CRC for Water Sensitive Cities Stakeholder annual report FY2021

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Date of publication: December 2021

An appropriate citation for this document is:


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9 years for the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities

**IMPACT**
- 60+ cities benchmarked using the Water Sensitive Cities Index
- Research benefits independently valued at $600M+
- Exemplar cities such as Perth actively transitioning to being water sensitive

**RESEARCH**
- 36 major research projects
- 300+ researchers across 20 disciplines
- 11 flagship tools and products

**COLLABORATION**
- 125 partner organisations
- Projects in 18 countries
- 5 states with established WSC communities of practice

**ADOPTION**
- 5 national conferences
- ~500 seminars, workshops and training sessions
- 50 students (PhD, Masters and other) employed by industry

**ENGAGEMENT**
- 1,800+ IP assets including:
  - 48 case studies
  - 29 synthesis projects
  - 4 integrated case studies
  - 95 guidelines
  - 313 journal articles
  - 3 Think Tank papers

**GOVERNANCE**
- $36M Commonwealth government CRC grant
- $11M+ earned and reinvested

Launched the WSC Knowledge Platform

Water Sensitive Cities Australia up and running

www.watersensitivecities.org.au
A final message from Cheryl Batagol

Board Chair

I agreed to become the Chair of the proposed CRC for Water Sensitive Cities in 2011: I knew the bid addressed important issues for our cities, but I didn’t really expect it to succeed. But there we were on 1 July 2012, when it formally commenced. We started with a vision of sustainable, resilient, productive and liveable water sensitive cities. After 9 years, we’ve answered the big questions. How does water contribute to liveability? How do we plan at different scales to produce resilient water systems? Importantly, how do we collaborate to achieve success? How do we engage the communities within which we work? Because without them, we can’t deliver.

And we have delivered the big projects. The research is done. Adoption has been delivered.

Importantly, the CRCWSC helped create an authorising environment for scaling up and mainstreaming CRCWSC insights and approaches, by influencing government policies (at the national, state and local levels), enabling water utility and urban planning strategies, and enhancing industry capacity and collaboration.

Once again, I’d like to acknowledge all those involved over the past 9 years: my fellow board members, the Executive team, partners, researchers and operations staff. Thank you for your passion and commitment to creating sustainable, resilient, productive and liveable water sensitive cities.

Cheryl Batagol
Chairman

A final message from Ben Furmage

CEO

Over 9 years, the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities formed a strong, national partnership between practitioners and researchers that unlocked new ways to manage the urban water cycle: new water technologies, new tools for measuring water performance, new ways of identifying and quantifying the benefits and costs of water sensitive approaches, and new processes for identifying water sensitive visions and deciding on actions to turn vision into reality.

Together, we demonstrated these new techniques work in practice in a range of settings, both nationally and internationally, through works on-ground and in policy. Then we used the lessons from these proof of concept applications to create, revise and refine a suite of tools, processes and guidelines that are now being deployed nationally and internationally.

The success of the CRCWSC — the research, the tools, the new skills, the impact, the legacy — reflects the collective efforts of many people:
- the Commonwealth Government
- the Board, led by Cheryl Batagol (Chair) and Professor Rob Skinner (Deputy Chair)
- founding CEO, Professor Tony Wong and the small group that led the bid for a CRC focused on water in cities
- industry partners from state government, water utilities, councils, consulting organisations and not-for-profit organisations
- Essential Participants, and the Essential Participants’ Reference Group chaired by John Savell (then Department of Communities)
- Executive team members, both past and present
- program and project leaders in Tranche 1 and Tranche 2
- Regional Advisory Panel members and Regional Managers
- researchers and PhD students
- CRCWSC staff.

This sustained collaboration across different technical disciplines, organisations and locations has seen the CRCWSC deliver on its aspirations. It has been a privilege to be part of and offers a great foundation for a better urban water future.

Ben Furmage
CEO
A final message from Tony Wong

Founding CEO

As we conclude the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities, I want to sincerely thank all of our partners for their enthusiastic participation over this past 9 years.

