

Providing a Precious COMMODITY

Since Australia is regarded as a sunburnt country, we are one of the most water-conscious nations on the planet. Wet Technologies Australia is helping more people conserve water, save money, and protect the earth.

Images by Estelle Judah Photography

John Falk, Managing Director of Wet Technologies Australia, states that “if as little as 10 per cent of households in Australia were to install a water tank in their home, we could generate a countrywide watersaving equivalent to the Sydney Harbour. Water is such a precious commodity in Australia, and we provide products and services beneficial not only to customers but also to the environment as a whole.”

What first began as a cottage industry in 1989 has seen significant growth over the past 25 years, with people across the country turning their attention to water conservation. John says the increased demand has allowed his company to expand into various subsectors of the tank industry with its subsidiaries Tankworld, Nylex Water Tanks, Rainwise, and Summertime Pools.

A diesel engineer by trade, John had a great deal of experience in manufacturing before taking on the tank industry, allowing him to foster quick growth in his subsidiaries.

“I was able to purchase my first franchise in Victoria in 1989,

followed by South Australia and the Northern Territory in 1991, and Tasmania in 1992. By 1999, I was ready to buy out the Tankworld franchisor located in Dubbo, New South Wales, and properly begin Wet Technologies Australia.

“As I purchased franchises around the country, I established production plants in unison, with one in Swan Hill in 1989, servicing south-western New South Wales, Victoria, and southern Australia; one in Port Pirie in 1991, servicing Eyre Peninsula and everything north of there right up to Darwin; a plant in Launceston in 1992, servicing all of Tasmania; as well as polyethylene plants in Caboolture, Queensland, and Wagga, New South Wales, between 1994 and 1995. I sold off the two poly plants in 1999 and established two new ones in Swan Hill and Tasmania a year later.”

With strong manufacturing systems in place, the company took off, with Tankworld in particular gaining much attention from consumers. “Government rebates have been a major catalyst for our growth over the years. Those in drought-ridden areas were able to apply for funding in an effort to conserve water and money.”

However, John warns, his story has not been without challenges. The recent change of focus of rebates to solar energy has caused the tank-manufacturing industry to hit a wall. “The government changed the legislation of rebates and water tanks, which changed the tank industry dramatically overnight. We needed to address the issue quickly, and have combated the slump by expanding into other sales channels, most notably internet sales. We also employed a marketing company to assist us in its operation.”

Another hurdle to overcome came with changes to laws regarding the transportation of oversized products. The altered guidelines have caused issues for the company’s 25 delivery trucks tasked with fulfilling their many swimming pool and tank orders. “The government, in its wisdom, says you can’t transport loads on public holidays; that we can no longer transport over-dimensional loads overnight; and there is no transport of over-dimensional loads during the Christmas and New Year period. So they physically shut us down for two weeks every Christmas. Around Easter time it is the same; we are not allowed to transport the day before Good Friday or the day >



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“For us, we’re trying to supply the customer with the right product and the right information, so customer service is the most important aspect of the business.”

- John Falk

“Many companies make tanks and pools, but there are few we count as partners. We have a great partnership with Wet Technologies because we share an uncompromising attitude to quality and are totally committed to providing a quality customer experience.” - Rankin McKay, General Manager - Marketing, Davey

after Easter Monday, so we lose another week’s production and transport.”

Regardless of the challenges that have been faced, John says, he is proud of Wet Technologies Australia and each of its subsidiaries, which have battled to keep intact their core values—maintaining and upholding of Australian standards. It is this dedication to high-level quality and service that puts the company ahead of the competition, as well as a strong commitment to troubleshooting. The organisation surveys every buyer to get feedback and to isolate problems.

“For us, we’re trying to supply the customer with the right product and the right information, so customer service is the most important aspect of the business,” John adds.

This ethos of strong communication and feedback does not end with the customer; John

likes to maintain open communication across the organisation to ensure he has a good understanding of the business’s operation, as well as to highlight areas of improvement. “We have a manager in each area, and I speak to the management team on a daily basis. Every member of the management team reports monthly, and we aim to meet each month to discuss sales, dispatch, and production. We track it all daily.”

This strict monitoring ensures Wet Technologies Australia provides the highest quality products and services across its network. “We are fully QAS [Quality Assurance Services] Australian standards approved, and we have people in each plant specifically tasked with maintaining this standard. Every product we build has to go through rigorous testing to meet the Australian standards, and we are audited by SAI Global to ensure we are abiding by the standard and the QAS process.”

In addition to its arduous checking, John says, the company seeks to align itself with other well-respected Australian companies to further guarantee their high standards. He says it is important for them to strive for mutual respect and concurrent movement towards goals with suppliers. By forming these symbolic relationships, the company has collaborated on innovative offerings that have reshaped the industry.

“We’ve worked closely with Davey Water Products on Rainbank, which is a system where you are able to flush the toilet and run your laundry at home with rain water instead of the mains water system. This system can save the average household 40,000 litres of water per year.”

Nuplex is another supplier Wet Technologies Australia has a good relationship with, having worked closely with them with food-grade resins, new initiatives for ultraviolet-resistant colours that are able to survive the harsh Australian



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- John Falk

environment, as well as a range of UV-stabilised pool colours. “We use low styrene emission resin, which is to help the ozone layer,” John says.

John also points out the efforts they make to ensure they can confidently guarantee their product. “Our polyethylene suppliers, Price Plastics, use all food-grade Australian products, and we test all material to make sure it meets Australian standards before we sign a contract to be supplied.”

Further adding to its dedication to quality and safety, John says, the company also implements a Driver Fatigue Management Plan within its transport company. “We train our drivers on driver fatigue management and also run an initiative called the ‘log checker’, which checks the hours worked to the logbook. We make sure our drivers are conscious of the number of hours they drive. We do these things to ensure we are providing a good service to both the public and the consumer. We do a lot of things behind the scenes to make sure we’re building the best product we can.”

While the tank industry has seen its ups and downs in recent years, John is hopeful for the company’s future as people are becoming more environmentally conscious. “Obviously, the big droughts of 1998, 2002, and 2006 grew tanks sales in Australia dramatically. We then went from the drought of all droughts to the biggest wet in 150 years—and when there is a lot of rain, people don’t tend to buy tanks. But as time goes by and we go back to a dry spell in Australia, more people are mindful of conserving water. We’re very conscious of trying to help the customer and explain to them what they really need.”

John says while the small tank industry is definitely growing in Australia, it is crucial for legislation to be uniform across the country. “If they don’t have rebates on the tanks, fewer people will be conscious of saving water. At the end of the day, the government needs to better educate people on the advantages of having a water tank and pump, and, in short, using your own water.” •

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