics and deliberative approaches in his socio-economic assessment work. Relevant projects include research on the impact of water pricing guidelines on rural communities and cost-benefit analysis of energy supply options for urban precinct-scale developments.
BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH ISF

Track record:
We have been conducting project-based research for Australian and international clients for a decade and have an excellent reputation for innovative solution-focused work.

Applying current thinking and practice:
Our researchers are not only up to date with best practice and current thinking - they contribute to it. Their research is published regularly in academic journals as well as industry and scientific publications and the popular media.

Practical and diverse experience:
Our researchers come from varied backgrounds, including: engineering, architecture, management, economics, science, social sciences, international studies and political studies. Most have worked in both government and commercial environments, so know how to deliver independent and feasible solutions to suit the needs of a diverse range of clients. We are small enough to offer our clients personalised service and large enough to offer a diversity of research skills.

Collaborative approach:
We seek to create change towards a sustainable future by building capacity in organisations and individuals, and in the community more broadly. This means that we actively aim to pass on our knowledge and skills to our clients through close collaboration.

WAYS WE CAN HELP

Consulting and research services:
We can provide the research you need to move towards sustainable futures. We provide consulting services under both negotiated and tendered contracts.

Professional advice:
You may need assistance with preliminary work before embarking on a larger project or an external review of an existing program. Our professional advice is available either for an hourly rate or on a package basis.

Partnerships:
Whilst we have many ongoing partnerships across a range of technical fields and can coordinate a specialist team to meet your requirements, our researchers are also available to join new or existing partnerships as needed.

Guest speakers:
We are experienced in communicating complex issues in an accessible and engaging way. Our researchers are often invited to speak at conferences, forums, workshops and seminars. We are also frequently called upon by print, radio and television journalists for expert opinion.

PUBLICATIONS
We are committed to sharing the results of our work in the interests of a more sustainable future for all. Many of our reports, discussion papers, journal articles and conference papers can be downloaded from our website.

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