Our bold journey started some 10 years ago, when 8 people came together to develop the bid for a new Cooperative Research Centre. We had great ambition and energy to secure funding for the CRCWSC and I especially want to acknowledge this great team: Barry Ball, Professor Rebekah Brown, Professor Ana Deletic, Professor Anas Ghadouani, Professor Jurg Keller, Professor Richard Weller and Professor Zhiguo Yuan AM.

We set ourselves the high-level ambition of delivering research excellence, building industry capacity in the use of new research insights and tools, influencing policy reform and creating the enabling environment for innovations in water sensitive practices, and influencing works-on-ground. After 9 years, we have evidence nationally and internationally of our success in all of our four aspirations.

I’d like to also acknowledge the Executive team, the Regional Advisory Panel members, Regional Managers and the many quiet achievers in the operations team. It was indeed a ‘well-oiled’ cohesive machine that upheld our value statement of being BIG: (i) Bold in our ambitions and endeavours; (ii) working with Integrity; and (iii) having a spirit of Generosity in all of our interactions.

My final and most heartfelt gratitude goes to Cheryl Batagol and her Board. I couldn’t have been more fortunate than having Cheryl to guide the CRCWSC more broadly, and me more specifically. She and the Board helped us navigate through the early phases of establishing trusted partnerships, while maintaining focus on the timely and successful project delivery.

It has been a most rewarding personal journey for me, and I hope it has been the same for all of you in your own way. We have achieved much together and have grown through our cooperation and collaboration in this, our joint mission. I congratulate you all for your vision, tenacity and commitment to a water sensitive future for our cities and planet Earth.

Professor Tony Wong
Founding CEO
We leave a lasting **IMPACT** after 9 years

Current infrastructure, community engagement and resource management approaches are leaving our cities vulnerable to the combined challenges of population growth, urban intensification, climate change as well as government, business and household budget constraints. Recognising that the solutions of the past may not be sufficient to sustain our economy and quality of life into the future, the CRCWSC demonstrated water sensitive solutions can deliver significant cost savings, multiple benefits and economic value.

There is evidence of our impact after 9 years both in Australia and overseas:

- **60+ cities have been benchmarked using the WSC Index**, taking their first step on their water sensitive cities journey. As well as establishing a baseline for their transition, these cities benefit from city-to-city learning. The Index has been applied in locations throughout Australia, as well as in countries such as South Africa, New Zealand, Fiji, Myanmar, China, Indonesia and Pakistan.

- **Water sensitive principles are now being reflected in policies at all levels of government.** For example, the Waterwise Perth Action Plan commits state government agencies to deliver actions that progress Perth’s vision of being a leading waterwise city (see the case study below). Similarly, water sensitive principles are reflected in the Victorian Government’s *Water for Victoria* policy, and subsequent regulatory and planning amendments to the Victorian Planning Provisions. Government agencies (e.g. NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) are integrating water sensitive practices and tools into guidelines for water sector planning and project evaluation. Water sensitive principles are also reflected in major urban redevelopments such as Fishermans Bend in Melbourne.

- **We are a trusted advisor, supporting significant policy reform and high level strategy development.** For example, we worked on an Urban Water Guide for the Australian Water Partnership, describing a 5-step process for implementing integrated urban water management in developing countries. Similarly, we worked with development agencies, country governments and other experts in China, Thailand and Vietnam, to develop a process for identifying, valuing, selecting and then funding nature-based solutions to manage urban flooding and create climate resilient cities.

Activities such as these provide valuable lessons for implementing water sensitive practice on the ground. They help refine and demonstrate the applicability of water sensitive principles to a wide variety of contexts. They build local confidence and capacity and identify future research, policy and practice needs to upscale application.

An independent assessment of the CRCWSC’s current and potential impact found the CRCWSC and its partner organisations will deliver around **$600 million in economic, social and environmental value** for Australian communities over 15 years to 2027.

The CRCWSC provided thinking and insight beyond engineering infrastructure to the value of water for our communities and the environment in a changing world.

