

The Queensland Water Directorate

Capability Statement 2019-20



Since 2003, the Queensland Water Directorate (**qldwater**) has represented the interests of our members, taking on a central leadership role in supporting the Queensland urban water industry.

qldwater aims to strengthen the industry to maintain and improve the safety, health, wellbeing and sustainability of Queensland's communities.

We provide our members with:

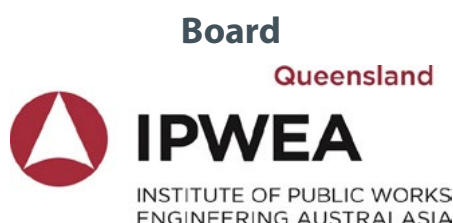
- a strong, dependable and united industry voice
- accurate, reliable and timely information
- critical technical and professional resources
- links to essential skills and training programs to help improve industry capabilities and assist career development
- opportunities for contribution in policy formulation
- support for water management, regional collaboration and efficiency improvements
- information sharing and streamlined water reporting.

Corporate Structure

qldwater is a dedicated industry body with strong working relationships with national water industry associations as well as Local, State and Commonwealth government agencies.

qldwater is a business unit of the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia, Queensland (IPWEAQ), reporting to the Institute's Board.

We maintain strong relationships with our other "parent" bodies, the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), Australian Water Association (AWA) and the Local Government Managers Association (LGMA).



Work program development and review - Technical Reference Group

Chair:

Troy Pettiford (Whitsunday Regional Council)

Deputy:

Narelle D'Amico (Bundaberg Regional Council)

Australian Water Association
Banana SC
Bundaberg RC
Burdekin SC
Cairns RC
Central Highlands RC
City of Gold Coast
Fraser Coast RC
Gladstone RC
Gympie RC
LGAQ

Livingstone SC
Logan CC
Mackay RC
Rockhampton RC
South Burnett RC
Toowoomba RC
Townsville CC
Unitywater
Urban Utilities
Whitsunday Regional Council



Our Members 2019/20



Affiliate Members

**BLIGH
TANNER**

**Community
Solutions**

**DETECTION
SERVICES**
WATER LOSS MANAGEMENT

**Queensland
Government**
DNRME
DoH

**Solomon
Water**

VEOLIA

**VIRIDIS
CONSULTANTS**

TRILITY

Key Programs

Advocacy and Member Services

Water Taste Tests
(state and national,
WIOA Water of Origin)

qldwater
on tap



Resource Library

swim
DATA REPORTING

100% of Queensland Service Providers used SWIM for mandatory reporting last FY (up from 99%)

swimlocal
DATA MANAGEMENT

The licensed version of **swimlocal** currently has 41 subscribers (up from 34). The **swimlocal** annual data reporting tool is freely available to all members.

waterskills
PARTNERSHIP

There are currently 46 subscribers to the Water Skills Partnership for 2019-20

(**qldwater** members plus Seqwater)



Queensland
Water Regional Alliance Program

Five funded regions with
30 local governments participating.

QWRAP covers **55%** of the State
and **21%** of the population across **200** communities.

Three have formed Water Alliances.

'Emerging regions' are discussing collaboration
and some have developed joint projects.

Message from the Technical Reference Group Chair



As Chair of the **qldwater** Technical Reference Group (TRG), I convene a group of over 20 professionals drawn from council-owned service providers from across the state who meet

regularly to review projects and activities, meet with key agency representatives, plan events, troubleshoot technical problems and broader policy issues, and maintain an important network for information exchange.

The group has strong representation from small, medium and large councils and SEQ utilities.

Being part of TRG means getting to take part in the deliberations and participate in the filtering process to choose activities and projects.

New TRG members are welcome, and while not every **qldwater** member will have the capacity to participate directly, there is an open invitation to raise issues of importance and project ideas.

I commend to you this annual statement of capabilities and program highlights from the 2019-20 financial year and trust that your organisation can continue to support the important work of the Directorate.

Troy Pettiford
Whitsunday Regional Council



Key Highlights 2019 - 2020

Advocacy and industry representation

qldwater has continued to represent the Queensland water industry on key issues and negotiations with state and federal governments throughout 2019-2020.

