

# The Queensland Water Directorate

## Capability Statement 2021-22



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 pride ourselves on being responsive, adaptable and nimble, introducing new programs like the Essentials and Fundamentals Webinar series during COVID and tackling emerging contaminants through the **qldwater** Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Contaminants (qCRAC).

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 to policy formulation
- support for water management, regional collaboration and efficiency improvements
- information sharing and streamlined water reporting
- research in response to industry needs

# 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.

## Board

Queensland



# IPWEAQ

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC WORKS  
ENGINEERING AUSTRALASIA

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## Work program development and review - Strategic Priorities Group

The Strategic Priorities Group meets quarterly to help set the strategic priorities for **qldwater** and has expanded significantly due to COVID. The current group includes members from the following organisations:

### 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

Charters Towers RC

Cherbourg SC

City of Gold Coast

Fraser Coast RC

Gladstone RC

Goondiwindi RC

Gympie RC

Isaac RC

LGAQ

Livingstone SC

Logan CC

Mackay RC

Maranoa RC

Mareeba SC

North Burnett RC

Palm Island ASC

Redland CC

Rockhampton RC

South Burnett RC

Southern Downs RC

Tablelands RC

Toowoomba RC

Townsville CC

Unitywater

Urban Utilities

Whitsunday Regional Council



**AUSTRALIAN  
WATER**  
ASSOCIATION

# Our Members 2020/21



## Affiliate Members



# YEAR IN REVIEW 2020/21

## MEMBERSHIP ACHIEVED

- 17 of 17 Indigenous Councils
- 52 of 52 Non-Indigenous Councils
- 2 of 2 council-owned statutory authorities in SEQ (Unitywater, QUU)
- 1 of 2 state government-owned Statutory Authorities (Gladstone Area Water Board)

**18**  
Affiliate  
Members

## SKILLS AND TRAINING

- **51 Subscribers** to Water Skills Partnership (up from 46 in 2019/20)
- **385** Aqua Card completions (850 in total to date)
- **283** Brown Card completions since launch in Oct 2020
- Launched Foundation Skills Micro-credentials
- Launched Fundamentals Webinar Series



## REPORTING AND BENCHMARKING

- **100%** of members use SWIM for reporting purposes
- The licensed version of **swimlocal** currently has **47 subscribers** (up from 41)
- The **swimlocal** annual data reporting tool is freely available to all members
- Power BI dashboard launched and embedded on **qldwater** website



## REGIONAL ALLIANCES

- **Nine** regions across regional Queensland have now held QWRAP discussions encompassing around **90% of the state's area** and public water service providers.
- Eight of these regions are currently undertaking joint activities with QWRAP including six that have reviewed their **joint institutional models**.
- Four of these reviews have resulted in **formal Urban Water Alliances** that include between three and seven council members.



## ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

- **Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP)** convened two workshops on the treatment of biosolids to deal with Contaminants of Emerging Concern and measurement of PFAS in biosolids to inform compliance.
- Established the **qldwater Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Emerging Contaminants (qCRAC)** with 8 founding members expected to grow significantly in 2021/22. Dedicated qCRAC website with curated selection of 140+ locally relevant research papers and plans to implement a community education campaign.



## NETWORKING AND EVENTS

- Water Skills Forum
- Essentials Webinars: 7
- Fundamentals Webinars: 9
- BOTB Qld Water Taste Test
- FNQ Conference Atherton
- Small communities workshop, Goondiwindi
- WQ Regional Conference, Barcaldine
- Biosolids Workshop
- SPG Meetings: 4
- Event support/presentations for affiliated organisations including IPWEAQ, WIOA, AWA

## ADVOCACY AND REPRESENTATION

- Submissions (direct & joint): 15+
- Committees Representing members: 20+ (almost doubled since COVID lockdown)
- MOU with NSW Water Directorate

## MEMBER RESOURCES

- Full migration of website
- 204 new documents added to Resource Library
- New Reef Councils portal
- New qCRAC knowledge portal
- New Careers in Water web portal

# Message from the Technical Reference Group Chair



As Chair of the *qldwater* Strategic Priorities Group (SPG), I convene a group of over 20 professionals drawn from the Directorate's diverse membership. The transition from face to face only to online and hybrid

meeting formats has meant a significant growth in numbers, therefore providing a well-received opportunity for broader representation and involvement from our members across the state.