Andrew Chapman, Aurecon
Perth: creating a water sensitive city

A key challenge for Perth has been creating and maintaining liveable communities in the face of rising temperatures, less rainfall and population growth. Throughout its 9-year term, Perth stakeholders worked with the CRCWSC on a range of projects that not only developed and applied new research, but also helped Perth on its transition to becoming a water sensitive city:

- Developing a vision and critical strategies to move towards a water sensitive city, documented in Shaping Perth as a Water Sensitive City. The Water Sensitive Transition Network (WSTN) forms.
- Being the first city to trial the WSC Index Tool benchmarking process
- Trialling the Transition Dynamics Framework (TDF) to identify priority strategies necessary to achieve a water sensitive city. The way forward is re-drafted as a Vision and Transition Strategy for a Water Sensitive Greater Perth. WSTN prepares the Implementation Plan 2019–2021 comprising 31 actions and indicators of success.
- Being the first city to re-benchmark using the WSC Index. The WSTN is using insights from this reassessment to update its Implementation Plan.
- Applying the CRCWSC’s research synthesis process to collaboratively develop practical ideas that address industry challenges. Examples include Ideas for Ocean Reef Marina, Ideas for Queens Park Regional Open Space and Ideas for the Subiaco Strategic Resource Precinct.
- Examining water users’ willingness to pay for recycled water from the Subiaco Strategic Resource Precinct
- Identifying ways to better integrate urban and water planning for a new development at Brabham
- Developing water sensitive housing options for an infill development at Knutsford that both support more people and are better for the environment
- Understanding how to better manage urban development in areas affected by high groundwater

We delivered an ambitious RESEARCH agenda

Over 9 years, we completed 36 major projects, involving more than 300 researchers spread across 20 disciplines. Our Tranche 1 research (2012–2015) covered topics ranging from a community’s water use to regulations that better manage stormwater, and groundbreaking new circular economy technologies for recovering nutrients from wastewater. This research also delivered tangible successes in policy change, and on-ground demonstrations of innovative technologies.

Tranche 2 research (2016–2021) responded to industry-identified needs for guidance on how to bring the new knowledge together into useable tools and practices. It incorporated 5 national, multidisciplinary Integrated Research Projects:

1. Water sensitive city transition strategies and implementation plans for 6 cities – Adelaide, Bendigo, Gold Coast, Perth, Sydney and Townsville
2. A comprehensive economic evaluation framework for supporting business case development
3. A framework for integrating urban and water planning across different scales of development
4. Water sensitive solutions for infill developments
5. Guidelines and solutions for managing development in high groundwater areas.

Australian and international awards recognise our excellence in research

- The CRC Association 2017 Excellence in Innovation Award recognised our impact in supporting the City of Kunshan (China) to become more water sensitive.
- CRCWSC project Resource recovery from wastewater won the 2018 Australian Water Association’s National Research Innovation Award, which recognises novel approaches to water resources management.
- Professor Tony Wong was presented the International Water Association’s prestigious 2018 Global Water Award for his influential work in water sensitive urban design.
- CRCWSC PhD candidate Jennifer Middleton (now conferred) won the Australian Water Association’s 2019 Student Water Prize for Western Australia.

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Our research produced 11 flagship tools and products developed and tested in collaboration with practitioners.

**WSC Index Benchmarking Tool**
This tool allows users to benchmark their cities based on performance in a range of urban water indicators that characterise a water sensitive city.

**Site-scale Urban WaterMass Balance Assessment Tool**
This tool allows users to benchmark their cities based on performance in a range of urban water indicators that characterise a water sensitive city.

**Guiding Integrated Urban and Water Planning Framework**
This conceptual framework and accompanying guidelines support more integrated planning of urban centres and water resources.

**Transition Dynamics Framework**
Practitioners can use this framework and database to understand a city’s position in its water sensitive city transition, identify priority strategies for advancing the transition and monitor progress.

**INFFEWS Value Tool**
This is a comprehensive database of dollar values for non-market benefits generated by water sensitive systems and practices.

**INFFEWS Benefit Cost Analysis Tool**
This tool assesses water management investments and supports balanced and systematic decision making and provides evidence for use in business cases.