In 2019, our focus was on consultation with members to develop an industry roadmap – examining key sector priorities to refine the *qldwater* work plan, articulate opportunities for further sector collaboration, and develop policy recommendations for government, and other major stakeholders. The final roadmap release has been delayed due to emerging priorities, but the final document is expected to focus on these themes:



1. Data transforming the water sector /
Next Gen Water



2. Strategic sector-wide investment



3. Regional innovation



4. Harmonising water regulation



5. Resource recovery and renewables



6. Catchment resilience in a changing environment



7. Exceeding customer expectations



8. Industry Skilling



9. Small, remote and nimble

At the time of writing, the COVID-19 pandemic was front of mind. *qldwater* has ensured a key role in supporting the industry as part of the co-ordinated state government response to the pandemic, addressing resource shortages – personnel, supplies including chemicals and critical spares.

Importantly, we have focussed on ways to minimise the bureaucratic load on members, ensure clear communication, and facilitate the sharing of useful information through our network to support local and regional management of ongoing water and sewerage services.

The following topics have been the focus of engagement with state agencies throughout 2019-2020:

Department of Natural Resources, Mines & Energy and Department of Health

- Key Performance Indicators and Reporting with a review of both the existing state KPIs and broader review of the National Performance Report managed by the Bureau of Meteorology
- Support for the review of statutory and other drinking water guidelines
- Drinking Water Operator Certification, improvements to drinking water legislation and statutory reporting
- Improved communication and planning among state agencies
- Regional alliance activities including increased departmental involvement in program governance.
- Joint advocacy on behalf of members ensures a rational approach to regulatory reporting and a principle of common sense being applied to new departmental initiatives.

Department of Environment and Science

- Meetings of the Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP) input into a range of departmental policies and regulation (detailed below) and creation of an emerging contaminants standing group following an industry workshop

- Advocacy on Reef policy, including recognition of the enormous investment made by members in environmental protection, and commencement of a strategic Reef Stewardship project
- Concerns around recycling and reuse initiatives including biosolids, and offsets policy.
- The relationship with the department continues to grow with active participation in *qldwater* initiatives from across the agency and significant improvement in consultation approaches.
- Both DNRME and DES have been active participants in *qldwater's* Annual Forum and Water Connections Tour for several years, with both activities serving to give departmental representatives exposure to real world issues.

Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

- Advice on the department's investment strategies to ensure that water operations and other key training priorities receive generous state funding offsets
- Strategic advice to reflect the changing nature of the industry (including national advocacy through the Water Industry Reference Committee and Water Industry Skills Taskforce).

Submissions, position papers and publications include

- Queensland's Urban Potable Water and Sewerage Benchmarking Report 2018/19
- Qld Urban Water Sector feedback on the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan V2.0 Consultation Draft
- Comment on draft revisions to the Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling: managing Health and Environmental Risks (Phase 1)
- Qld Urban Water Sector Feedback on the Department of Environment and Science End of Waste Code proposed for water treatment residuals
- Notes from the 2019 Asset Management Workshop
- QWRAP Research Report 5.2: in-ground asset cost analysis looking at cost implications for in-ground assets of Queensland's ageing water and sewerage assets
- Contribution to WSAA Joint Submission to the Parliamentary Committee for the inquiry into and report on the deployment, adoptions and application of 5G in Australia, other related submissions
- Urban Water Submission on End of Waste Code for Biosolids
- *qldwater* and Water Skills Partnership submission to Productivity Commission review of skills and workforce development
- PFAS Basics Fact Sheet
- *qldwater* Roadmap Priority Sections – for review
- Regular articles and contributions to the Engineering for Public Works Journal, Industry Queensland and other industry publications
- Many additions to the *qldwater* member Resource Library

Representative Groups

qldwater relies on the efforts of our many member representatives who go above and beyond their day jobs to contribute to sector improvements, including:

- Our Technical Reference Group
- Our Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (and now Emerging Contaminants Standing Group)
- Water Skills Partnership members;
- Water Industry Worker Group; and
- All of the individuals who help us with opinions, technical advice and other support for our work program in an environment which increasingly challenges capacity to undertake meaningful consultation.

