

Strength in adversity

This has been a year of turbulence and shocks marked by catastrophic and unforeseeable events. Most notably the COVID-19 global pandemic but also, prior to this, many Australians faced a tough summer with bushfires wreaking havoc across water catchments and other land, and devastating communities across the country.

There have been many challenges and obstacles, and the resilience and resolve of individuals and organisations has been tested. Equally though, this year has offered opportunities for growth and allowed our members and our organisation to demonstrate the strength which lies within our BIG Team of members, alumni, trusted partners, staff and Board.

In these uncertain times, our focus on our core mission - healthy people, healthy lives and a healthy planet through the advancement of water science - has served us well.

Our capacity to adapt and our flexibility has enabled us to seize opportunities, adjust our approach to supporting members and develop responses to the new issues our country is facing. Through the commitment of our members we have been able to shape the water sector through science and meet the needs of a rapidly changing world.

We have listened intently and engaged tirelessly with our BIG Team, building on our strength of collaborative research to develop innovative, new and impactful responses to their needs.

Water Research Australia (WaterRA) has led the way through the rapid development of the ColoSSoS project - Collaboration on Sewage Surveillance of SARS-CoV-2—an Australia-wide investigation which aims to track and monitor the presence of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) and its persistence in the Australian sewerage network, that will provide vital information on where it is present in the population. This globally unique collaboration between national experts in health, microbiology, laboratory testing, wastewater-based epidemiology and policy communication, enabling vital integration of results of sewage testing with health data for COVID-19 on both a national and local basis to support governments' timely response.

In spite of the challenges presented in 2019-20, we have continued to achieve against our three-year strategy, comprised of four pillars:



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Optimising our business model to provide enduring value for members

Strengthening and enhancing our engagement activities to give members increased pathways to become involved

Tailoring our services to meet the evolving needs of our members

Nurturing and developing the skills of our BIG Team

As an organisation we have:

- continued to grow our core business of impactful research through the unwavering support of our members. We have harnessed increased research value through member collaboration, completing 11 projects, representing \$2.5 million worth of investment. Our research portfolio covers all of our 11 focus areas and aligns with current challenges and strategic initiatives of water utilities across the country.
- enhanced our engagement activities and successfully transitioned to virtual events. This change has enabled us to reach new audiences, engage for longer through our online and on-demand content delivery, and in turn create valuable pathways for more members

to become involved and collaborate. Most notably, within a week of COVID-19 being classified as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization, we delivered our first ever virtual conference, the 2020 Catchment Forum: VIRTUAL, to great success. The event saw over 75 participating organisations from across the country log-in to hear from leading water industry experts, share information and connect with like-minded professionals to plan for a more resilient future. It was exciting to see the level of engagement online from all participants. We have since delivered six member events digitally. including Horizon our annual research planning workshop. Rest assured that our collective effort to transition to virtual events will not have been wasted as we gradually return to face-to-face meetings and events post COVID-19. Our plan is to develop a hybrid approach that caters for each member's preference for learning and interacting into the future and tailors our services to meet their evolving needs.

- continued to provide members with meaningful connections, learning opportunities and exposure to thought leaders in the water industry by becoming the new custodians of the Australian Water School (AWS). We re-launched the AWS with its own digital presence and are committed to delivering high-calibre online courses and webinars focusing on significant, innovative or critical advances in water science, technology and management.
- worked tirelessly across our Board and management to drive amendments to our Constitution which will benefit all current and future members. These amendments are designed to provide security for the organisation into the future, ensure clarity for our members and solidify flexible, future-ready pathways for collaboration across our membership and invaluable national and global partners.
- appointed a new chair of the WaterRA Board Mark Gobbie who along with the Board and members, will lead the strategic direction of WaterRA after the Annual General Meeting in October 2020.
- re-thought the way in which our exceptional team work. As with all organisations, COVID-19 has demanded WaterRA innovate to meet the demands of the new world. Our staff and Board have rapidly changed the way they undertake their roles, learning new skills and utilising new technologies to adapt to remote working environments. These changes will have long-lasting effects on our business and has ignited our imagination in how we can deliver meaningful and valuable services to our members in creative and innovative ways. We are exceptionally proud of the positivity and dedication of our team and the ways in which we have continued to deliver for our members while working and collaborating remotely.

