2015 *qldwater* Member Survey Report

This report has been prepared following a survey of *qldwater* members conducted during July 2015. The content was reviewed by the *qldwater* Technical Reference Group on 21 August 2015 and a series of actions agreed. The survey was intended to provide a comprehensive evaluation of *qldwater* activities – rather it was targeted to specifically test proposed changes to its work plan.

The survey is attached as Appendix A.

A total of 8 responses were received, representing:

- The two DREs (QUU/ Unitywater)
- Two larger councils (Gold Coast, Bundaberg)
- Two medium councils (Livingstone, Charters Towers)
- Two small councils (Murweh, Boulia)

Results and actions

SECTION 1

*1 (a)   Should **qldwater** be advocating for the re-introduction of a single mandatory plan?*

100% negative response DREs, 100% positive response councils.

> **Action 1:**
>
> **qldwater** draft a position paper proposing a framework for introduction of a single mandatory plan for councils and seeking input from DREs around any changes sought to the Netserv regulatory framework, SEQ D&C Code, if any.
>
> **As both DREs suggested that some of the questions were less relevant to them and they are not represented by LGAQ, qldwater will engaged SEQ members to propose development a discrete advocacy strategy and seek to engage with necessary government stakeholders to progress. DILGP needs to be better factored into all existing plans.**

1 (b)   Would your organisation make use of a template/ guideline?

As above except Gold Coast City Council would not use a template.

1 (c)   If yes, what are your top 3 priorities from the list provided?

		Y
a.	Asset management and capital infrastructure planning	3
b.	Asset evaluation and renewal planning, inspections, etc.	4
c.	Operations	5
d.	Customer service standards and community consultation strategy	1
e.	Strategic business planning	2
f.	Water security	1
g.	Environmental sustainability	0
h.	Risk management	2
i.	Performance management	2
j.	Human resources	0

*1 (d)   Would you be prepared to contribute to a funding pool to allow the development of these resources by external contractors that **qldwater** manages?*

One positive response, one maybe.

1 (e)   Would you (or your staff) be interested in participating in a steering group established to oversee the development of the template/ guideline, if it proceeds?

Three positive responses.

1 (f)   Option of creating a resource library of old templates etc.

Five positive responses.

Other comments

Various reinforcing the differences in SEQ but one also supporting the addition of supplier/ provider guidance for bulk water supply.

Action 2:

The absence of reference groups to drive an agenda has contributed to the slow response to some of these issues in the past. Aside from position papers, the ability to establish and maintain an appropriate committee will be a significant factor in deciding whether future work proceeds.

W&S Operational Plan Template/ Guideline –

(a) **qldwater will collate all available information/ templates into a library on the web site. This is cost-effective and relatively simple to achieve in the short term. (mostly complete – TRG suggested including more completed sample documents from members, some materials volunteered including e.g. Toowoomba trade waste documents)**
(b) **TRG agreed to selecting asset management as a pilot activity. qldwater to prepare a briefing paper and attempt to get 5 or 6 member representatives to form a reference group to establish if work can proceed**

Proposal for documentation to support supplier/ provider arrangements for bulk water supply -

(c) **Interest also exists around the growing trend towards members being considered as bulk water providers for "independent" service providers. qldwater to prepare briefing paper and establish if there is interest enough to form a reference group.**

Priority list for industry position papers

	Y
Receiving Environment Monitoring Programs, irrigation guidelines	3
Total Water Cycle Management Plans	0
KPI framework and removal of mandatory plans (see questions above)	2
Recycled water legislation – risks in current approach	3
Reef and Murray Darling Basin Commission	0
Future of National Performance Reporting	3
Operational Support for Drinking Water Quality Management Plans and KPI reporting	6
Building over water infrastructure (Queensland Development Code MP1.4)	5

Action 3:

qldwater **proceed with drafting the following position papers and remove others from the priority list:**

- **Building over water infrastructure (Queensland Development Code MP1.4)**
- **Operational Support for Drinking Water Quality Management Plans and KPI reporting, KPI framework and removal of mandatory plans / Future of National Performance Reporting (combined)**
- **Recycled water legislation – risks in current approach (new DOH work in this space)**
- **Receiving Environment Monitoring Programs, irrigation guidelines**

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2 (a) Relevant agency priorities