In writing this piece for the capability statement I reflected on *qldwater's* role "as the central advisory and advocacy body within Queensland's urban water industry," and as "a collaborative hub, working with its members to provide safe, secure and sustainable urban water services to Queensland communities" and what this really means for my organisation.

In the last 12-18 months I've witnessed the way the Directorate has successfully adapted to provide information and linkages to support business continuity through a pandemic, go through a significant business transition and maintain its advocacy approach at a state and national level.

My organisation has participated directly in several projects initiated through the SPG and other reference groups including Lower Emission Level (LEL) gas investigations and the development of Asset Criticality tools and guidelines. We actively participate in a range of Queensland Water Regional Alliance and skilling activities, and the networks I've established, both personally and to support the development of my staff have been exceptional.

New SPG members are always 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 through the group, to ensure members are heard and support given where needed.

I commend to you this annual statement of capabilities and program highlights and trust that your organisation will continue to support the important work the Directorate undertakes for the industry.

Troy Pettiford  
Whitsunday Regional Council



# Key Highlights 2020 - 2021

## Advocacy and industry representation

*qldwater* has continued to represent the Queensland water industry on key issues and negotiations with state and federal governments throughout 2020-2021.

Since 2019, our focus has been 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. There has not been a single document released, but with the completion of the Sustainable Services for Regional and Remote Communities workshops in Goondiwindi in February 2021 we have developed a master list of priorities with detail customised for each relevant audience. The focus priorities are:



**Emerging - Urgent Priorities**



**Strategic sector-wide investment**



**Regional innovation  
and regionalisation**



**Harmonising water regulation**



**Resource recovery  
and renewables**



**Catchment resilience in a  
changing environment**



**Understanding & exceeding  
customer expectations**



**Industry skilling & capability**



**Data transforming the water sector /  
Next Gen Water**



**Small, remote and nimble**

We have written to six key state agencies welcoming newly appointed Ministers and Directors General and at the time of writing were working through setting up meetings, targeting Regional Development Manufacturing and Water, Environment and Science, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training and State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning.

The five “urgent” priorities developed to summarise the topics to be addressed at these meetings (and subsequently endorsed by LGAQ’s Water and Sewerage Advisory Group) are:

1. Sustainable investment and financial sustainability - including pricing and affordability
2. Raising the bar – establishing agreed minimum levels of service across the state
3. Asset management challenges including a growing infrastructure deficit
4. Effectively managing both growth and decline (incorporating water security)
5. Access to appropriate skills and capability

Through COVID, our engagement with the Water Services Association of Australia, NSW Water Directorate and other organisations has grown significantly and we are progressing a number of national advocacy topics including infrastructure investment, industry governance and skilling.

The Productivity Commission’s draft report on the future of the National Water Initiative was released in late 2020 and we have attended various briefings, provided presentations and two separate submissions.

Other key submissions and representations on behalf of members this financial year include:

- National Performance Indicator Review (including the proposal to expand the NPR to include all water service providers)
- Queensland Drinking Water Quality Management Plan Guideline Review
- Amendments to the Telecommunications Carriers Powers and Immunities Framework, AC pipe management guidelines, critical infrastructure, federal government on COVID recovery investment to support regional Australia (jointly with WSAA and other water directorates)
- Draft Guideline – Activities Releasing Contaminants into Reef Catchment Waters (and several other formal and informal submissions to the Department of Environment and Science including a revised Sewage Pump Station standard)
- Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development
- At least six national industry skilling surveys/ submissions and state submissions including business cases to the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to increase subsidies for key qualifications
- Development of a (draft) blanket exemption for high pressure water cleaning of AC sewers
- An industry-led push to review MP1.4 of the Queensland Development Code relating to building over infrastructure.



## 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 Strategic Priorities 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 was a great example of how our industry rallies for mutual support when it's needed.

## Committees and Reference Groups

Together, **qldwater**:

- convenes 8 significant long term industry reference groups including our strategic priorities group, water skills partnership and sewerage and water environmental advisory panel
- represents industry on 4 major government-convened committees and 5 major association-led committees
- participates and assists in 7 regional alliance groups
- and represents members in another 20+ current but ad hoc committees nationally.



