

Information evolved over 55 years

The HVRF was established 55 years ago, in 1956, in response to community calls for reliable and independent information. Its impressive repository of physical, economic, demographic and social data provides a regional information source that is unique to the Hunter. No other Australian region, and few others in the world, enjoys the depth of knowledge about its physical and economic development as the Hunter, thanks to the efforts of the HVRF. Its success is largely due to the Foundation's ability to continually evolve its research program to meet the information needs of the Hunter Region.

HVRF has been guided in its efforts to determine emerging information needs for the Region by the many committed volunteers who have served as its Directors, and adherence to the principle that it not undertake research work being done by other agencies.

The Foundation's first research problem was to answer the urgent plea from the Hunter community to find a scientific solution to mitigate against the devastation caused by flooding, following the 1955 Maitland floods. The floods, which rank with the Newcastle earthquake as one of the worst natural disasters to strike eastern Australia in the 20th century, claimed 25 lives and resulted in the widespread destruction of property, with an estimated damage bill of 10-15 million. The *Sydney Morning Herald* highlighted the disagreement among experts at the time, commenting that the question of what could be done to check the Hunter's periodic floods "has been the cause of more violent arguments, has led to more official inquiries and has brought forth more unfulfilled plans than any question ever asked in Australia".

HVRF's founding Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the late Professor Cyril Renwick, was an energetic economist whose vision and influence won support for the HVRF. Prof. Renwick, who passed away last year at the age of 90, steered the Foundation for the first 30 years, when it succeeded in surveying and understanding the physical characteristics of the Hunter River Valley and the Port of Newcastle, and its population and economy.

Under its second, and current, CEO, Dr Wej Paradise AM, who has been with the foundation since 1983, the HVRF has expanded and diversified its research program and revolutionised the way it delivers its findings to the community and regional stakeholders.

The HVRF and its expert researchers have helped to provide understanding and certainty in difficult times in the Hunter.

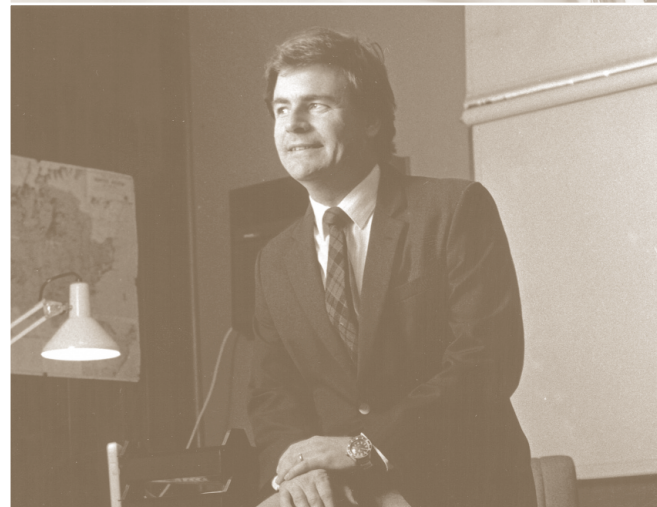
HVRF research has added to the resilience of the Hunter Region over its five and a half decade existence. It has not only provided businesses with a thorough understanding of their markets and the impact of proposed investment in the region, but has helped generations of Hunter government and community leaders to make important decisions based on reliable evidence that is unavailable through any other source.

Top: (L-R) Allan Pattison, Leo Butler, Lester Saddington MLC, Dr J.N. Gregory (Australian Atomic Energy Commission) and Prof. Cyril Renwick scoping for a silt-tracing research project on Newcastle Harbour in 1957

Centre: Young PhD graduate Dr Wej Paradise modernised the HVRF from the mid-1980s

Bottom: A HVRF researcher measures river flow in the 1950s

celebrating
55 years
1956 to 2011



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