The online forum established for COVID-19 has been a highlight in how our industry rallies for mutual support when it's needed.



Major Programs



Data management and reporting – SWIM

The **Statewide Water Information Management (SWIM)** program is a local database/online water reporting portal that collates data submitted by service providers to streamline mandatory reporting requirements to a range of State and Federal agencies. Having a centralised reporting system strengthens industry negotiations to achieve standardised definitions and reduces the incidence of poorly considered one-off data requests. It also increases the reliability of benchmarking and comparative data – a critical tool to improve industry performance and provide customer confidence.

With 41 Service Providers currently using the full licensed version of **swimlocal** (and still growing), the program continues to evolve in line with customer needs.

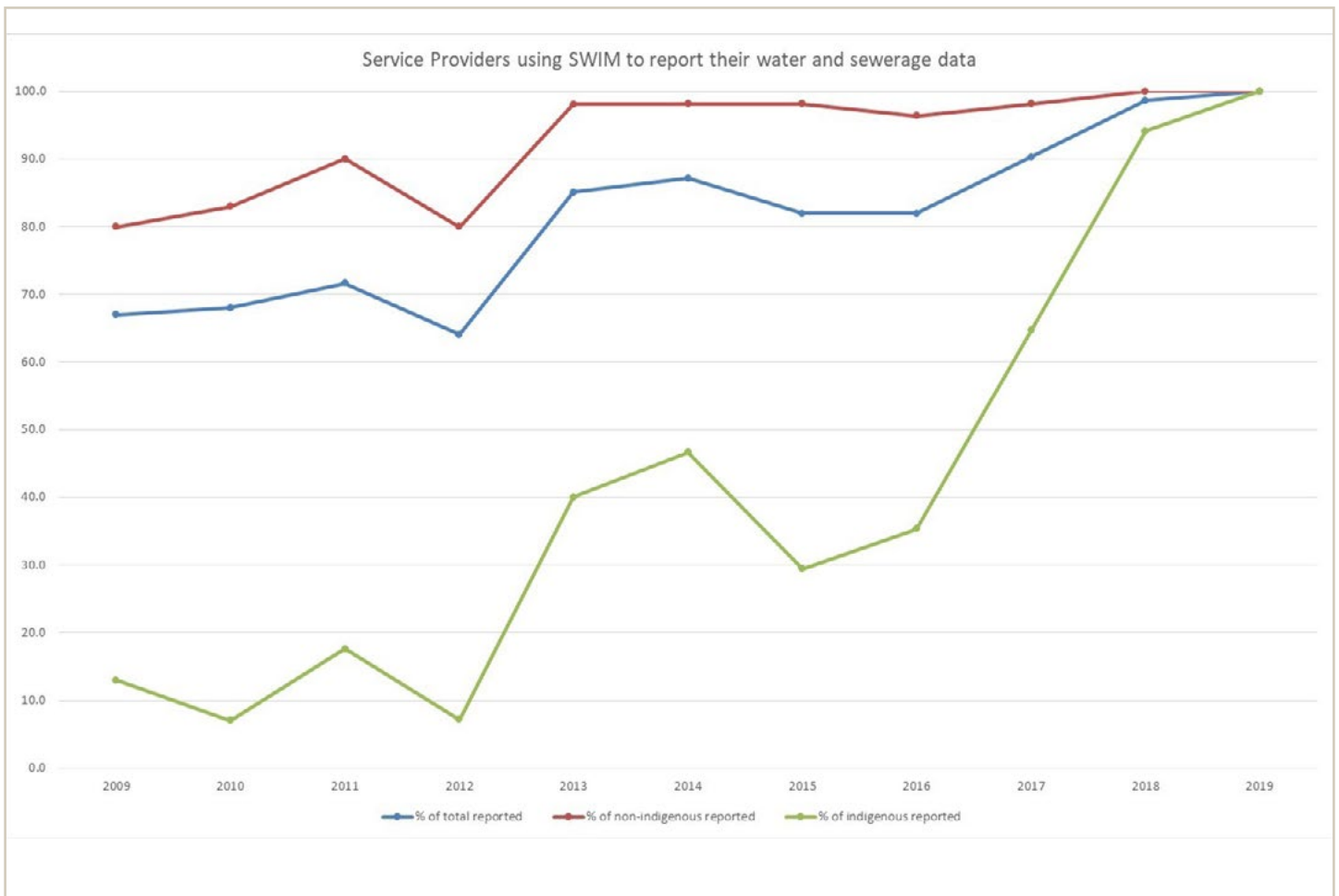
All **qldwater** members have access to a free version of the swimlocal software (to enter their regulatory required annual water and sewerage data and some metadata) and the SWIM member's portal (for managing additional metadata).