# 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 47 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).

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

- An 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

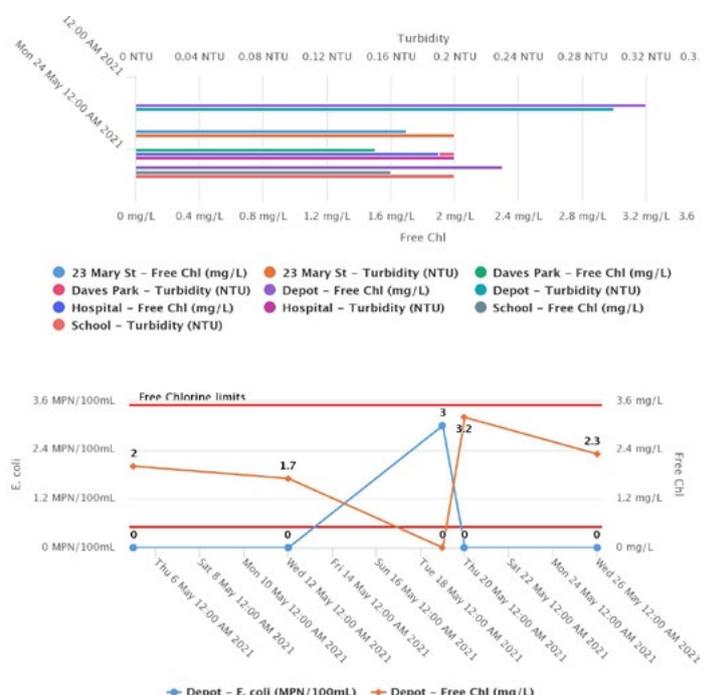
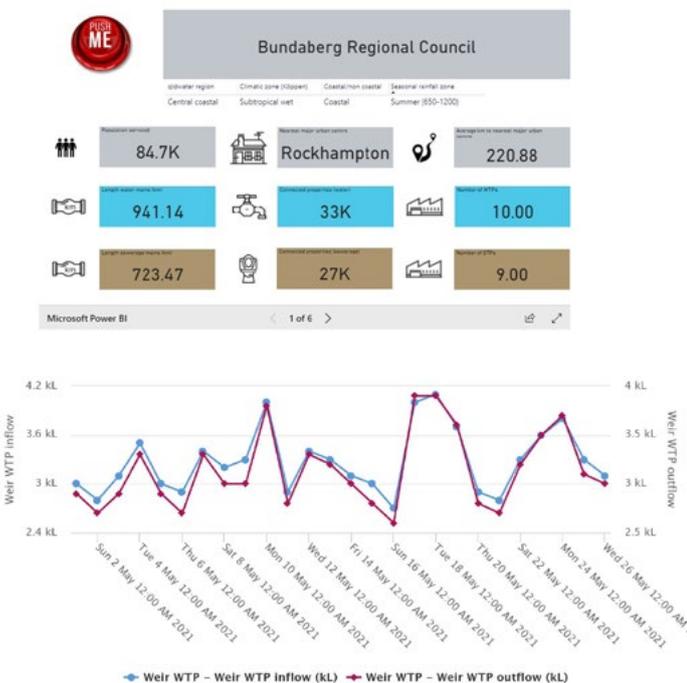
- A new web-based reporting module (with graphing and dashboards) is currently being developed with a July 2021 release date.

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

It is receiving growing support from key regulators and industry experts. Through the National Performance Report (NPR) review conducted in 2021, it was clear that SWIM represented the most robust and user-friendly system for NPR data collection and collation in the country.

The tenth annual *qldwater* Water and Sewerage Benchmarking Report was published in the period, with a range of training initiatives provided to members. For the first time the report was published as a package that includes two sets of slides in PowerPoint with charts for all water reporting entities separated into medium, large and extra-large service providers (>1,000 connections), and small and indigenous service providers.

The package includes a document providing explanatory notes and additional insights that should be read in conjunction with the charts. The slide deck and explanatory report contains a suite of indicators and benchmarking data for all 72 of Queensland's council owned urban water/sewerage utilities.



## Capacity Building – Queensland Water Skills Partnership

2021 marks ten years of successful industry collaboration by the Water Skills Partnership to address critical skills needs facing the urban water industry in Queensland. At the time of writing, the Partnership has been shortlisted for the Queensland Training Premier's Industry Collaboration 2021 Award. The winner will not be known until September, but the nomination is well deserved recognition of the efforts of many industry representatives who have worked together to deliver initiatives to support Queensland water industry skilling and workforce development.