	Y
DEWS	
Revised/ updated Memorandum of Understanding (LGAQ)	1
Single point of contact/ better whole of government approach to water and sewerage issues including regional water supply security, drinking water regulation (including regulatory "tiering" and recycled water regulation (LGAQ)	5
Dedicated funding program to support local government water and sewerage (LGAQ)	4
Resolve SunWater bulk pricing (LGAQ)	0
Resolve government position on private service providers (LGAQ)	4
Maintain and improve KPI framework including support to smaller providers (LGAQ)	6
Improve practicality of Drinking Water Quality Management planning	5
Establish and fund a mandatory drinking water operator certification program (LGAQ)	1
Establish incentives for cooperative regional infrastructure planning and affordable, fit for purpose technologies	3
Establish incentives for innovation and capacity building through regional collaboration	4
Strategic plan for skills development	4
Other WaterQ priorities	1
Other QWRAP priorities	1
DEHP	
Implement CoP	6
Implement/ incentivise STP operator certification	4
Implement cost-effective and targeted monitoring and question the effectiveness and efficiency of direct toxicity assessments	6
Investigate and address the implications of development encroachment on odour and noise abatement for sewerage infrastructure	4

Expand the "mechanism" (offsets for sewerage capital investment) to include more options for offsets	4
DHPW	
Critically review recent decisions made around meter installation and move towards industry best practice	6
Address remaining shortcomings with MP 1.4 of the Queensland Development Code	3
Establish appropriate industry consultation mechanisms for changes which impact water and sewerage service providers	4
DOH	
Address confusion in drinking water and recycled water regulation	5
OTHER	
Generally address the divide between planning and service provision	1
Establish infrastructure advisory panel(s) to provide advice to councils on major infrastructure investments (including post-completion benefits assessment)	2
Address regulatory inconsistencies between South East Queensland and the rest of the State	2
Are you prepared to invest in further work for any of your identified priorities?	3
Would you (or your staff) be interested in participating in a reference group should one be established for identified priorities?	5

A number of the responses relate to issues which only impact certain service providers. For example, SunWater pricing would be expected to generate stronger interest from SunWater customers.

- The desire for stronger coordination among agencies is clear.
- Improvement in the DWQMP and KPI process is consistent with earlier responses.
- Support for capacity building, through skills development and regional collaboration is clear.
- There is a strong desire in SEQ particularly to resolve the state's position on private service providers.
- All of the identified DEHP issues rate highly. This is likely where the strongest interest in further investment exists.
- There is some concern with recycled water arrangements.

Action 4:

qldwater notes issues identified of significant concern and will consider in work prioritisation. Of the summary points above, all were already considered high priority.

TRG agreed to include a standing agenda item which ensured that position papers/ agency priorities were considered at each meeting.

SECTION 2

1   Costing project – further investment/ reference group

Some interest in further investment, 3 respondents interested in the reference group.

2   Big Data project – further investment/ reference group

Marginal interest in further investment, 3 respondents interested in the reference group including QUU and Unitywater.

3   Customer engagement/ CSS/ value of water proposal

Reasonable interest in investment/ participation (3 + maybes). Comment that the cost appears high. (Was based on 20 hours communications manager time per fact sheet).

4   Customised reporting/ specific benchmarking proposal

Reasonable interest in investment/ participation (3 + maybes). Suggestion of a comparative visualisation tool along the lines of LGAQ one developed/ DEWS. Comments suggesting this should be part of member services/ fees.

5   Other SWIM activities

(a) and (b) - Acknowledgement that the terms of use has already been addressed

(c) General acceptance of the user pays model

(d) Limited interest in idea of a hosted web portal.

Action 5:

     (a) **Costing project – *qldwater* to invite those interested to participate in reference group.**
     (b) **TRG discussed future of Big Data based on briefing note prepared by Rob Fearon - the existing reference group (along with others interested) will be convened to discuss options to bring back to TRG.**
     (c) **Customer engagement – *qldwater* to proceed to proof of concept stage of fact sheets by developing one which assists members in managing community expectations with the release of KPI data publicly. Tentatively titled "Fact or Furphey"**
     (d) ***qldwater* to develop a brief prospectus of possible SWIM-related services, costed, with web presence and discuss options with LGAQ and others for visualisation tools.**
     (e) ***qldwater* to proceed with user pays model for SWIM. Web portal not to be considered further unless circumstances around State Government Open Data change.**

Action 6:

***qldwater* to prepare a series of 3 capability statements/ annual reports for different audiences to replace the current agenda items etc. Targeted at SEQ members, other members and government stakeholders.**

Queensland Water Directorate (*qldwater*)

We need your help on our 2015/16 Forward Work Plan

Background

qldwater has recently undergone a number of changes. The general decline in government grants has impacted our members directly, and is starting to influence the advocacy and other services we offer.