The full licensed version of **swimlocal** includes significantly more functionality to help manage data at a local level:

- Indicators module which allows SPs to manage Indicator data more frequently
- Task module which allows SPs to manage their 'regular' maintenance tasks
- Alerting via SMS/email, QA/QC processes, mobile data entry and other enhancements

SWIM also supports a significant advocacy program, continually seeking to refine and reduce the reporting burden on members.

The ninth annual **qldwater Water and Sewerage Benchmarking Report** was published in the period, with a range of training initiatives provided to members.



Capacity Building – Queensland Water Skills Partnership

After nine years of operation, the **Queensland Water Skills Partnership** has established itself as the pre-eminent industry-led skills program for the water industry in Queensland.

The Partnership performs a number of functions in this role including securing skills and training funding for industry, producing reports and workforce planning documentation, coordinating industry wide skills/workforce development projects, piloting training initiatives, information sharing and collaboration opportunities and representation for Queensland on numerous national industry skills committees.

The Partnership is the key industry vehicle for progressing the skills agenda for the urban water industry in Queensland – both in developing a focus for implementing strategy and ensuring the State and Federal governments invest appropriately in this essential industry.

There are currently 46 subscribers to the Water Skills Partnership for 2019/2020.

2019-2020 Key Projects

- The third annual **Queensland Water Skills Forum** provided an excellent information sharing opportunity and valuable input for a range of existing project priorities and potential new initiatives to support the skilling and training needs of Queensland water service providers.
- Continued role as a Vocational Education and Training Industry Advisory Organisation for the Department of Education, Small Business and Training, securing another three year contract to provide skills advice
- Participation in the Technical Advisory Committee with the revised Certificate II in Water Industry Operations and Certificate III in Water Industry Operations being endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments Skills Council.
- Appointed to the Technical Advisory Committee to review the Certificate IV in Water Industry Operations and Certificate IV in Water Industry Treatment qualification and associated Units of Competency with a view to combining them into one qualification.
- Continued discussions with DNRME to consider options including mandatory minimum qualifications for drinking water operators as suggested in the Value of Operator Competency Research Report released by Water Research Australia.
- Commenced work to develop a Queensland-wide workforce plan for operators to better understand the existing workforce demographics and qualifications coverage.
- Continued growth in **Aqua Card** completions, an online training course covering basic water quality awareness for those working on or around water infrastructure, with more than 500 completions registered.
- Commenced development of the wastewater equivalent of the Aqua Card, the 'Brown Card' with release expected in 2020.
- Positive response to call for sample documents of Operator Positions Descriptions with a number of sample documents added to the Resource Library
- Supported Mackay, Townsville, Cairns, Whitsunday and Burdekin Councils with 30 employees signing up to the Water Industry Workers regional pilot program and a coordinator employed with funding support through the QWRAP program
- Surveyed Water Skills Partnership members on possible options for micro-credentialing in the water industry to support the Queensland Government skills strategy "Skills for Queensland – Great training for quality jobs"
- Response to a Jobs Queensland discussion paper on "The Future of Work in Queensland to 2030 – Evolution or Revolution."
- Continued role as secretariat for the Water Industry Operator Certification Taskforce (formerly Water Industry Skills Taskforce) with CEO Dave Cameron as Chair.
- Ongoing partnerships with key agencies and organisations.
- Support for the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils in establishing a regional traineeship program.
- Participation in WSAA Workforce Planning initiatives.

Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program (QWRAP)

qldwater has been working with the **Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)** on regional collaboration initiatives for the urban water industry since 2006 and this program was expanded in June 2010 through a joint Memorandum of Understanding, which includes the Queensland Government (DNRME).

QWRAP is an industry-led initiative built on this partnership, to investigate regional collaboration. It has created a significant opportunity for Queensland councils to discuss regional-scale water and sewerage management opportunities, including alternative institutional models and water reform. It has been funded by the DNRME until June 2022.

QWRAP has generated genuine and consistent engagement at political and managerial levels in 30 participating councils across five regions comprising more than 50% of Queensland's area and nearly two thirds of the population outside of the south east corner. This has resulted in numerous collaborative projects as well as investigation of alternative institutional models.

QWRAP Regional updates and 2019/2020 highlights:

RAPAD Water and Sewerage Alliance

The first QWRAP Water Alliance to form, the RAPAD Water and Sewerage Alliance in western Queensland has a small population spread over an area 1.6 times the size of Victoria. Recent projects include a collaborative review of telemetry and SCADA systems, ongoing reservoir and network maintenance and investigating STP regulatory requirements and performance across the region.

Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils

Councils in the Far North Queensland region have completed a number of projects including:

- Participation by two councils in the broader Water Industry Worker Program
- A regional drinking water quality symposium exploring key and unique water quality issues in the region
- Yarrabah analysis of water and sewerage networks.

Whitsunday Isaac Mackay Water Alliance

The Whitsunday Isaac Mackay Water Alliance has arguably the most ambitious raft of projects including coordinating a training framework for water industry workers, optimising operational control of four regional STPs, hosting a regional operators forum to improve regional safety communication and knowledge sharing and the joint design of contracting arrangements for two new regional STPs.

Wide Bay Burnett Water Alliance

The WBBROC Water Alliance located immediately north of SEQ developed a four-year plan to guide strategic collaboration and identify and prioritise opportunities for collaboration including shared services, resources and assets. The group also investigated water security across the smaller schemes in the region, developed a joint Design and Construction Code and continued the largest collaborative sewer relining contract in Queensland.

Downs and Surat Basin Water Group

The most recent QWRAP region to be funded, the five Downs and Surat Basin (DASB) councils immediately west of SEQ have improved understanding of water security issues across the wider regional through the expansion of water security resources for regional councils. The group has also developed regional standards for SCADA systems.

Emerging Regions

There has been ongoing interest from regions that are not currently funded through QWRAP, particularly in north and central Queensland and through the remote North West RoC. These groups are participating in technical meetings to discuss collaboration as well as undertaking initial joint activities where they are clearly beneficial for their communities.

In addition to the activities being driven independently in each region, the Chairs and Coordinators from each group meet regularly to compare experiences and learnings and provide feedback and updates to the DNRME who fund the program through LGAQ.