The industry investment via subscriptions to the Partnership, paired with ad hoc State support over the last decade, has resulted in the delivery of many beneficial programs of work and sound advice to support broader State and industry investment strategies. The Partnership's priorities are determined by subscribers with two formal meetings per year, as well as regular engagement via email, online forums and input from the broader industry gathered at the annual Water Skills Forum.

The purpose of the Water Skills Partnership is to ensure that all water industry staff have the relevant skills and experience to deliver safe, secure and sustainable urban water and sewerage services to Queensland communities. It achieves this purpose by:

- securing funding for accredited water industry training,
- capturing workforce data and 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 and sewerage services 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 51 subscribers to the Water Skills Partnership who worked together during 2020-21 to deliver the following initiatives:

### 2020-2021 Key Projects

- The fourth annual Queensland Water Industry 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 an Industry Skills Advisor for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) as part of a contract to provide skills advice through to 2023.
- Established the Fundamentals Webinars series to build an online resource library of common water and wastewater treatment and network operations and maintenance tasks with twelve recordings added to the online library by the end of the FY.
- Following feedback from Water Skills Partners, launched the Water Industry Foundation Skills Micro-Credentials in Water Treatment, Wastewater Treatment and Network Operations. These entry-level short courses are based on knowledge components from a small number of accredited units from the training package and supported by funding from DESBT.
- Supported the rollout of regional training cohorts in Far North Queensland and North Queensland, with more than 20 water and wastewater treatment operators from 10 councils receiving training.
- Supported the expansion of the Water Industry Worker program into the Wide Bay Burnett region with 12 operators participating and ongoing support for the coordinator employed with funding support through the QWRAP program for roll-out of a second round of training in North Queensland. The regional pilot was recognised with a Queensland AWA Organisational Excellence Award in 2020.
- Continued growth in our online training platform at [www.watertraining.com.au](http://www.watertraining.com.au) with 158 Council staff and 227 Contractors completing the Aqua Card this financial year. Aqua Card is an online training course for people working on or near water infrastructure.

- Launched the wastewater equivalent of the Aqua Card, aptly named the Brown Card, an online training course for people working on or near wastewater or recycled water infrastructure. To date 236 Council staff and 47 Contractors have completed the Brown Card.
- Established a Careers in Water web portal including career facts sheets about qualification requirements and career pathways and capturing the experiences of recent trainees about their roles and training experiences through recorded interviews.
- Celebrated the achievements of operators with annual awards for the Young Operator and Operator of the Year (Civil/All-Rounder) in conjunction with WIOA.
- Worked with the Queensland Department of Health to provide input to the development of contextualized formal training for drinking water operators within Indigenous Councils.
- Submitted a business case to DESBT with recommendations for future VET investment to meet the training needs of the water industry.
- Supported the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (RDMW) with data collection and industry engagement for its investigations into future operator competency requirements with inputs to inform future *qldwater* Operator Workforce Planning efforts.
- Continued role on the Water Industry Reference Committee responsible for oversight of the National Water Training Package.
- 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.
- Participation in 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 to combine them into one qualification.
- Participated in consultation with Federal and State Governments to progress key reforms to improve the VET system including the quality of the VET workforce, the quality of VET training and role of industry engagement.



## 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. QWRAP was commenced in 2011 as an industry-led initiative to investigate regional collaboration more formally. 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 received funding from the Queensland Government since 2012 and is currently administered by the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water with funding available until June 2022.

QWRAP has generated genuine and consistent engagement at political and managerial levels across regional Queensland. The groups that have participated in QWRAP are summarised below.

### QWRAP Regional updates and 2020/2021 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. The Alliance collaborates on a range of projects ranging from ongoing reservoir and network maintenance streamlining regulatory requirements as well as aligning and optimising treatment approaches directed by a strategic plan endorsed by the region's mayors.

#### **Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils**

Councils in the Far North Queensland meet regularly to collaborate on water and sewerage projects prioritised by the ROC. In the past year this has included a successful joint sewer relining program and hub training for water treatment operators.

#### **Whitsunday Isaac Mackay Water Alliance**

The Whitsunday Isaac Mackay Water Alliance undertakes a range of joint activities to enhance and optimise services of the three participating councils and seeks to share knowledge and resources under a strategic plan developed by the Alliance steering group. An ongoing Water Industry Worker training program has been highly successful in extending beyond the region to include councils from other parts of the state.