**Scenario Tool**
This planning support tool enables users to perform an integrated assessment of evolving urban infrastructure, water networks and population demographics over time.

**RESTORE Tool**
This decision support tool supports the repair of urban waterways.

**Infill Performance Evaluation Framework**
This conceptual framework demonstrates how key WSC elements can be applied at finer urban scales.

**Stormwater quality database**
This database summarises the water quality of urban run-off events across Australia.

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What’s really exciting about the TARGET [module of the Scenario Tool] is it can be used at the street scale, the suburb scale, right up to the city scale. And it’s really fast. You don’t need a supercomputer to run it. Dr Stephanie Jacobs, Bureau of Meteorology
We created the **COLLABORATION** platform needed for transformative change

Cities are complex systems and city scale change requires collaboration across different stakeholders each with their own priorities, strengths and weaknesses but also with a shared stake in more liveable, sustainable, resilient and prosperous communities. Working with **125 public, private and research institutions**, the CRCWSC has proven capacity to bring together different city shaping organisations finding solutions to complex urban water problems.

After 9 years, we have established communities of practice in 5 states across Australia. Our Regional Advisory Panels (RAPs) comprised CRCWSC industry participants and other regional stakeholders. As well as ensuring research excellence, our RAP committees helped research Participants and industry Participants to connect and actively engage. They also drove water sensitive city initiatives in their regions, including local research activities, on-ground works that demonstrate water sensitive practice, and capacity building activities.

**Our legacy is a community of practice of professionals from across different sectors, with enhanced knowledge and tools to deliver a vision of a more liveable urban environment.**

*Helen Scott, City of Kingston*
We also undertook projects in **18 countries** over the past 3 years, strengthening partnerships with Australian (e.g. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Water Partnership, AusAid), and international (e.g. World Bank, Asian Development Bank) development agencies and governments in individual countries. In addition to generating over $6.6 million in international commercial revenue this experience has created profile and commercial opportunities for Australian partners and the water sensitive cities brand.

**Countries where we are influencing urban water practice**
Our **ADOPTION** activities established the foundations for seeing water sensitive practice, in every city, every day

Scaling up and mainstreaming water sensitive practice requires on-ground pilots, communities of practice and industry expertise. Our adoption efforts focused on translating research outputs into ready-to-use tools, capacity building activities and providing education opportunities to support the next generation of water sensitive practitioners.

Over the past 9 years:

- We hosted 5 national conferences, showcasing new technologies and concepts, practical applications and lessons. The 5th Water Sensitive Cities Conference – held in March 2021 – combined online and in-person events in 5 states focused on how to apply water sensitive practice in every city every day. It also celebrated the achievements of the CRCWSC. The conference attracted: 1,630 unique online viewers over the 3 main conference days; 185 people to in-person events; and 155 participants to Day 4 training sessions.

- We delivered almost 500 capacity building workshops, seminars and training sessions on water sensitive principles, practices, tools and resources during the CRCWSC’s term. In FY2021, we held training events and site visits to share research findings: 1,770 practitioners and end users were exposed to CRCWSC research outputs via 50 seminars, workshops, site tours and other events.

- We trained 3 cohorts of WSC Index facilitators in Australia, Canada, Chile, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States who can apply the tool to benchmark water sensitive performance.

- We supported a total of 50 PhD students to complete their studies. Three students completed their PhDs during FY2021. Another 8 students are still completing their studies. We also supported 9 masters students and 9 honours students. Overall, during the life of the CRCWSC, 50 students (PhD, masters and ‘other’ student types) have found employment with industry.

Our legacy is that ‘water sensitive cities’ terminology and practice is now mainstream in the Australian water sector.

Lindsey Brown, GHD
Our **ENGAGEMENT** activities catered to a range of stakeholders

Over 9 years, we created over 1,800+ assets to engage with a wide range of users: researchers, policy makers, water businesses, local government officials and consultants.

- **48 case studies of best practice** – This body of evidence supports and encourages the adoption of research outcomes by showcasing specific examples in different contexts. These case studies capture and communicate the lessons from the early adoption of research knowledge in real-life projects.