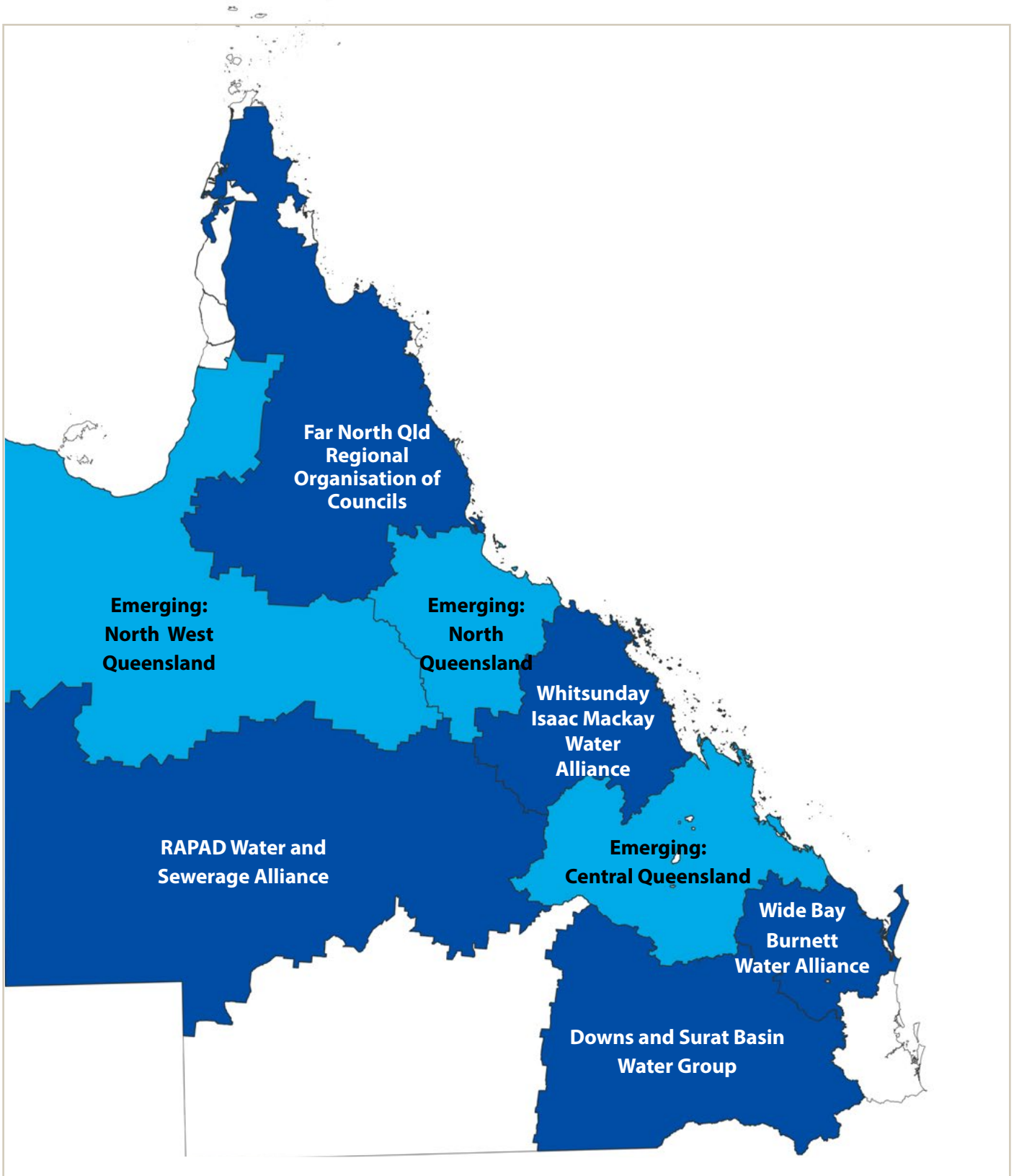
QWRAP Research

Highlights include the finalisation of an analysis of the asset management processes for water and sewerage across the state.

Four new fact sheets were created to communicate some of the outcomes of the two major research reports on “Infrastructure Cliff? Queensland’s ageing water and sewerage assets” published in 2018 and 2019.

The fact sheets cover at a high level some of the findings from the research, which may be useful in trying to communicate the issues around ageing infrastructure to a non-technical audience. The sheets cover:

- The Queensland Urban Water Industry
- Queensland’s ageing pipes
- What to do with ageing pipes: Pipe Whispering
- Regional Network Support



Events

Each year *qldwater* seeks to hold a number of regional events to engage with our members from across Queensland. Most years, we hold between three to six regional conferences which bring together over 200 member representatives from 40 water service providers to network and exchange information.

In addition, we support many of our parent bodies' and collaborators' conferences.

Industry Workshops

Reef Councils Wastewater Stewardship Strategic Assessment (WWSSA) Project Workshop 2 – November 2019

Reef Councils are investing in continuous improvement in local assets and activities to reduce total discharges to the Reef, improve water quality and respond to increasing community expectations and regulations. However, investment in high-tech sewage treatment plants (STPs) is expensive with diminishing returns.

This workshop aimed to brief and update elected members and council officers on the activities and outcomes of the WWSSA project, review methodology to identify potential trial sites for further analysis and review and refine draft council applications for trials.

Water Skills Forum – March 2020

The third Queensland Water Skills Forum brought together more than 70 Managers, HR and Learning and Development staff from water service providers from across Queensland along with representatives from a number of State Government Departments, Jobs Queensland and Registered Training Organisations to consider skilling and training challenges for the water industry and initiatives to address them.