Our operations are guided by a Management Committee which has approved a member survey to help shape our work program for 2015/16 and beyond. This is the first broad-scale survey we have conducted since 2013 when the state was developing the 30 year water sector strategy. The questions have been considered and refined by our Technical Reference Group (TRG) which comprises around 20 *qldwater* members.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could make the time to complete the survey (which should hopefully only take around 15-20 minutes) and return responses to hgold@qldwater.com.au by Friday 10 July 2015.

It is important to note that the primary purpose of this work is to ground-truth our work plan which currently comprises a list of outstanding tasks and new proposals. The information you provide will help our TRG prioritise our efforts and consider supplementary funding options, where gaps exist.

Those who complete the survey will go into a draw to win a $100 Wish Gift Card or one of two personally signed copies of the Steve Hrudey book, Ensuring Safe Drinking Water.

Section 1 – existing proposed projects

1. With amendments to the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act in 2014, the requirement for several different management plans disappeared to be replaced by mandatory Key Performance Indicators. *qldwater* advocated for the retention of one mandatory fit-for-purpose management plan, but this proposal was a casualty of red tape reduction.

   We still believe that every water service provider should have such a plan. Many still maintain Strategic Asset Management Plans and or Total Management Plans, and there is still a requirement for Local Government Asset Management Plans, but these do not reflect the full needs for water and sewerage. TRG has developed a list of components of a "Water and Sewerage Operational Plan" template and prioritised development; however our internal capacity to develop a single plan template has been limited.

   (a) Should *qldwater* be advocating for the re-introduction of a single, mandatory plan? **Y/N**

   (b) Would your organisation make use of a template/ guideline? **Y/N**
   (c) If yes, what would be your top three priorities from the following list of components for development?
       a. Asset management and capital infrastructure planning **Y/N**
       b. Asset evaluation and renewal planning, inspections, etc. **Y/N**
       c. Operations – maintenance plans, system leakage, recycled water, energy management, standards, drawings, processes and procedures **Y/N**
       d. Customer service standards and community consultation strategy **Y/N**

  e. Strategic business planning – pricing policy, developer contribution policy, infrastructure charges policy, financial model, full cost pricing strategy **Y/N**

  f. Water security – drought management including triggers, demand management, water loss management **Y/N**

  g. Environmental sustainability – environmental management, sewage treatment discharge policy, total water cycle management **Y/N**

  h. Risk management – risk mitigation, disaster management **Y/N**

  i. Performance management – monitoring, benchmarking, quality management and continuous improvement **Y/N**

  j. Human resources – skills development, succession planning, health and safety **Y/N**

(d) Would you be prepared to contribute to a funding pool to allow the development of these resources by external contractors that *qldwater* manages **Y/N**

(e) Would you (or your staff) be interested in participating in a steering group established to oversee the development of the template/ guideline, if it proceeds? **Y/N**

(f) If *qldwater* were to gather all existing templates (including old SAMP and TMP guidelines) and continue to gather and maintain other resource materials to support this planning and place in a prominent location on our web site, would this provide a suitable alternative to a Template and guidelines? **Y/N**

Any additional comments?

In 2014, we commenced a process for developing a series of industry position papers, driven largely by a period of "red tape reduction" and concern that an amount of useful legislation which assisted service providers in dealing with customers or protecting assets was being removed. These papers form a platform for advocacy, should an opportunity arise to revisit them. However, development and maintenance of such papers are typically given a low priority with limited existing resources. The following papers have been developed and published on our web site since 2013.

- WaterQ
- Code of Practice for Sewage Pump Stations
- Meter Installation
- Trade Waste

(a) The current list of proposed papers is below. Please identify any you believe should be a priority

- Receiving Environment Monitoring Programs, irrigation guidelines **Y/N**
- Total Water Cycle Management Plans **Y/N**
- KPI framework and removal of mandatory plans (see questions above) **Y/N**
- Recycled water legislation – risks in current approach **Y/N**
- Reef and Murray Darling Basin Commission **Y/N**
- Future of National Performance Reporting **Y/N**
- Operational Support for Drinking Water Quality Management Plans and KPI reporting **Y/N**
- Building over water infrastructure (Queensland Development Code MP1.4) **Y/N**

(b) <u>Can you identify other issues relating to legislative changes (or legislation which should be changed) to put to the TRG for consideration as a position paper?</u>

The following list identifies advocacy priorities by agency.