#### **Wide Bay Burnett Water Alliance**

This Water Alliance was established under the Wide Bay Burnett ROC but now operates as an independent group reporting back to the participating councils. Major projects initiated through the group, such as an award-winning sewer relining program, continue

under the oversight of the group and new projects are exploring strategic planning for water and sewerage collaboration and streamlining regulatory requirements. The Alliance also has a major role in the Water Industry Worker training program led by the WIM Alliance.

#### **Downs and Surat Basin Water Group**

The Downs and Surat Basin (DASB) councils have undertaken a range of joint activities including a review of cybersecurity for water and sewerage services. The councils have not elected to progress with formal collaboration but are exploring regional water security at a broader scale with other councils located in the same catchment.

The two western-most councils of this group (Maranoa and Balonne) have joined with four councils to their west to form the SWQ Water and Sewerage Alliance immediately west of SEQ to improve understanding of water security issues across the wider region through the expansion of water security resources for regional councils. The group has also developed regional standards for SCADA systems.

#### **South West Queensland Water and Sewerage Alliance**

This group of six councils are the most recent to form a Water Alliance and have progressed more rapidly than any other regional group in Queensland.

Learning from the institutional reviews in other regions, the SWQROC has streamlined their review of available collaboration options and elected to move directly to form an Alliance.

Overseen by the ROC, a technical group is focussing on skills and training needs for the region and opportunities for joint procurement.

## North West Regional Organisation of Councils

While the group has considered participation in QWRAP in the past, currently collaboration on water and sewerage management is being tested through a trial technical program reviewing SCADA needs across five of the groups councils. Other projects including developing skills at local and regional scales and automatic water metering are under discussion as possible future collaborations.

## North Queensland ROC

The NQ region has been holding technical meetings for two years and the ROC is currently considering forming a QWRAP group. Collaborative technical projects are being undertaken with the major initiative being a research project drawing councils from other regions to research management of biosolids and contaminants of emerging concern from sewage treatment in north Queensland conditions. This is a first-of-its-kind for regional Queensland and Australia.

