

# Going all the Way

A passion for the profession turns Aussie's goal into a reality

BY JOHN STURGEON, SR/WA, MRICS, FAPI



I first heard of IRWA in 2008 while staying with friends in Alberta, Canada. A right of way agent came to visit my friend to discuss acquiring some of their ranch land for an electricity transmission project. As a seasoned acquisition professional from Australia, naturally I was very interested in the approach and techniques used by North American project teams. What impressed me most was the agent's level of professionalism. His methodology showed a high level of sophistication, and I was amazed at how quickly the deal was done. When I asked what the SR/WA meant on his business card, he explained that he was a member of IRWA and touched on some of the educational opportunities the Association offers.

Upon my return to Australia, I did some research on IRWA and was pleased to learn that the next Annual Conference was being held in Calgary the following year. Returning to Canada to attend my first conference, I felt like a kid in a candy store! I never realized that there were so many dedicated industry professionals who shared my passion for the profession. I met some wonderful and inspiring people and learned that what very few of us do here in Australia is actually big business in North America. In June 2014, I traveled to Hartford, Connecticut for the Annual Conference, along with fellow Sturgeon Consulting Group Directors, my wife Kylie Sturgeon, Patrick Leahy and Murray Sharpe to show them first-hand what I

had discovered. The conference really demonstrated the value of IRWA to us both as individuals and as a corporation.

Getting credentialed became my immediate priority. I was keen to get started and decided to take time off work to concentrate on taking courses through IRWA University. After applying for my Right of Way Agent Certification candidacy and completing my first online course, I was hooked! I found myself studying all hours of the night and day, even on the family holiday to New Zealand. I decided that if I were going to be credentialed, I would go all the way and work toward the SR/WA Designation. I found the quality of the online learning materials to be first rate, a real credit to those behind its development. Following countless late nights, 16 online units and 216 unit credits later, I completed the requirements. Then came the SR/WA Capstone Exam. With 250 questions over a five-hour period, now that was intense.

Today, I am honored to be the first Aussie to have achieved IRWA's most senior designation. I see IRWA as providing me with the foundation and support — both academically and professionally — to grow as an individual, as well as a business. I believe it is essential that I not only “talk the talk,” but that I “walk the walk” and see these credentialing opportunities as the first step in establishing a consolidated IRWA presence in Australia. 🌟



*John is Principal of Sturgeon Consulting Group in Queensland Australia. As a Fellow Member, Australian Property Institute, he has over 20 years experience and has acquired more than 3,000 properties in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Asia.*