In short, we are proud of our achievements during this very trying year and we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank our BIG Team. The active participation and commitment to collaboration, innovation and impact by our members, loyal partners and contributors, will always be the backbone of our organisation and the foundation of our success. It is only through your dedication, effort and support that we have been able to navigate these uncertain times and continue to help create healthy people, healthy lives and a healthy planet. Our heartfelt thanks.







Karen Rouse CEO

collaborate

In 2019-20 WaterRA's research program continued to develop addressing urban, regional and remote water issues - embracing all aspects of drinking water, recycled water and wastewater.

As ever, collaborative research remains at the core of all we do, and bringing industry, research, regulators and consultants together from across our membership has never been more important.

This year we continued our subject-specific Communities of Interest (Cols), and Problem and Opportunity Definition (POD) workshops, while extending our Horizon Annual Research Planning event. Horizon is designed to engage industry members to establish the collective research needs, identify collaborative research opportunities and plan our research agenda and knowledge transfer activities for the upcoming year. In this year's event we incorporated 'moonshots', enabling members to discuss long-term research goals that will ensure safe and secure water for decades to come. Our members' 'moonshots' have formed the basis of a collaborative effort with trusted partner the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) which will see national water research priorities developed thereby providing an efficient and nimble approach to water challenges and solution implementation across Australia.

Another enhancement to Horizon in 2019-20 was the addition of online follow-up events which brought members back together throughout the year. These updates allowed members to revisit the collaborative research opportunities, add to our pipeline of research based on emerging needs, and receive updates on current projects and upcoming initiatives.

S2.5m worth of investment \$1.8m cash \$670,000 in kind



eadersh

additional identified project opportunities

4 Students Completed Higher Degrees

Matthew Kube | RMIT University & South East Water (PhD)

Harnessing algae for high rate municipal wastewater treatment: developing immobilised algae systems

Timothy Coggan | RMIT University & Melbourne Water (PhD)

Assessing the impact of wastewater derived perfluorinated chemicals on aquatic ecosystems

Cameron McPhail | University of Adelaide & SA Water (PhD) Long-term robust scenario planning of water supply infrastructure in a deeply uncertain future using formal optimisation methods

Dean Mensinga | Griffith University & Seqwater (Honours) Bayesian belief modelling of pathogen health risks associated with indirect stormwater reuse



Through Horizon, our Cols and associated POD workshops, our research managers, together with our members, co-created 12 new projects designed to efficiently address shared industry challenges and identified numerous research projects which are currently being scoped.

Our Research Leadership Program also offered significant collaborative opportunities. Through the support of 11 sponsor organisations, 2019-20 saw three new PhD students and two new masters students commence their studies, making a total of 27 active students in the program. WaterRA's students are transforming businesses through research across operational areas such as customers, water quality, source water, wastewater, integrated catchment management and climate change. Partnerships and collaboration between universities and industry provide an invaluable connection to the next generation of high-calibre research leaders who work within businesses to solve focused and organisation-specific challenges and integrate the newest techniques and technologies into business services.

Our collaborative, better-together approach, additionally saw WaterRA welcome five new member organisations into our BIG Team - Sydney Water, CSIRO, University of Tasmania, Research Laboratory Services and SA Health. The diversity of our new members, who cover all aspects of the water sector, adds to the depth of our current membership and ensures that the sector as a whole can collaborate for mutual benefit.

€\$438,500k New student sponsorship value \$148,500 cash \$290,000 in kind

> active projects in our portfolio

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projects started in 2019/20



Nancy Millis Memorial PhD Award for 2020 Minh Duc Nguyen

Victorian Student of the Year (AWA 2019) Matthew Kube

Dean Mensinga

Dean Mensinga

Stephen Joseph Abstract Award 2019 from Australia New Zealand Biochar Initiative Inc. Ekaterina Selezneva

innovate

Working across our 11 focus areas, our projects during 2019-20 consolidated the breadth of our research and our ability to meet the diverse needs of our members.