The forum received fantastic feedback from delegates and the key message of the day was that collaboration is critical to addressing our skilling challenges.

Delegates were asked to nominate their most important skilling and workforce priorities and there was general agreement that we need to encourage more trainees to join the industry, develop them through programs such



as the Water Industry Worker competency development framework and provide organisational cultures that skill up and support current and aspiring leaders to be effective people managers.

Conferences

- NQ Regional Conference and tour of Haughton Pipeline, Townsville – 4-5 July 2019
- CQ Regional Conference and Technical Tour, Hervey Bay – 25-26 July 2019
- SEQ Regional Conference and Technical Tour, Gympie – 23-24 April 2020 (Cancelled due to COVID-19)

Annual Forum - September 2019

The sixth *qldwater* Annual Forum was held on 11 and 12 September 2019 at the Logan Metro Sports & Events Centre.

Day 1 included a tour of the new Cedar Grove Environmental Centre which will service the Greater Flagstone priority Development Area and includes a new STP Biological Treatment Bioreactor, advanced odour control system and constructed wetlands.

Day two was devoted to workshops aimed at refining the *qldwater* industry roadmap based on ten key priorities.

Workshop topics included strategic sector-wide investment, harmonizing water regulation, understanding and exceeding customer expectations, building jobs in a changing industry, catchment resilience in a changing environment and data transforming the water sector.





Water Connections Tour - May 2020

Since 2005, *qldwater* has hosted a five-day intensive tour visiting up to eight remote and regional councils. The event's current primary focus is on touring water, sewerage and treatment plant infrastructure with a number of State agency representatives to meet key staff and elected representatives to improve understanding of the challenges of delivering water and sewerage services.

The tour delegation generally includes *qldwater* staff and key representatives from LGAQ, Department of Environment and Science, Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs, Department of Health and the Technical Reference Group Chair.

Unfortunately, the planned 2020 tour will need to be rescheduled due to COVID-19. The program included an exciting small communities' forum to inform roadmap planning – with a number of low cost, fit for purpose water and sewage treatment technologies to be showcased. It is hoped this event at least can be rescheduled for later in 2020.

Water Taste Tests 2019/20

Mackay Regional Council maintained bragging rights for the best tasting water in Queensland, again winning Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test at the Annual Forum before going on to win the Best Tasting Tap Water in Australia competition held at the 3 Peaks Festival in Dunkeld Victoria.

Water from Mackay's Marion Water Treatment Plant then made its way to the USA, securing silver at the 30th Annual Berkeley Springs International Water Tasting competition.

The water taste test continues to shine a spotlight on the hard work and efforts by water service providers in delivering a food grade quality product to our taps 24/7, 365 days of the year, and we welcome Sigura as our taste test sponsor for 2020.



Ongoing Programs and Activities

qldwater website – a wealth of industry relevant resources

The **qldwater** website averages approximately 14,000 hits per month. After the home page, the **qldwater** blog page accounted for the most hits at 8,837 for the year.

The 'member resources' section of the website contains a wealth of information relevant to our members including:

- Manuals, guidelines and templates
- Service provider example documents
- Factsheets
- Reports and position papers
- Joint industry responses
- Research and case studies
- Queensland Water Directory – a list of service providers for services relevant to the industry, including laboratory services, industrial cleaning, equipment sharing, relief operator services and more
- Online training modules
 - Water Quality / Aqua Card (now hosted at www.watertraining.com.au)
 - Induction to the Queensland Water Industry
 - Water Industry Legislation
 - Water Industry Risk Management (free for members)
- Industry Forum (Zoho) and blog

Over the course of 2019-2020, we added more than 100 documents to the resource library, including tender specifications, event presentations, member sample documents and many reports and position papers.

The most viewed item was the "Operations and Maintenance Manual for Groundwater Bores for Drinking Water" - actually produced by the NSW Water Directorate and shared through our MOU, with 78 downloads.

Other popular documents included the draft guidelines for low exposure recycled water schemes, our water demand management factsheets, the DNRME Drinking Water Quality Management Plan template and the Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling.