(a) <u>Please identify those that are particularly important to you and any gaps you can think of:</u>

DEWS
- Revised/ updated Memorandum of Understanding (LGAQ) **Y/N**
- Single point of contact/ better whole of government approach to water and sewerage issues including regional water supply security, drinking water regulation (including regulatory "tiering" and recycled water regulation (LGAQ) **Y/N**
- Dedicated funding program to support local government water and sewerage (LGAQ) **Y/N**
- Resolve SunWater bulk pricing (LGAQ) **Y/N**
- Resolve government position on private service providers (LGAQ) **Y/N**
- Maintain and improve KPI framework including support to smaller providers (LGAQ) **Y/N**
- Improve practicality of Drinking Water Quality Management planning   **Y/N**
- Establish and fund a mandatory drinking water operator certification program (LGAQ) **Y/N**
- Establish incentives for cooperative regional infrastructure planning and affordable, fit for purpose technologies **Y/N**
- Establish incentives for innovation and capacity building through regional collaboration **Y/N**
- Strategic plan for skills development **Y/N**
- Other WaterQ priorities **Y/N**
- Other QWRAP priorities **Y/N**

DEHP
- Implement industry-developed Code of Practice for Sewage Pump Stations and Networks **Y/N**
- Implement/ incentivise STP operator certification **Y/N**
- Implement cost-effective and targeted monitoring and question the effectiveness and efficiency of direct toxicity assessments   **Y/N**
- Investigate and address the implications of development encroachment on odour and noise abatement for sewerage infrastructure **Y/N**
- Expand the "mechanism" (offsets for sewerage capital investment) to include more options for offsets **Y/N**

DHPW
- Critically review recent decisions made around meter installation and move towards industry best practice **Y/N**
- Address remaining shortcomings with MP 1.4 of the Queensland Development Code **Y/N**
- Establish appropriate industry consultation mechanisms for changes which impact water and sewerage service providers **Y/N**

DOH
- Address confusion in drinking water and recycled water regulation **Y/N**

Other
- Generally address the divide between planning and service provision **Y/N**

- Establish infrastructure advisory panel(s) to provide advice to councils on major infrastructure investments (including post-completion benefits assessment). **Y/N**
- Address regulatory inconsistencies between South East Queensland and the rest of the State. **Y/N**

(b) <u>Are you prepared to invest in further work for any of your identified priorities?</u> **Y/N**

(c) <u>Would you (or your staff) be interested in participating in a reference group should one be established for identified priorities?</u> **Y/N**

Section 2 – other project concepts/ possible enhancements to *qldwater* operating model

1. **Costing Service Providers activities**
   Initial investigations have commenced on a "costing" project which is designed to look at unit costs to perform services; for example – simple mains repairs, meter replacements and so on. The work is intended to:

   - Assist members in understanding true costs for internal forward budget development
   - Give members the opportunity to benchmark costs against other service providers
   - Allow members to compare services offered internally against the market

   (a) <u>Would you be prepared to invest in further work on this project?</u> **Y/N**

   (b) <u>Would you (or your staff) be interested in participating in the reference group established for this project?</u> **Y/N**

2. **Big data project**
   The introduction of a performance reporting framework for Queensland service providers along with the broader industry trend for analytics and data analysis has raised interest among many members. A small group has been formed to examining potential opportunities for Queensland service providers for centralised analysis of large data sets. An initial project has been commenced looking at relationships between pricing, water use and climate. Any further projects would require member input and agreement to provide (one-off) access to historical data sets (e.g. billing, water use, SCADA).

   (a) <u>Would you be prepared to invest in further work on this project?</u> **Y/N**

   (b) <u>Would you (or your staff) be interested in participating in the reference group established for this project?</u> **Y/N**

3. **Customer engagement/ CSS/ value of water**
   qldwater has developed a proposal which TRG is considering which includes a number of different options for improving member capacity to engage with their communities in developing, monitoring and reporting against Customer Service Standards.

   LGAQ also has an interest in a collaborative program which improves community understanding of the value of water and sewerage services.