During 2019-2020, 11 research projects were completed, representing the culmination of effort of 30 industry partners and nine research agencies. WaterRA leveraged more than \$670,000 in in-kind contributions, and approximately \$1.8m in funding from collaborating agencies, to create these projects for and with our members, with a total value of \$2.5m. 2019-20 has also seen 12 new projects started and 24 additional project opportunities identified.

We also commenced redefining our research process across the research value lifecycle in line with the preliminary findings of our flagship project, the Value of Research (Project #1118).

In the past year we have significantly increased our research outputs with 9 final project reports delivered and actively transferred via training activities, workshops and our new webinar series which has covered topics such as digital and data.

We have also delivered many presentations, both face-toface and online, at national and international conferences including Cleanup 2019, Recycle Water 2019 and the European Commission Town Hall Gathering on SARS-CoV-2, 2020.

WaterRA research continues to fuel innovation within the industry, and our commitment to developing new knowledge and generating impactful and operationally applicable research is shown through our inaugural sponsorship of the Australian Water Association's National Research Innovation Award.

Management of environmental *E.coli* | Project 1101

Bertone, E., Gordon, D, King, B., Lau, M., Roiko, A., Sinclair, M., Gaget, V. and O'Toole, J.

Benthic cyanobacteria: an aesthetic and toxic risk to be evaluated Project 1110 Gaget, V., Hobson, P. and Brookes, J.

Value of operator competency | Project 1111 Bartlett, S.

National carp control program | Project 1114 van der Linden, L., Kildea, T., Davies, D., Kozlik, E., Kapralos, C., Nedic, M., Trotta, E., Harris, M., Fanok, S., Lau, M., King, B., Pera, J., Marshall, Jand Catizone, I.

Good practice guide to water treatment plants update | Project 1117 McDonald, S., Northcott, K., Robertson, M., Sheehan, D., Sneddon, A., Westgate, S. and Wilson, M.

Fluorinated surfactants in wastewater treatment plants Project 2046 Coggan, T.

PFAS exposure modeling and trigger points for investigation in recycled water irrigation applications | Project 3043 Stevens, D. with Executive Summary by Northcott, K.

+ 2 ARC final project reports

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The Value of Research **Project enters Phase 2**



WaterRA's Value of Research Project was created to ensure members derive maximum value from their investment in research, and that research benefits can be realised through all aspects of a business and at all stages of a project.

Having entered Phase 2 in 2019-20, the Value of Research (Project #1118) has continued to be one of WaterRA's flagship projects. Based on input from our utility, health and research members, we determined a successful pathway of how to best value research undertakings (including outcomes and outputs) that relies on a combination of evaluation processes and organisational culture. After extensive scoping efforts to define the project deliverables, which balanced the diverse experiences and expectations of project outputs across our members, the final scope of works was awarded to a consulting consortium. The consortium was tasked with providing connectivity between the Research Management Framework Elements (determined in Phase 1) to create a best practice approach to maximising the value of research

This approach is being developed into the 'Good Practice Guide to Achieving Value of Research' (VoR GPG). The VoR GPG is being designed to ensure that current practices used by our members are included, while also allowing for continuous improvements. The VoR GPG will be underpinned by two key elements:

- the "Good Practice Research Lifecycle", which outlines the steps and considerations to create value at each stage of a research project
- the "Benefits Assessment Framework", which outlines the ways to identify and use tangible and non-tangible financial or economic assessment tools to better assist with value articulation.

The project has now entered the 'deep feedback' phase, with project stakeholders currently evaluating and reviewing the draft VoR GPG.

impact ()

In 2019-20 WaterRA research yielded many practical tools for members to apply within their business and keep pace with the industry's evolving challenges.

We rapidly responded to Australia's bushfire emergency by creating several factsheets that were immediately available, assisting our members to identify water quality risks to drinking water catchments and to prioritise their response.

A bushfire recovery planning day was also added to the 2020 Catchment Forum: VIRTUAL held in March to help support our members' recovery efforts.