Communications

Each year **qldwater** sends approximately 40 e-flashes and skills e-flashes to inform the industry on relevant matters such as legislation changes, events and other industry news.

Email notifications and forum posts are used to update members on SWIM indicators and reporting requirements.

SEQ members also receive a tailored SEQ update every four months.



qldwater Staff



Dave Cameron
Chief Executive Officer

Dave commenced with **qldwater** in 2008 and formally took on the CEO role in 2015 after an extended acting period. Dave oversees all **qldwater** programs with a focus on managing the advocacy agenda.

Dave sits on a number of industry committees, including:

- LGAQ Strategic Water and Sewerage Advisory Group
- SEQ Research and Innovation Network
- SEQ Joint Operations Committee
- National Water Industry Operator Certification Taskforce (Chair)
- COVID-19 – Water Supply Continuity Steering Committee
- Reef Rescue Plan, Wastewater Stewardship Project Steering Committee



Ryan Cosgrove
Research / Project Coordinator

Ryan commenced in April 2016 and was appointed to undertake research and project coordination activities for QWRAP as well as project coordination for the maintenance of the SEQ Design and Construct Code.

Ryan, along with Rob, has been leading the effort to support the new Reef Stewardship work.



Carlie Sargent
Manager, Skills

Carlie commenced with **qldwater** in February 2018 after four years with IPWEAQ. She is responsible for managing the Queensland Water Skills Partnership program and industry capacity building projects as well as other strategic projects that emerge.

Carlie sits on the Water Industry Reference Committee (for the National Water Training Package) and Workforce Planning Community of Practice.



Louise Reeves
Technical Writer

Louise joined qldwater in 2019 with a position funded through the Reef Stewardship contract. Louise provides support to QWRAP, SWIM and the SEQ Code.



Rob Fearon
Director Innovation Partnerships

Rob commenced with **qldwater** in 2006 as CEO and is currently the Director, Innovation Partnerships. Rob's current major project focus is the Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program as well as advocacy work with DES and DNRME. Rob sits on a number of industry committees, including:

- **qldwater** Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel
- SWEAP Emerging Contaminants Standing Group and Consortium Steering Group
- Partner Steering Group (DNRME, LGAQ, **qldwater**)
- QWRAP committees in five Queensland regions.
- LGAQ Water and Sewerage Advisory Group
- COVID-19 – Water Supply Continuity Steering Committee
- Reef Rescue Plan, Wastewater Stewardship Project Steering Committee
- Standards Australia Service Activities Committee



David Scheltinga
Manager, SWIM

David commenced with **qldwater** in 2011 and is responsible for managing the SWIM program. David works remotely from Hervey Bay and is involved in:

- Performance Reporting Steering Committee (DNRME)
- SWIM Steering Committee
- Water Monitoring Standardisation Technical Committee



Desiré Galton
Manager, Communications

Desiré commenced with **qldwater** in 2011 and works part-time managing **qldwater's** communications such as corporate publications, newsletters, promotional materials and website updates. She also assists with events and other projects. Desiré sits on the Queensland Collaborative Water Education Networking Group and is on the Management Committee of the Noosa Integrated Catchment Association.

Executive Assistant

Position currently vacant.

Financial Overview

As a not for profit organisation, **qldwater** typically receives ~\$600,000 per annum from membership subscriptions. The annual budget, including these subscriptions, grant funding and revenue from programs is in the order of \$1.3 million. This provides an operating budget for key projects and employs approximately 7 full time equivalent staff along with occasional technical contractors. As a mature collaborative industry hub, **qldwater** continues to deliver a significant and growing return on investment to members.

Our membership target includes 100% of local government and local government-owned water service providers in Queensland which was achieved in 2015/16 and again in 2019/20. Achieving this target puts us in the best possible position to meet our advocacy objectives with various levels of government and achieve strategic priorities.

Contact Details

qldwater

6 Eagleview Place
Eagle Farm Q 4010
PO Box 2100, Fortitude Valley BC QLD 4009

T: 07 3632 6850

Email: enquiry@qldwater.com.au

Web: www.qldwater.com.au

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Water Connections Tour:

