



A Play about Sustainability, Produced Sustainably

Water Wars is a funny, dark, beautiful, shocking and surprising piece of theatre about how we live with each other on an increasingly fragile planet. It profiles the impact of scarcity.

Produced by Brisbane based production house, Umber Productions, **Water Wars** had its World Premiere at the Empire Theatres, Toowoomba on 20 July 2011, before a Brisbane season at La Boite Indie in August 2011.

About the play

Water Wars tracks the descent into madness of a neighbourhood struggling through long-term drought. Because that's what you do – you get through, you get by, you do what needs to be done, whatever that is...

As Mrs P says to her husband, John, after a long day arguing with the neighbours about her housing: "But I got some watering done – the roses. I remember when you put them in. They glowed in the sun like red velvet bows... it's all so hard now, John; not like before... We seem to be losing everything."

And she's not talking only about gardens – she means the community.

These characters all went through floods together 15 years before – they saved each other's lives and dogs and chickens and precious china plates. They all stayed in the house at the top of the hill for 3 days till the water subsided – the chooks had the bathroom.

So why are these people, who have this history, acting so differently now?

This is the tension that sits at the heart of the play. How do we balance self-interest and self-sacrifice? Because they're both needed, if we are to survive.

The world of the play holds both great hope and great fear – especially if you start thinking about what today's kids might be facing in 10 or 15 years time.

This is a play about how we might survive *together* on the planet.



Sustainability

Water Wars asks people to consider our environment and it practices what it preaches. Very early in the development process, it was decided that this play would be a new way of making theatre: **Theatre made Sustainably**. Sustainability would be simply another factor in design considerations – like budget, cast size, venue size, any of the many variables design considers.

In more detail:

- The set is designed for **portability**; its made of tough recycled card product which is easily transportable because it is light-weight and constructed in pieces. Board flats are digitally printed and provide the background for AV projections as the scene changes.
- The production team **recycled and reused** wherever possible. Buckets and hoses were all borrowed and returned at the end of the season. The flower bed was made and kept in stock for future production seasons. Costumes were predominantly borrowed and returned to owners, with those items purchased new retained for future seasons.
- As the focus piece of the production, the tree was constructed with a steel skeleton, Styrofoam padding coated with non-toxic, water based resin and the bark was sourced from a local property and painted.
- **Suppliers** were chosen who offered energy savings solutions or good environmental credentials. All set and staging were built using **recycled timbers**, with **fabrics** either re-used, re-purposed or recycled.
- Instead of printed programs, a **digital program** was developed that can be viewed by the audience on their smart phone or mobile device (see <http://bit.ly/waterwars>)
- **Lighting** for the show can be achieved from a simple wall socket. It draws no more than 10 amps of power at any one time. As a show with over 400 technical cues, the maximum power drawn was 7 amps, which was for the actors' curtain call. It is thought that this is a world first.

Stakeholders

From idea through creative development, pre-production, production and post-production, the sustainable success of **Water Wars** can be attributed to the unwavering commitment and engagement of all stakeholders. They include:

Original Cast

- Chris Baz, Kellie Jones, Amber Salas, Jess Veurman-Betts and Kate Wilson

Original Production Team

- **Writer & Producer** Elaine Acworth
- **Director** Shaun Charles
- **Lighting Design** David Walters
- **Lighting Realised by** Geoff Squires
- **Design** Penny Challen
- **Sound Design** Guy Webster
- **AV Design** Freddy Komp
- **Dramaturg** Kathryn Kelly
- **Assistant Director** Sita Borhani

- **Executive Producer** Nicholas O'Donnell

Presenting Partner – The Empire Theatre, Toowoomba, and

Brisbane Presenting Partner – **La Boite Indie, Brisbane**

The great contribution of creatives and cast who worked on the development – Greg Clarke, Chris Betts, Bernadette Pryde, Alana Noyes, Angus Blackman.

Production secondments – allowing an opportunity to mentor and influence designers of the future

What's next

Water Wars is keenly waiting for notification from touring body **arTour**, whether the production has been picked up for a 2013 regional tour through Queensland.

More information on the company's approach in developing **Water Wars**, including video interviews and blogs, can be found on www.umber.com.au