The immediacy of our COVID-19 collaboration and knowledge sharing helped utilities deal with the emerging threat in real-time and better understand risks and public concern as the pandemic unfolded. As 'ColoSSoS' (Project #2060) commenced, we continued to share emerging collaborative tools on SARS-CoV-2 and viral surveillance through wastewater monitoring as new research was developed. These initiatives provided clear guidance, supporting our members' decision making during these challenging times, and providing instantly applicable knowledge.

Another project which created impact for our members was 'Understanding impacts of recreational access to Drinking Water Catchments and Storages in Australia' (Project #1124). As various jurisdictions across Australia responded to requests for public access

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ColoSSoS ollaboration on Sewag urveillance of SARS-CoV-:

The ColoSSoS Project — Collaboration on Sewage Surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 - is delivering research to track and monitor the presence and persistence of fragments of SARS-Cov-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in the Australian sewerage network, providing information on where the disease is currently or was recently present in the population.

Led by WaterRA and supported by our trusted partners WSAA and GWRC, ColoSSoS is a uniquely collaborative Australiawide research program that sees our members from water utilities, universities and health departments working closely together to develop local monitoring capability in every state.

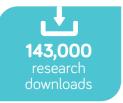
The collaboration between national experts in health, microbiology, laboratory testing, wastewater-based epidemiology and policy communication will enable the vital integration of the results of sewage testing

Bushfire recovery for resilience | 'build back better'

The devastating bushfires in late 2019 and early 2020 have been heart breaking for communities who were left to rebuild their homes and livelihoods. The scale of the devastation, in terms of duration, extent and intensity, has provided our members — essential service ders such as water supply utilities and health services — with extraordinary immediate response to challenges and brought to light







to drinking water reservoir reserves, research was undertaken to ensure industry preparedness. WaterRA developed a range of tools to assist utilities to develop a clear policy position, complete preliminary investigations and initiate or further develop education initiatives, in order to be best prepared for access requests to reservoir reserves. The tools also help utilities better engage with elected officials and the community regarding the issue.

This year also saw the release of an updated 'Good Practice Guide to the Operation of Drinking Water Supply Systems for the Management of Microbial Risk Second Edition' (Project #1117). Originally published in 2015, the guide has been utilised by water utilities in the operation of more than 70 water supply systems and has now evolved into an evaluation and benchmarking tool that can be utilised to set system upgrade priorities and budgets. The update created a more refined benchmarking resource and provided an improved tool for utilities to ensure that microbial risks are successfully managed and customers' safety secured.

Through Project #1114, WaterRA has played a pivotal role in creating the Commonwealth-Government funded National Carp Control Plan (NCCP), addressing significant industry concerns around a successful virus release to control carp populations, including impacts on drinking water quality from dead and decaying carp near offtakes or water storages; water infrastructure; aquatic ecosystems; the logistics and costs involved in a large clean-up effort; and the need for further control measures.

for the SARS-CoV-2 virus with health data for COVID-19 on both a national and local basis to support governments' timely response.

Early stages of the ColoSSoS Project have confirmed that sewage testing is feasible and promising as a tool to complement existing measures such as clinical testing, so that together they may provide a clearer and more timely picture of the presence of COVID-19 in the community.

The project has been successfully initiated with the rapid development of sampling, processing and laboratory testing methods for sewage surveillance. It is continuing to ensure initial detection methods used across the nation are robust, sensitive, specific and comparable, while also identifying any improvements that can deliver greater efficiency and ease of implementation.

WaterRA is involving all Australian state and territory health authorities both individually, and through the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth), to ensure that the project can readily inform national COVID-19 control efforts.

knowledge, WaterRA was able to produce much needed information and guidance for our members in January 2020 even while the bushfires

Guidance documents covered key aspects of bushfire related treatment challenges as well as "no-regrets" mitigation measures. Our catchment and bushfire forum in mid-March 2020 showcased research efforts dertaken by our research and utility members, and id es for working more specifically on resilience efforts.

to scope our members' research needs to ultimately 'build back bette with a significant focus on the four key areas which enhance bushfire

Our Big Team



In 2019-20 we were delighted to welcome new members:

