

# FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE, DETERMINATION AND VISION



ELENA GOSSE – CEO OF AIS WATER, AWARD-WINNING BUSINESSWOMAN,  
INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKER & ENTREPRENEUR

BY SUSANNAH PASK

Elena Gosse was born to a middle-class family as one of three children in Volgograd (former Stalingrad) in the USSR. She grew up in a culture which did not value female empowerment – and lived in an abusive family where her late father ruled the family home with violence and fear, fuelled by alcohol.

The young Elena would stand up to her father, protecting her mother and sisters, often with harrowing results. She made a promise to herself that she would work hard, achieve an education and be an advocate for change to achieve a better life for her family and help other women do the same.

She earned her first university degree at 20 in Russia, married an army cadet and had two daughters. Her second daughter, tragically, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and Elena was told that she would never walk or talk. Elena refused to accept that her daughter would never have a normal life and she worked hard to provide her with quality treatment and care.

After working at a day job at the Army Officers' Family Centre, Elena would write stage scripts and sing in restaurants in the evenings. In 1989, Elena, along with a few co-workers started a TV show called *Family Express*. It was an overnight success. When her marriage ended in 1991 Elena was determined to remain independent for the benefit of herself

and her two children. Building on the success of their TV show, she and her colleagues started an entertainment company which eventually employed 67 staff.

In 1992, Elena met her second husband, a Russian-born Australian named Kerry. They decided to move to Australia, but the immigration process proved to be extremely challenging due to Elena's daughter's disability. They were finally able to move in 1994.

Elena spoke no English, so the move was especially challenging for her. She entered the family business, AIS Water, that she co-owned with her husband and embarked on a second university degree. She drew minimal wages for the first few years and spearheaded the decision to reinvest nearly all of AIS Water's profits into research and development. Her efforts soon paid off and she was able to implement a global expansion plan. AIS Water now has its water disinfection technology operating in over 55 countries worldwide.

Elena is now CEO of AIS Water, which is globally recognised as an innovative leader in the design and manufacture of swimming pool water disinfection technology – quite the career change from Elena's former entertainment career! As a businesswoman, Elena promotes female leadership and Australian manufacturing to the world in what is a male-dominated industry. Her influence has seen AIS Water create many world-first products.

Elena sits on two industry boards, leading the changes she wants to see in the industry, encouraging more women to join the industry and raising awareness to preserve the world's most precious resource, water, through simpler, safer and smarter water disinfection technology. She has been recognised with over 30 international and national business awards.

Elena believes it is her mission to change the way commercial and residential swimming pool water is disinfected globally and to protect our planet's most precious resource – water.



## Elena's Plans for the Future...

AIS Water will continue to expand across the world.

Elena will continue to lobby all levels of government to legislate to ensure pool water and money is saved and public safety enhanced by adopting safe and smart water disinfection technology such as AIS Water's.

She is actively campaigning to have all Australian school and public pools protected by AIS Water's technology. Brisbane City Council and the Queensland Government are leading the way with many pools already using this innovative technology. Other states continue to put the safety of children and the public at risk with poor quality pool water and the dangerous handling and storage of chemicals.

Earlier this year Elena won a prestigious Water Start Connection Exchange scholarship and attended the annual Channels for Innovation Summit held in Las Vegas. She took the opportunity while in the United States to meet with key business targets in Nevada as well as attending meetings across the Caribbean and British Virgin Islands, including with Richard Branson and his engineering team at his privately-owned island, Necker Island. Elena sees unlimited opportunities for AIS in North America and is considering opening a second manufacturing facility in Nevada.

Elena believes that our planet's most precious resource must be treated with respect. Humans are made up of 75% water, the same as planet earth. Elena believes that by treating water in the same way as humans wish to be treated – with love and gratitude – that AIS Water will continue to be a global success.

Her mission includes stopping trillions of litres of water from being wasted from public swimming pools each year and ensuring perfect water disinfection to provide the ultimate levels of swimmer comfort and experience.

She also has the evidence to prove it. Recently Elena commissioned independent university research which shows that AIS Water's technology saves a minimum of 1.6 million litres of water and \$40,000 in water rates in just one 50-metre swimming pool per year. For a city where 100 pools might be present that's a whopping saving of 160 million litres of water and \$4M per year.

Initially AIS Water's technology was the world's best kept secret but during the past five years Elena has spent a great deal of effort educating the market about its benefits. Elena is now seeing the results of these efforts as more commercial pool owners and operators understand and embrace AIS Water's technology.

Her achievements in business have not overshadowed her commitment to

raising awareness about the scourge of domestic and family violence. As part of her involvement with Dancing CEOs, an event that raises funds for Women's Legal Service Queensland to help women escape domestic violence, Elena has made a real difference, raising both significant awareness and funds for this issue. In 2016 she won Dancing CEOs Community Awareness Champion, raising \$24,000 and in 2019 she broke the all-time fundraising record by raising \$83,832 through her innovative community awareness and education campaign. She readily shares her own personal story about DV, proving that vulnerability can be a strength, not a weakness.

Following two business trips to Necker Island (Richard Branson's private island located in the British Virgin Islands (BVI)) with the networking group, Business Chicks, the group decided to build a women's shelter for DV survivors in the BVI. The group is now helping to raise a total of \$350,000 USD and the shelter will be opened by December 2020.