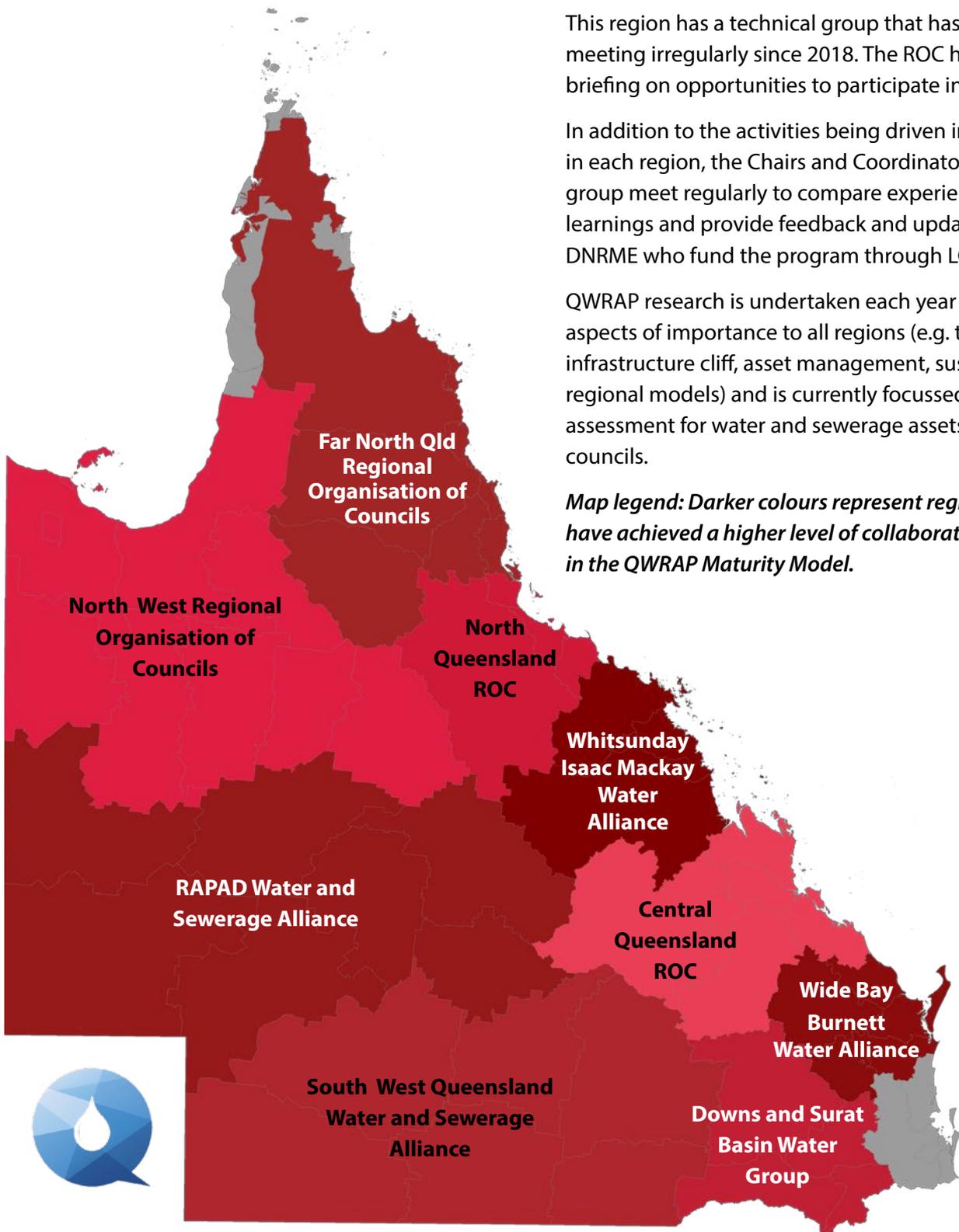
## Central Queensland ROC

This region has a technical group that has been meeting irregularly since 2018. The ROC has asked for a briefing on opportunities to participate in QWRAP.

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 is undertaken each year to study aspects of importance to all regions (e.g. the infrastructure cliff, asset management, sustainable regional models) and is currently focussed on criticality assessment for water and sewerage assets in regional councils.

*Map legend: Darker colours represent regions which have achieved a higher level of collaboration "maturity" in the QWRAP Maturity Model.*



## Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP)

Evolving from the ERA 63 Expert Panel in 2012, SWEAP is an expert group of representatives from water service providers across Queensland that meets regularly to provide advice on environmental management and regulation and to foster collaboration on joint submissions to the Queensland Government on policy issues.

The group aims to be a driving force to move the industry from reactive environmental management towards a focus on stronger industry leadership with the following objectives and priorities:

- Foster partnership and industry leadership towards a whole-of-catchment management approach (rather than focus on individual point sources).
- Seek Smart Regulation, flexibility and self-responsibility (rather than a 1990s-style compliance framework and laboured communication between Regulators and utilities).
- Challenge perverse outcomes from regulation and policy (e.g. any unbalanced response to contaminants).
- Predict and proactively respond to pressures on cost to serve.
- Foster innovation.

In response to concerns about contamination from legacy and emerging chemicals, a Standing Group was formed to deal with issues around contaminants of emerging concern. The group's function is to rapidly collate and share information from across the sector and beyond to help inform the whole sector.

In April 2021, the group convened two workshops, one on the treatment of biosolids to deal with Contaminants of Emerging Concern (COEC) and the second, co-convened with the Department of Environment and Science (DES) to examine the measurement of PFAS in biosolids to inform compliance with the End of Waste Code. Recordings of the workshops are available on the *qldwater* website.

## Queensland Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Emerging Contaminants (qCRAC)

At the behest of the SWEAP group, expressions of interest were sought from members for developing a Consortium of water utilities to participate in national industry research and innovation on contaminants of emerging concern (COEC). Individually, most service providers do not have the resources to maintain membership in national research organisations or to influence the direction of research. It was felt that a cooperative consortium coordinated through *qldwater* could provide opportunities to direct research in technology and policy at state and national levels on this important topic. As a result, the *qldwater* Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Emerging Contaminants (qCRAC) was established with the initial aims to:

- Jointly address political drivers and Regulator and public reaction to media concerns on COEC.
- Avoid duplication, information collection.
- Influence research and advocacy at state, national and international scales.
- Create new resources for members.