   A further proposal being considered is to develop some member resources to help deal with issues which have a significant public profile but are difficult to address. These would be

informed by member advice but also the significant number of inquiries we receive at times; e.g. fluoridation, dirty water complaints (iron and manganese), meters. These issues can typically cause heated debate, and members are often left struggling with how to get facts across in the face of often organised "nay" campaigns. There is a growing body of work around influencing public behaviour for complex issues which suggests that information alone for education can just add to confusion.

The proposal would be to develop a series of fact sheets with a theme of "debunking myths." The idea is to provide members with concise 1-2 page tools (including editable Word documents) which can be referred to in the *qldwater* web library which address typical social media and other campaigns around an issue. Each fact sheet is expected to cost in the order of $1500 to produce. *qldwater* would fund the development of a small number of trial materials, then seek to develop a model where costs of further fact sheets could be shared among interested members.

(a) Would you be interested in considering a full proposal to develop these materials over time? **Y/N**

4. **Customised reporting/ specific benchmarking activities for members**
   qldwater is potentially able to offer consulting services to members to prepare customised reports based on analysis of SWIM data. The introduction of mandatory KPIs means that 2014/15 data will be the most complete we have captured and as the data is publicly reported, there are limited restrictions on how it is used.

   We have produced a voluntary benchmarking report for the last 4 years and prior to that developed other comparative reports for each member which showed performance relative to industry averages, regional averages and so on. These were informative, but ultimately under-utilised.

   SWIM holds a significant amount of historical data which is protected by licenses authorised by each individual service provider. It is possible to develop comparisons using this data, but strictly only with the permission of the impacted service providers.

   We are contemplating developing templates and procedures for interpreted reports which name service providers being compared (subject to permissions). These reports would be offered on a fee for service basis (discounted consulting rates) to members and in some instances the work may be subcontracted. We expect a growing market for this work once more data is publicly available.

   (a) Can you foresee a future circumstance where you would wish to contract *qldwater* to prepare a benchmarking report which specifically compares the performance of your organisation with others? **Y/N**

5. **Other SWIM activities**
   Our SWIM steering committee met in May and discussed a number of potential activities. Currently, *qldwater* member subscriptions cover all SWIM system maintenance and the salary of its project manager. Historically, grants, member subscriptions and for 2 years a modest "SWIM levy" have supported some system development. There are no immediate development plans, other than to finalise the SWIM*Annual* system for 2015 reporting – a major undertaking funded by members through subscriptions.

The SWIM steering committee has supported a User Pays approach to future SWIM development as well as some changes to the way we manage SWIM licences. Your feedback is sought on the following aspects of the new approach:

(a) SWIM licences will stay (particularly for historical data), however the uptake of the licences has been poor. To ensure the fundamental permission required of SWIM (i.e. being able to report your data to regulators) is met it is proposed:
   a. To include a "terms of use" which includes this permission when the software is installed
   b. To write to member CEOs advising that this change will take place

FEEDBACK

(b) For any new "development" area of SWIM, the work will be costed and details sent to members outlining these costs on a recovery basis (scaled based on member size) / or a grant application will be prepared. Work will only proceed if investment targets are met. Assuming the work is funded by members, and depending on the scale of the work undertaken, access to new functionality may be limited to investors.

FEEDBACK

DEWS is fundamentally interested in data at a point in time; i.e. as reported each year on 1 October. SWIM has the capability for members to amend data (while maintaining an audit trail of all changes). An example of a "development" proposal would be for *qldwater* to host/ maintain a web page for each member which allows simple corrections. It would serve several purposes:

   a. To meet your requirements to publicly report data under the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act. Note: SWIM will already generate a simple "data only" spreadsheet which can be used to meet this need. .
   b. To allow corrections to be publicly available.
   c. To provide the basis for some cost recovery – i.e. *qldwater* could "sell" the "enhanced" or corrected data (with appropriate permissions) from 2014/15 onwards as a product to consultants, academics etc.
   It should be noted that DEWS has advised that all service provider data will be available on the Queensland Government's Open Data Portal, although how and when this will be made available is still being discussed.

FEEDBACK
Thank you for completing this survey. Please email responses to hgold@qldwater.com.au by Friday 10 July 2015 or post to:

Queensland Water Directorate
PO Box 2100
Fortitude Valley BC 4006

If you have any questions, please call us on 07 3632 6850.