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Sydney Water

Corporation

University of Adelaide

University of Melbourne

• University of Newcastle

University of Queensland

• University of Tasmania

• University of South Australia

• University of Technology, Sydney

• University of the Sunshine Coast

Wannon Region Water Corporation

• University of Western Australia

University of Woollongong

• Veolia Water Australia

Victoria University

Water Corporation

• Tasmanian Water & Sewerage

• University of New South Wales











Our Trusted Partners*

Australian Water Association

- Canadian Water Network
- Chinese Academy of Science Intelligent Water Networks (IWN)
- International Research Center On Water
- and Environment (C.I.R.S.E.E.)
- KWR Watercycle Research Institute
- Public Utilities Board Singapore STOWA Foundation for Applied Water
- Management Research
- TZW Water Technology Centre
- UK Water Industry Research
- Veolia Environnement Research and Innovation (VFRI)
- WaterAid
- Water Environment & Reuse Foundation • Water Industry Operators Association of
- Australia (WIÓA) • Water Research Commission South
- Africa
- Water Research Foundation
- Water Services Association of Australia



AWS continues serving the water industry

This year, WaterRA became the new custodian of Australian Water School (AWS). Originally launched by the International Centre of Excellence for Water Resources Management (ICEWaRM) in 2016, AWS was established with the purpose of facilitating key thought leadership and encouraging knowledge-transfer and capacity-building across the Australian and international water sector.

Since its establishment AWS has gone from strength to strength delivering high-calibre online short courses and webinars focusing on significant, innovative or critical advances in water science, technology and management.

Finance

WaterRA has been returning a positive operating surplus over many years and 2019-20 was no exception. Despite the uncertainty caused during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been able to remain financially sustainable and flexible enough to take advantage of the opportunities that have arisen, including membership growth, the ColoSSoS project and the acquisition of AWS. We have been able to adapt to the changing environment by hosting many successful online events and, although we were not able to meet face-to-face for some of the year, any savings that were generated became available to be invested to fulfil strategic goals and benefit members. The WaterRA Board and management are committed to investing in, and improving member experience, the BIG Team and the organisation in line with our three-year strategy for the benefit of all.. The summarised financial reports (below) have been derived from WaterRA's full report for the financial year.

For the detailed Financial Report please visit waterra.com.au

Income Statement For The Period Ended 30 June 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
REVENUE		
Revenue from continuing operations	3,313,631	3,124,186
Other income	107,001	5,341
EXPENDITURE		
Research program	(787,646)	(876,917)
Education program	(186,372)	(184,182)
Operating	(1,948,883)	(1,771,976)
Depreciation and amortisation	(17,685)	(680)
Chairman & Independent Director remuneration	(47,650)	(46,000)
Surplus/(Deficit)	432,396	249,772

Our Members

- Atom Consulting
- Australian Water Ouality Centre
- Barwon Region Water Corporation Cairns Regional Council
- Central Gippsland Regional Water
- Corporation
- Central Highlands Water
- Centre for Appropriate Technology
- Charles Darwin University
- ChemCentre
- City West Water
- Coliban Region Water Corporation CSIRO
- Curtin University of Technology
- Deakin University
- Digital Content Analysis Technology (D-CAT)
- Department of Health Environmental Health Northern Territory
- Department of Health & Human Services Tasmania
- Department of Health & Human Services Victoria
- Department of Health Queensland
- Edith Cowan University
- Federation University
- Flinders University

 Goulburn Valley Regional Water Corporation • Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water

• GHD

- Corporation
- Griffith University
- Hydrology and Risk Consulting (HARC)
- Hunter Water Corporation
- Icon Water
- Lower Murray Water
- Melbourne Water
- Monash University
- Murdoch University
- National Measurement Institute
- Natural Logic
- NSW Health Power & Water Corporation
- Research Laboratory Services
- Risk Edge
- RMIT University
- SA Health
- South Australian Water Corporation
- South East Water Corporation
- Suez Water

Our staff and board

In 2019-20 we were pleased to welcome Associate Professor Rita Henderson from UNSW as a new Board Member of WaterRA. Our team also expanded with six new staff members. We bade a fond farewell to several staff and Board members who left during the year and we thank them for their contribution to WaterRA and their dedication to our mission.