- **29 research synthesis reports** – We worked directly with end users to combine the latest research with local expertise to collaboratively develop practical ideas that address industry challenges.

- **4 integrated case studies** – These case studies – Townsville (Qld), Norman Creek (Qld), Salisbury (SA) and Knutsford (WA) – demonstrated an integrated application of CRCWSC tools and how they can be used from vision to implementation of WSC solutions. They built capacity of local partners to use and apply CRCWSC tools. They also provide insights into the value proposition for water sensitive approaches.

- **95 guidelines** – These resources provide information and guidance to help practitioners plan their approach, influence opinion and facilitate progress towards sustainable and liveability communities

- **3 Think Tank papers** – These papers broker ideas, stimulate policy debate, influence practice and offer creative yet practical solutions that can accelerate the transition to being water sensitive.

- **313 journal articles** – These peer-reviewed resources present the evidence about new concepts and technologies.

- **86 videos** – These resources (available on our YouTube site) outline key concepts (such as what is a water sensitive city), introduce tools (e.g. WSC Index and Scenarios tools), showcase works on-ground (e.g. tours of sites across Australia and internationally) and record events such as conferences.

For many years, our fortnightly newsletter – waterSENSE – kept 4,000+ subscribers around the world abreast of our activities and achievements, supported by an active presence on LinkedIn and Twitter.

The CRCWSC’s term formally ended on 30 June 2021, but the WSC Knowledge Platform ensures ongoing access to CRCWSC outputs through a single, easy to navigate website. It gives practitioners an integrated approach to envisioning, designing and delivering their water sensitive city.
Strong **GOVERNANCE** ensured we finished our 9-year term in a strong position

The CRCWSC was governed by a board of directors and managed by an Executive team.

FY2021 was a challenging but successful final year for the CRCWSC. The COVID-19 pandemic again impacted almost every aspect of the CRCWSC’s local and international activities. Commercial income was almost 40% below plan and many university and industry partners were focused on immediate operational imperatives, while Commonwealth funding was completed in FY1920. At the same time, effective industry engagement was essential to ensure research completion and industry adoption.

Through innovative engagement and delivery approaches and careful financial management overseen by the Board, the CRCWSC completed its 9-year term in a strong financial position:

- **$11 million of commercial income earned**, generating value for local and international partners
- a relatively modest **surplus of $209,000**, which the Board and Essential Participants’ Reference Group both approved to use to launch Water Sensitive Cities Australia and to maintain and develop CRCWSC intellectual property.

### Our Board

- Cheryl Batagol, Chairman
- Professor Rob Skinner, Deputy Chairman
- Nicholas Apostolidis
- Terri Benson
- Peter Betson
- Professor Simon Biggs
- Greg Claydon
- Paul Grimes
- Kerry Stubbs
- Greg Cash

### Our Executive team

- Ben Furmage, Chief Executive Officer
- Professor Tony Wong, Chair of Water Sensitive Cities Institute ThinkTank
- Associate Professor Briony Rogers, Chief Research Officer
- Jamie Ewert, National Engagement Executive
Water Sensitive Cities Australia is up and running

Significant insights have been gained into the social, institutional and economic enablers needed to develop and rapidly scale water sensitive solutions. Water Sensitive Cities Australia will build on these achievements by upscaling their implementation and extending them to other key city shaping sectors. It will continue to support mainstreaming water sensitive practices and further develop CRCWSC intellectual property.

Water Sensitive Cities Australia was established at Monash University’s Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI) to continue the mission of the CRCWSC. As part of MSDI, WSCA will help cities and towns apply the latest science to local priorities, drawing on MSDI’s diverse disciplinary and infrastructural capabilities. It complements MSDI’s other programs that guide system transformations to create more liveable, sustainable, resilient and productive cities.

During its establishment phase, Water Sensitive Cities Australia is focusing on activities including:

- using the knowledge and intellectual property generated from the CRCWSC in defining and influencing water sensitive practices in Australia and internationally
- ensuring continued access to, and ongoing development of, CRCWSC tools
- growing the CRCWSC’s national and international reputation as a thought leader and trusted partner
- building on the achievements of the CRCWSC, further strengthening interdisciplinary collaborative research
- leveraging its existing networks to enhance interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration.

