

Virginia Brunton

State	NSW
Organisation/Company	MRA Consulting Group
Position/Role	Director Organics
Membership Type	National Associate Member
Nominator	Mark Darwin
Nominator Organisation	JR Richards
Nominator Position	GM - Infrastructure

Do you have experience in any of the following areas?

☒ Financial Acumen

☒ Governance

☒ Risk Appetite & Management

☒ My experience lies in other key areas

Finance - Please provide details of your financial experience (max 100 words)

I bring a strong, practical understanding of financial analysis, budgeting, and strategic decision-making. My experience spans interpreting complex data, assessing risk, and guiding investment or operational choices with clarity and confidence. I've supported Councils and Businesses through project cycles, developed cost structures, and for MRA have supported long-term financial sustainability through disciplined forecasting and budget management. I'm comfortable translating numbers into insights that shape strategy, improve performance, and support executive-level decisions. Whether evaluating opportunities, strengthening financial positions, or improving reporting systems, my approach is analytical, structured, and evidence-based. My financial experience has consistently delivered profit and measurable value.

Risk Management - Please provide details of your risk management experience (max 100 words)

I have extensive experience identifying, analysing, and mitigating implementation risks across strategic, operational, financial, and compliance domains. I have developed risk frameworks that are structured and evidence-driven, using expertise and judgement to assess likelihood, consequence, and mitigation. I've developed risk registers primarily for Councils to managing risk in implementation, development, governance, procurement, reporting systems and planning. I'm skilled at translating complex risks into management actions ensuring issues are understood early and managed proactively.

Governance - Please provide details of your governance experience (max 100 words)

I have deep, hands-on experience in governance, shaping systems that strengthen accountability, transparency, and strategy. Within MRA, and for clients, I've worked across policy development, risk management, and compliance, ensuring decisions align with organisational objectives and regulatory expectations. My approach emphasises structured processes, evidence-based judgement, and well-defined roles that support effective team and executive functioning. I'm skilled at interpreting complex issues, guiding stakeholders through options, and embedding practices that improve performance and integrity.

What other skills and qualifications(refer to skills matrix) will you bring to the Board of AORA?
(max 200 words)

I have been closely involved in AORA for over 20 years, member and chair of the NSW Committee for 5 years and bring over 30 years experience in agriculture, organics and circular economy markets. I have strong expertise and understanding of the organics processing industry nationally, including the growth potential and the challenges. I have strong business development experience growing the Organics group within MRA, holding the senior leadership role for over 10 years. I have a strong understanding and appreciation of the regulatory frameworks across Australia that govern recycled organics and am skilled at interpreting the impact of these on production and use of composts. I have limited Board experience but strong project management skills. I hold a Bachelor of Science (Environmental Biology) and Masters of Science - Sustainable Agriculture. I have written books, articles, reports supporting the use of compost across a wide range of sectors.

Describe your experience in working with member organisations and how you would help raise the profile of AORA (max 200 words)

I have been an AORA member for over 15 years, NSW committee member for 5 or so years and Chair for 3 years, giving me a deep understanding of how member-based bodies operate (particularly AORA), what they value, and how they make decisions. I understand and experience the challenges of volunteer organisation through my leadership role in the SES, deploying volunteers and being deployed myself in response to a flood or storm emergency.

I would raise AORA's profile by bringing clear, credible, evidence based leadership to national conversations about organics, compost quality, FOGO, and circular economy reform. I would strengthen AORA's advocacy by contributing high quality analysis, shaping authoritative guidance materials, and elevating AORA's voice in government submissions, media commentary, and sector forums. Through an industry growth focused strategy, I would help position AORA as the national authority for Australia's organics industry and the leading advocate for compost use as a meaningful climate action.

Why do you want to become an AORA Director? (max 200 words)

I want to become an AORA Director to help strengthen the national voice of Australia's organics industry and support its transition into a mature, high-performing sector. I'm motivated by the opportunity to contribute strategic insight, and practical industry knowledge to an organisation that plays a critical role in shaping policy, standards, and market development. AORA sits at the intersection of environmental crisis, circular-economy growth, and agricultural innovation, and I want to help elevate its influence, deepen member engagement, and ensure the industry is positioned for long-term success. My goal is to support AORA in leading with credibility, evidence, and ambition.

What are three key points about you that you would like members to consider when electing Directors (max 100 words)

1. Deep Sector Expertise Across Organics, FOGO, and Compost Quality

I bring practical, evidence-based insight from years of working with councils, processors and regulators. My understanding of contamination, facility operations, and market dynamics strengthens AORA's ability to lead nationally.

2. Passion to see the industry grow

I believe that the recycled organics industry has a significant role to play in climate action and that with the right strategy the market for compost and other recycled organics products is unlimited.

3.Proven ability to engage and create strategic direction

My strong track record of working collaboratively across the industry, building trust, aligning interests, and translating technical issues into clear, influential narratives will assist in raising AORA's profile and strengthening advocacy.



