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NEW RESEARCH BY SMART APPROVED WATERMARK COULD INCREASE THE VALUE OF HOUSEHOLD WATER IN THE EYES OF USERS AND CHANGE THE WAY THEY USE IT FOREVER

Today, Smart Approved WaterMark (SAWM) launches 'Australia's Relationship with Water' that provides the basis for community-based education and national water efficiency initiatives that could **change the nation's relationship with water, making it more valuable and visible.**

SAWM's findings are based on 8 ethnographic studies and an online survey of 2,077 respondents from across Australia completed May 2019. Respondents make up a significantly **robust data set reflective of the nation.**

91% of respondents believe 'water is precious'. However, when asked, 'water' and 'tap water' are not regarded as the same thing. Their feelings about 'tap water' however expose a very different relationship and reality. **Only 42% think tap water is precious.**

Concern for the environment is shared across generations. Yet this concern rarely extends to issues pertaining to water, such as droughts, water shortages or dam levels. As a nation who believes water is precious, there is a disconnect between the impact they have on water in the environment and the water they rely on every day.

Until they were asked to think about it, survey respondents found it difficult to value tap water — especially the younger generations.

For most Australians, tap water is a daily necessity — **with respondents reaching for it at least 16 times a day, every day**, with 69% of respondents saying they would 'freak out' if their taps stopped flowing. **55% of Australians even agreed they are addicted to turning on the tap.**

It seems clear that the **use of household water is subconscious** and that awareness of the water-saving capability of standard taps and toilet devices is also unknown with many appliances being subconsciously used and chosen.

The last time most respondents learned anything about the household water cycle was in high school. Consequently, **water literacy is low** amongst the respondents, with only 64% knowing where their household water comes from and 45% saying they definitely don't think about where it comes from. **It's much like loving milk but not knowing what a cow is.**

Our older generations have higher water literacy which is reflected in their environmental concerns, willingness to save and their use of water-efficient devices. Despite passing their water knowledge down to their children, that pattern did not repeat, with **efficient water behaviour depleting with every younger generation.**

A key reason for the generational decline is that those who have experienced water shortages, have higher water literacy and are more likely to believe tap water is precious.

53% of Baby Boomers (55-80yrs) claim to have been affected by shortages as do 49% of Gen X (39-54yrs) as opposed to 35% Gen Y (23-38yrs) and only 24% Gen Z (14-22yrs). Whilst 63% of respondents agreed they could save more than they do, evidence shows that most are generally on autopilot when it comes to household water use. They suggested they would use water wisely if they

knew where it came from and where it went. **Gen Z and Y, in particular, said they could save more water than they do.**

The research concludes it will take a personal water shortage for younger generations to see and appreciate 'tap/household' water — and to understand the connection between their own water use and the 'water in the environment' they value so highly.

This knowledge could increase the value of water in the eyes of the users, starting a conscious relationship with water that could drive behaviour change towards more efficient domestic water use.

This relationship could also provide scope to **bring more people along the purified recycled water and greywater journeys** with education campaigns, once the basic household water cycle has been understood.

The report '**Australia's Relationship with Water**', details what Australians really think about water and provides insight into the motivation Australians need to use water efficiently. Read the report at <https://www.smartwatermark.org/research/australias-relationship-water/>

SAWM will be launching the 'One Bucket Challenge' in 2020. This is a water deprivation exercise encouraging households to manage with just one bucket of water for one night. Trials have shown that participants are significantly more willing to save and use water wisely as a result of the exercise. **SAWM is seeking expressions of interest to support, promote and sponsor this initiative.**

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Smart Approved WaterMark (SAWM) is the one-stop shop for water efficiency in Australia. Through the Smart Water Advice program, SAWM delivers a range of educational, interactive water-saving resources for councils and water utilities to take to communities about saving water around the home, garden and business. SAWM also certifies water-efficient products and services in Australia and Europe. Since 2004 it has reviewed over 1000 applications and approved more than 300 products and services. Through Smart Water Solutions, SAWM helps businesses reduce their water use and save money by delivering water audits and recommendations. SAWM has also published the 'Water Efficient Australia' 2019 report and 'Water Efficiency 2017' in partnership with Water Services Association Australia (WSAA). Smart Approved WaterMark works towards a future that's blue, a future that celebrates the many amazing qualities of water, sees its strength and acknowledges its vulnerability.

Independent Reviewer - Institute for Sustainable Futures - isf.uts.edu.au

This report has also been independently reviewed by the Institute for Sustainable Futures (September 2019) to ensure data and outcomes are representative of the data generated by this survey and ethnographic studies. Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, Level 10, Building 10, 235 Jones Street Ultimo NSW 2007 (PO Box 123).