Monash University inherited all CRCWSC intellectual property, while ensuring all CRCWSC Participants retain ‘non-exclusive royalty-free worldwide perpetual licence to use, reproduce, modify and adapt’ this intellectual property. The organisation has welcomed foundation partners in Victoria and Western Australia: Monash University (Vic), Melbourne Water (Vic), South East Water (Vic), the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Vic), the Department of Water and Environment Regulation (WA), Water Corporation (WA), the Department of Communities (WA) and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (WA). Acting as an interim Advisory Board, these partners are actively shaping our early mainstreaming activities.
Thank you to our Participants

Essential Participants

• Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board
• Advanced Choice Economics
• Alluvium Consulting
• Biofilta Pty Ltd
• Blacktown City Council
• Bligh Tanner Consulting Engineers
• Brisbane City Council
• ChemCentre
• City of Armadale
• City of Boroondara
• City of Canning
• City of Gosnells
• City of Greater Bendigo
• City of Greater Dandenong
• City of Greater Geraldton
• City of Joondalup
• City of Kingston
• City of Mandurah
• City of Melbourne
• City of Melville
• City of Nedlands
• City of Newcastle
• City of Port Phillip
• City of Rotterdam
• City of Salisbury
• City of Subiaco
• City of Unley
• City of Vincent
• City of Wanneroo
• City West Water
• Citygreen Systems
• Coliban Water
• Cocks River Alliance (City of Canterbury-Bankstown)
• Cooth, Inc.
• Create Develop
• Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
• Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources
• Department of Health and Human Services
• Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
• Department of Regional Development
• DesignFlow
• DevelopmentWA (previously LandCorp)
• DHI
• e2DesignLab
• Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council
• Edge Environment
• Edith Cowan University
• Envirostream Solutions Pty Ltd
• eWater Limited
• Fairfield City Council
• Flow Systems
• Foundry Consulting
• GHD
• Gilgandra Shire Council
• Greater Sydney Local Land Services
• Griffith University
• Healthy Land and Water
• Hornsby Shire Council
• Hydrosyst
• Hydrology and Risk Consulting
• ICE WaRM
• IHE Delft Institute for Water Education
• Inner West Council
• Integrated Planning and Design (Shanghai)
• International WaterCentre
• Jacobs Group
• Josh Byrne & Associates
• Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR)
• Knox City Council
• Kunshan City Bureau of Planning
• Kunshan City Construction Investment & Development Group
• Ku-ring-gai Council
• Maddocks
• Manningham City Council
• Marsden Jacob Associates
• Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority
• Metropolitan Water Directorate
• Moonee Valley City Council
• Morphum Environmental Ltd
• National University of Singapore
• National Water Commission
• Natural Decisions Pty Ltd
• Northern Beaches Council
• Places Victoria
• Prentice Eco Systems Pty Ltd
• Public Utilities Board (PUB)
• Queensland Urban Utilities
• REALMstudios
• RM Consulting Group (RMCG)
• SA Water Corporation
• SERCUL (South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare)
• South Australian Murray-Darling Basin NRM
• Southeast University
• Southwest Jiaotong University
• SPEL Environmental
• Stratfield Municipal Council
• Technical University of Denmark (DTU)
• The City of Sydney
• The University of Adelaide
• Three Seeds
• Townsville City Council
• Tract Consultants Pty Ltd
• University of Innsbruck
• Urban Renewal Authority (Renewal SA)
• Urban Water Solutions
• Urban Water Solutions
• Veolia Water Australia
• Victorian Planning Authority
• Villawood Properties
• Water Corporation WA
• Water Technology
• Wave Consulting Australia
• Western Suburbs Regional Organisation of Councils
• Whitehorse City Council
• Yarra Valley Water
• ZiPu Environmental Planning and Design (Shanghai) Ltd

Other Participants

Essential Participants and Other Participants highlighted were foundation partners of the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities.