

The WaterAid Australia story

WaterAid Australia was established by a number of Australian water industry and international aid organisations in 2003 modelled on the UK based WaterAid charity.

The origins of WaterAid Australia trace the development of new collaboration between the water industry in Australia and the international aid sector, helped along by support from WaterAid in the UK. The result is an organisation which reflects an innovative partnership dedicated to mobilising support from a broad cross section of the Australian community for the provision of a basic water and sanitation services to communities in need around the world.

The rapid growth of WaterAid Australia is unprecedented in the establishment of aid organisations in Australia. Begun as an idea in 2002, developed as a proposal in 2003, established in 2004 and grown to a fully operational organisation with a turnover of more than \$1million per annum by 2005-2006. This growth reflects the goodwill and commitment of many people and the development of strong partnership foundations between the water industry and the international aid sector, and between WaterAid Australia and WaterAid in the UK.

An idea that emerged from a public awareness campaign “Water Matters”

In May 2002 the aid and development agency TEAR Australia commenced a two-year public policy and education initiative called *Water Matters*. This campaign was focussed on activities around the 2003 UN International Year for Freshwater. A key driver was the renewed emphasis internationally to halve global poverty represented in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs included a specific goal to halve the proportion of people without access to clean water by 2015. Thanks to the efforts of WaterAid UK, the Water Matters campaign and other international aid NGOs the MDGs were revised in 2002 to also include the goal of providing essential sanitation services – vital to improving the health of communities living in poverty.

Building on the model of WaterAid in the UK, the Australian Water Matters Campaign Coordinator, Grant Hill, identified the opportunity for the international aid sector to develop a new partnership with Australian water utilities and service providers. **Commencing in July 2002** Grant worked with Jane Furniss and David Allen to establish a Steering Committee (See note 1 for list of members) to pursue the formation of a new Australian aid agency specialising in water and sanitation. The Australian Water Association (AWA) gave support to this effort through their annual conference and AWA CEO Chris Davis joined the Steering Committee. A proposal for a new WaterAid styled body and its membership and governance was developed by the Steering Committee. The proposal outlined the vision of a new partnership between long established aid agencies in Australia and the Australian water industry. A partnership that would enable water and sanitation projects to be supported by a broad range of Australians through the reach of the water utilities and the support of the water business sector.

In April 2003 the Steering Committee held a series of consultative workshops with the water industry to gauge industry support. The first of these was held with AWA support at the AWA Ozwater Conference in Perth. A Melbourne workshop was co-hosted by the Victorian Water Industry Association. There was also a presentation in Sydney to a smaller group of industry representatives. A separate workshop was held in Melbourne for members of Water Matters and representatives of aid agencies. The workshop presenters included Grant Hill and the WaterAid UK Deputy Director, Stephen Turner. The response was very encouraging and industry representatives were excited about a new partnership that would build on the experience of the established aid agencies and bring the extensive knowledge and networks of the water industry to focus on providing basic water and sanitation services internationally. The Steering Committee invited expressions of interest from industry representatives to serve on the first Board and appointed the members of the inaugural board of WaterAid Australia.

On 4th July 2003 the first meeting of the governing board of WaterAid Australia was held in Sydney (see Note 2 for a list of members). The governing board included seven representatives from the water industry, three from the international aid sector, and one member invited for their specialist expertise. Taking up from the work of the Steering Committee, and led by Tony Kelly after his election as Chairman in September 2003, the new Board set out an ambitious work plan to establish the new organisation. Grant Hill was also appointed the interim CEO in September 2003 to coordinate and implement this work. The constitution of the new entity was finalized and adopted in 2003 supported by the pro-bono professional services of Paul Cargill and Jane Furniss at Mallesons. An agreement was negotiated with WaterAid UK that provided valuable support and partnership in the establishment phase including a contribution of seed funds over the first three years. Yarra Valley Water provided office space and support services, partnership arrangements were negotiated with Oxfam Australia for initial project funding management pending the approval of charity and tax deductible status from the Australian Government and the establishment of WaterAid Australia operational capacity.

In early 2004, following a visit to the UK by representatives of the WaterAid Australia board, a final partnership agreement was signed to formalise the ongoing relationship between WaterAid UK and WaterAid Australia. In July 2004 Chris Wootton was appointed CEO of WaterAid Australia to lead the next stage of WaterAid Australia's establishment and growth.

In March 2005 WaterAid Australia was officially launched at Parliament House by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Alexander Downer, MP.

From an idea floated in 2002, grown through 2003, firmly established in 2004, a new vibrant specialist agency was born.

Important dates in the establishment and development of WaterAid Australia

May 2002	TEAR Australia launches “Water Matters Australia” a public awareness and policy campaign. The campaign, coordinated by Grant Hill, prompts the idea of a new partnership to establish a specialist water and sanitation agency in Australia.
July 2002	The idea for a WaterAid Australia begins to take shape with support from the Australian Water Association.
October 2002	A Steering Committee is established to develop a proposal for a WaterAid styled entity in Australia.
April 2003	Workshops and consultations commenced with water industry and international aid agencies on the proposal.
June 2003	Discussions commenced with WaterAid in UK on the proposal to establish WaterAid Australia and cooperation arrangements.
4th July 2003	First meeting of WaterAid Australia Governing Board
September 2003	Tony Kelly appointed as Chairman of Board. Grant Hill appointed as interim CEO.
January 2004	WaterAid Australia office established within premises of Yarra Valley Water and administration transferred from TEAR Australia.
May 2004	Final agreement with WaterAid UK on the name of WaterAid Australia and ongoing relationship. Agreement with Oxfam Australia to manage funds for projects pending application for tax deductible status.
July 2004	Chris Wootton appointed as CEO. Commencement of process to invite the water industry to join WaterAid Australia and contribute to projects.
November 2004	WaterAid Australia sends first funds to water project in Papua New Guinea.
March 2005	Formal launch of <i>WaterAid Australia</i> by the Minister for Foreign Affairs at Parliament House on World Water Day.
December 2005	WaterAid Australia reaches 64 member organisations and income of over \$1million for the year. 6 projects supported in 5 countries reaching 20,676 people.
21 June 2006	WaterAid Australia gains Tax Deductible status

NOTE 1:

Members of the Steering Committee to establish a WaterAid in Australia

Grant Hill (Chair)

Coordinator – Water Matters Australia,

Chris Davis

CEO of the Australian Water Association,

Katrina Hermann

Senior Policy Officer, Victorian Water Industry Association,

Jane Furniss

Corporate Lawyer, Mallesons Stephen Jacques,

David Allan

Consultant on Sustainable Development,

Sara Parrott

Senior Marketing Manager, Ernst & Young,

Warren Kalinko

Lawyer and consultant,

Brett Mathieson

Regulation & Strategy Manager, Yarra Valley Water.

NOTE 2:

Members of the inaugural 2004 Governing Board of WaterAid Australia

Tony Kelly (Chair)

Managing Director, Yarra Valley Water,

John Ringham (Deputy Chair)

Head of Water Services, SA Water

Chris Davis (Treasurer)

CEO of Australian Water Association,

Grant Hill (Interim CEO)

TEAR Australia and Water Matters

Paul Cargill

Partner, Mallesons Stephen Jaques,

Graham Tupper

Executive Director, Australian Council for International Development,

Llew Vale

Chairman, South Gippsland Water,

David Murdoch

Chairman, Gosford-Wyong Water

Dr John Langford

CEO, Water Services Association Australia

Russell Cooper

Managing Director, Suez Environment