Virginia Brunton

Improved organics recycling through research and communication

**Principal Consultant –
Director Organics & Sustainability**

 Virginia Brunton
 mraconsulting.com.au

Qualifications

- Masters of Sustainable Agriculture
- Bachelor of Applied Science (Environmental Biology)
- Certificate IV Training and Assessment (TAE)
- Graduate Diploma in Vocational Education and Training

Areas of Experience

- NSW AORA Committee Chair
- Organics technology and strategies
- FOGO Implementation and feasibility
- Network between agriculture and recycled organics industry
- Project Management
- Training and assessment
- Policy development
- Organics Processing Auditing and compliance

Industry Memberships

- WMRR
- EIANZ
- AORA – NSW Chair

Volunteer Experience

- NSW SES

Professional Summary

Virginia is a nationally recognised leader in organics recovery, compost use, and sustainable agriculture, with more than three decades of experience across environmental education, organics processing, market development, and policy. She has played a central role in shaping FOGO expansion, organics infrastructure planning, contamination reduction strategies, and compost market growth across Australia.

As NSW Chair of AORA, Virginia has deep sector knowledge, strong member engagement experience, and a commitment to strengthening the industry's national voice. Her work spans councils, processors, regulators, agricultural industries, and commercial generators, giving her a unique whole-of-sector perspective. She is known for evidence-based analysis, clear communication, and strategic leadership that supports industry growth, compliance, and credibility.

Key Strengths

Governance & Strategy: Experienced in policy development, risk management, compliance frameworks, and strategic planning for organics infrastructure and service rollout.

Industry Advocacy: Demonstrated communications in developing clear, influential narratives that support national advocacy, standards development, and government engagement.

Member Engagement: Extensive experience working with AORA members, councils, processors, agricultural industries, and commercial generators, building trust and aligning diverse stakeholder interests.

Compliance & Risk Expertise: Strong background in environmental risk assessment, facility compliance auditing, WHS risk, and regulatory alignment across Australian.

Market & Industry Insight: Deep understanding of compost markets, feedstock strategies, organics processing technologies, infrastructure feasibility and industry growth potential and challenges.

Education & Behaviour Change: Proven ability to design and deliver large-scale community engagement programs, training, and resources that improve organics recovery outcomes.

Career History

Director, Organics & Sustainability – MRA Consulting (2023–present) Leading national organics strategy, infrastructure planning, compliance assessments, and strategic projects for councils, industry, and government.

Principal Environmental Consultant – MRA Consulting (2015–2023) Delivered major FOGO feasibility studies, organics processing assessments, contamination reduction programs, and compost market development initiatives.

Professional Officer – Soil, NSW Department of Primary Industries (2009–2015) Advanced compost use in agriculture, developed farmer resources, and led soil health research.

Senior Environmental Education Officer, NSW EPA (2003–2009) Designed statewide behaviour-change programs.

Environmental Agriculture Lecturer – Sydney University & NSW TAFE (1988–2002) Delivered vocational and tertiary education in environmental agriculture and sustainability.

What I Bring to the AORA Board

- A whole-of-sector perspective spanning agriculture, councils, processors, regulators, and commercial generators.
 - Proven leadership with AORA, MRA and as a volunteer in the SES.
 - Proven expertise in organics strategy, compliance, market development, and education.
 - Strong governance capability and disciplined, evidence-based decision-making.
 - Deep commitment to advancing organics recycling, compost quality, and industry credibility.
 - A collaborative, member-focused approach that strengthens engagement and builds industry unity.
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Selected Projects Demonstrating AORA-Relevant Expertise

Market Development & Compost Use

- **DCCEEW – Compost in Agriculture Resource Development** Developed national resources to improve understanding of compost benefits for soil health and productivity.
- **Author – *Using Compost in Agriculture: A Farmer's Guide*** Widely used resource supporting
- **Various NSW EPA – Organics Market Development Projects**– Professional Development for Rural Advisors, Compost for Carbon, Organics on Farm, Commercial Benefits of Compost, Freshcare Compliance, Industry sector Compost Specifications

Policy Development and Advocacy

- **NSW EPA – FOGO Legislation Review** – Investigated and reviewed the regulations and legislation used internationally to mandate food waste collection in domestic and commercial settings.
- **NSW EPA – Food Donation Legislation Review** – Investigated and reviewed the regulations and legislation used internationally to direct commercial food waste generators to donate surplus food.
- **NSW AORA** – contribution to various submission to the NSW EPA and State Government in issues related to FOGO mandate, contamination, biosolids, asbestos and plastics.

FOGO Strategy, Contamination & Behaviour Change

- **AORA – Contamination supply chain management**- Co-designed resources to support communication to businesses to reduce contamination in commercial food waste.
- **Ballina Council, on behalf of a group of Northern Rivers Councils**- assess the feasibility of jointly procuring a regional organics processing facility.
- **Over 30 Councils and Groups of Councils – Organics Strategy Development** Collection system design, stakeholder engagement, rollout planning, and education strategies.

Commercial & Institutional Organics

- **Commercial Clients – Organics Collection Systems** Strategies for supermarkets, manufacturers, and large food waste generators.
- **UNSW – Whole-of-Campus Food Diversion Program** Designed recycling, avoidance, and food collection systems across five campuses.