- Swinburne University of Technology
- Segwater
- Water Futures WaterNSW • WaterQ Plus
- Yarra Valley Water

- Western Region Water Corporation • Western Sydney University

AWS has a proud history and a vision and mission that aligns with WaterRA's values of collaboration, innovation and impact.

WaterRA is pleased to be able to continue this vital initiative and confident that under our stewardship AWS will continue to evolve and become an even more valuable training hub for water professionals.

AWS relaunched in June with its own digital presence and will continue to provide collaborative, innovative and impactful courses, programs and online opportunities to the global water community.

The full offering of webinars, live training and on-demand resources can be viewed at www.awschool.com.au

Financial Position As At 30 June 2020			
	2020	2019	
ASSETS	\$	\$	
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	4 ,888,289	3 ,506,105	
Trade and other receivables	12,920	5 11,589	
Contract assets	1,248,950	-	
Prepayments	46,633	21,739	
Total current assets	6 ,196,792	4 ,039,433	
Non-current assets			
Plant and equipment	2,306	-	
Intangible assets	10,000	1,360	
Right-of-use assets	63,983	-	
Total non-current assets	76,289	1,360	
Total assets	6 ,273,081	4 ,040,793	
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	477,784	463,711	
Contract liabilities	3,252,540	-	
Lease liabilities	15,840	-	
Employee entitlements	105,434	89,577	
Revenue received in advance	558,759	2,105,630	
Total current liabilities	4,410,357	2,658,918	
Non-current liabilities			
Lease liabilities	48,453	-	
Employee entitlements	-	-	
Total non-current liabilities	48,453	-	
Total liabilities	4,458,810	2,658,918	
Net assets	1,814,271	1,381,875	
EQUITY			
Retained earnings	1,564,271	1,131,875	
Operating reserves	250,000	250,000	
Total equity	1,814,271	1,381,875	

The company is a not-for-profit entity, registered as a charity and is exempt from income tax

Thank you

WaterRA is grateful for the support of our BIG Team, as they are the lifeblood of WaterRA. Their tireless efforts allow us to continue to develop research and tools that have a lasting impact and enable us to reach out to other professionals, organisations, and communities in the wider water sector.

Our Student Sponsors



Our Committees

Risk and Audit

Jamie Hollamby (Chair) | AWQC Ken Murphy (non-Executive Board Director) Independent Gary Penn (non-Board member) Independent

Human Resources

Dr Steve Capewell (Chair) Water Corporation David Sheehan | Coliban Water Prof Christopher Saint | UniSA

Strategic Advisory

Amy Dysart (Chair) | Power & Water Corporation Assoc Prof Rita Henderson (Deputy Chair) UNSW Dr David Cunliffe | SA Health Dr Annette Davison | Risk Edge Graham Hawke | Bureau of Meteorology Prof Cynthia Mitchell | University of Technology, Sydney Dr Greg Ryan | Water Services Association of Australia Wendy Henderson | NSW Health Karen Rouse (Secretary) | WaterRA

Research Leadership Program Advisory

Dr Louise McKenzie (Chair) | Hunter Water Dr Michael Bartkow (Deputy Chair) | Seqwater Dr Bradley Clarke | University of Melbourne Peter Spencer | Water Corporation Dr Melita Stevens | Melbourne Water Dr Kathryn Linge | ChemCentre

Our Mentors

Jo O'Toole | Monash University Cameron Veale | Seqwater Shaun Cox | Inxure Strategy Group Jason Barnett | TasWater Stephanie Rinck-Pfeiffer | GWRC Tony Priestley | Consultant Peter McCafferty | ChemCentre Tanja Stefanovic | Beyond Paradigms Kathy Cinque | Melbourne Water Amy Dysart | Power & Water Stacey Hamilton | Water Corporation Tara Callingham | Goulburn Valley Water Kris Coventry | Melbourne Water Kathy Northcott | Veolia David Sheehan | Coliban Water Melita Stevens | Melbourne Water Arash Zamyadi | WaterRA Michael Storey | Isle Utilities Leon van der Linden | SA Water

