



Furntech-AFRDI Staff

Ian Burton B E (Mech) Hons, B A (Politics), NZCE
General Manager

Ian graduated from the University of Auckland with an honours degree in Mechanical Engineering and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Studies.

He spent a number of years working as a design / project engineer for a structural timber jointing company and had several machine designs patented during this period. More recently, he has worked in design and project management roles for the sheet metal manufacturing and primary timber processing industries. Ian commenced work at Furntech-AFRDI in December 2002 as Technical Manager, becoming the Institute's GM in July 2019.

Bob Panitzki B Sc, Dip App Sci, MRACI
Business Development Manager

Bob graduated from the University of Tasmania with a BSc in chemistry. After commencing work in the automotive industry he completed a diploma in secondary metallurgy. He spent 32 years in the automotive components industry working in the areas of quality assurance and technical management.

Bob was in operations and general management before becoming the Institute's CEO in October 2003. After more than 15 years in that position, he moved to his present role of BDM in July 2019. Bob is currently Chair of Standards Australia Committee CS-088 Furniture – Domestic and Commercial, and is a member of Standards Australia Council. Since 2007 Bob has been a Tasmanian Member's Representative for National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA).

Australasian Furnishing Research and Development Institute

An independent, not-for-profit technical organisation serving buyers and sellers of furniture in
Australia and New Zealand - PO Box 2042 Launceston Tasmania 7250,
Ph 03 6326 6155 Email admin@furntech.org.au

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Dr Lee Bowkett PhD, B App Sc (Hons)
Team Leader (Sustainability & Standards)

Lee graduated with a doctorate from the University of Tasmania in December 2012.

Since starting work at AFRDI in August 1999 Lee has become experienced with the majority of Australian furniture standards and a wide range of International furniture standards. Lee was Team Leader of child safety product testing from 2005 to 2011 and is currently Team Leader of sustainability product assessments.

Lee is a NATA signatory for all standards covered by AFRDI's scope of accreditation and is a certified Green Star Associate of the GBCA. In June 2014, his role was expanded to include standards development in conjunction with AFRDI's Technical Manager.

John Court BSc (Hons)
Team Leader

John graduated with an honours degree in physics from the University of NSW in 1989. He then worked on electromagnetic radiation research at the Defence Science and Technology Organisation before moving to the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Eye Research and Technology. At the CRC, he was responsible for investigating the mechanical and material properties of polymers being developed for the contact lens industry.

John has also worked as a maths and science teacher, as well as researching the flow of ice sheets at the University of Tasmania. He joined Furntech-AFRDI as a testing officer in May 2011, becoming the Team Leader for height adjustable chairs in March 2021.

Colin Witt Adv Assoc Dip Eng
Team Leader

Colin spent 33 years in the powder metallurgy / automotive component manufacturing industry and is trade qualified in Fitting and Machining. Following completion of his trade certificate, Colin also acquired an advanced associate diploma in Mechanical Engineering. He has experience in CAD design and production control systems, and has worked extensively in areas of APQP including FMEA and quality systems. Colin joined Furntech-AFRDI in September 2014.

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John Brock ***Testing Officer***

John has spent more than 25 years in the furniture industry, offering products to the Tasmanian manufacturing and upholstery sectors. During this time he has developed a broad range of skills in foam products, leather, fabrics and components. John took an innovative approach, introducing a number of new products into the Tasmanian furniture manufacturing and upholstery trade.

Previously he worked in the weighing machine industry for 13 years as a service technician, covering aspects ranging from laboratory scales to industrial weighbridges and batch weighers specialising in electronic applications. John joined the Institute in May 2010.

Jeremy Jackson ***Testing Officer***

Jeremy has a background in mechanics, construction, diving, furniture making, management and supervision. He also has experience in pneumatics, hydraulics, inspection, plant set-up / maintenance and design. Qualifications include Certificate III in Furniture Making, Certificate II in Carpentry, Certificate IV in Business Management and Certificate IV Offshore Diving Supervisor. Jeremy joined the Institute in June 2015.

Jai Larkman BNEWS ***Testing Officer (Sustainability) and Internal Quality Auditor***

Jai completed his degree in Natural Environment and Wilderness Studies (BNEWS) at the University of Tasmania in 2006. During and post-study, he worked in the field of Geographic Information Systems and Spatial Data Management. Jai has completed various contract positions for the Launceston City Council, Tamar Natural Resource Management and SFM Environmental Solutions.

Prior to study Jai worked as a technical support officer for Internet Service Provider 'TasAccess'. Jai joined Furntech-AFRDI's Sustainability team as a testing officer in February 2011 and is a certified Green Star Associate of the GBCA.

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Guy Manley BDes (IndDes) ***Projects/Testing Officer***

Guy holds a Bachelor of Industrial Design and is a CAD specialist who has worked in the motion picture, television, manufacturing and education industries. He has also consulted in the field of virtual reality with organisations such as C.S.I.R.O, Powerhouse Museum Sydney and the A.N.U. Dept. of Computer Science.

Currently he spends any spare time as a designer / maker of fine furniture, working with Tasmania's beautiful and unique timbers. Guy joined the Institute in April 2010.

Dr Paul Semmens PhD, B Comp (Hons), B AppComp ***Administration and IT Manager***

Paul graduated with a doctorate from the University of Tasmania's School of Computing in December 2007.

Paul commenced work at Furntech-AFRDI in December 2005. His role initially covered all the IT aspects of the Institute including development and maintenance of Furntech's Web site, computer systems, servers and network architecture.

In May 2007 his role was expanded to include coordinating the AFRDI 146 leather program, and then again in May 2009 (until September 2012) to include the AFRDI 150 sustainability program.

Tim Parsell ***Testing Officer/Administration Support***

Tim joined the Institute in April 2021. Prior to this he had an extensive working background at the University of Tasmania spanning over 27 years. Tim worked in both teams and individually in UTas areas such as Finance, Cashier, Payroll, Student Administration and Library Services. His roles covered a wide and varied list of duties across client services, administration, general clerical and database updates.

Tim has been able to bring these experiences and skills to apply to his role at Furntech-AFRDI as an Administration Officer. Outside of work Tim enjoys playing a variety of sports.

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Sharon Jones
Administration Officer

Sharon has extensive experience in Accounts and administrative roles across many sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, health care and the timber industry.

Outside of administration roles, Sharon worked alongside her husband for three years in a remote aboriginal community school in the Kimberley region of WA. She worked as a personal assistant to a special needs student. The experience gave her practical insight into the areas of education, people with special needs, and the realities of remote aboriginal culture.

As a result of the Kimberley experience, Sharon completed her first year of a Bachelor of Education degree whilst living there. She remains passionate about education, aboriginal issues and special needs people. Sharon joined the Institute in May 2020.