The Consortium has eight founding members that have worked together with *qldwater* to deliver the following:

- Dedicated website for qCRAC members for resource and information sharing, including a curated selection of 140+ locally-relevant research papers linked from the site, covering topics on emerging contaminants from PFAS to microplastics to endocrine disruptors.
- A prioritisation of COEC for member councils, where relevant contaminants are ranked by perceived "hazard" "level of interest" & "distribution" to focus effort.
- The expedited public release through the RTI process of a PFAS ambient monitoring dataset for coastal Queensland collected by the Department of Environment and Science.
- A document of collected advice for managing a PFAS contaminated site study as required by the Environmental Regulator under an Environmental Evaluation notice.

The Consortium is actively pursuing research collaboration opportunities at a state and national level, through its growing links with Australian research centres undertaking research into COEC relevant to the urban water industry .

# 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

### Steve Hrudehy Presentation – July 2020

*qldwater* sponsored the keynote presentation at the WIOA Virtual Water Conference on 22 July. Dr Steve Hrudehy, Emeritus Professor from the University of Alberta discussed drinking water risk management: converting hindsight into foresight. The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines were substantially upgraded in 2004 to adopt a risk management framework that was mirrored by the WHO Drinking Water Guidelines adoption of Water Safety Plans.

### Atherton Conference – October 2020

The Far North Queensland regional conference was our first foray into hybrid in-person and online events. Hosted by Tablelands Regional Council and held at the Local Disaster Coordination Centre in Atherton, the event included a virtual tour and a trivia competition at the end of the day.

### Queensland Water Skills Forum – March 2021

Almost 100 water industry stakeholders participated in the fourth annual Queensland Water Skills Forum on Thursday 4 March, hosted as a hybrid event with most delegates attending in person and the remainder online.

The forum covered a number of key themes that had been identified by Water Skills Partners as their most pressing skilling and workforce priorities, including leadership development, succession planning and future training requirements.

Feedback was invited throughout the day from delegates participating online and those in person about the priorities they would most like to address through the collaboration of the Water Skills Partnership and the common issues identified were:

- The need for a mandatory minimum competency standard for operators;
- Tools to support retirement transitions;
- Addressing the FTE caps within utilities to allow for the recruitment of more trainees; and
- Skilling opportunities for future and current leaders.

Copies of all presentations are **available for download** by *qldwater* members, Water Skills Partners and forum attendees.

### Sustainable Water and Sewerage Services for Regional Communities – February 2021

The joint Queensland and NSW Water Directorates' Sustainable Services for Regional & Remote Communities workshop held in Goondiwindi on 17- 18 February 2021 challenged the minds of attendees to help inform the *qldwater* industry roadmap and develop practical recommendations for service providers and decision makers, including regulators, policy makers and elected representatives at all levels.

The urge to get out of the office after the long COVID hibernation was clear in the number of in-person registrations (70+!), but the hybrid event attracted a strong interest in online attendance as well. The event started out with a bus tour to the Yelarbon Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP), Water Treatment Plant and reservoir construction site guided by Goondiwindi Regional Council's Manager Water & Sewerage, Trevor Seth.

The bus tour then returned to the Goondiwindi/ Waggamba Community Cultural Centre where we set the scene for day two, presenting five controversies and provocations:

1. Funding water and sewerage services responsibly and sustainably
2. Choosing fit-for-purpose technology
3. Negotiating levels of service
4. Appropriate approaches to compliance and regulation
5. Readiness for alternative supplies

Presentations and panel discussions covered topics like common challenges for regional communities, technical traps when generic solutions are attempted, compliance approaches in regional Qld and NSW, regional collaboration and innovative solutions .

### Emerging Contaminants and Biosolids Workshop – April 2021

The Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP) convened an online Biosolids Workshop with two sessions. The first focused on treatment of biosolids to deal with COEC while the second, co-convened with the Department of Environment and Science (DES) examined the measurement of PFAS in biosolids to inform compliance with the End of Waste Code.



Topics for session 1 included treating Biosolids in Northern Queensland (JCU), transformation of Australia's Biosolids Resource (ARC Centre), Biosolids Gasification (Logan), Options for Water Utilities (SE Water), Biochar technology (RMIT), Anaerobic Digestion and Thermal Treatment (UQ), Modular Thermal Treatment (IQEnergy) and a qCRAC update from *qldwater*.

Topics and speakers for session 2 included an update on the End of Waste Code by DES, an estimation of PFAS in biosolids (UU), practical and operational considerations (Townsville, Unitywater, Arkwood, Gold Coast), CRC CARE and an update from the National Chemical Working Group on compliance issues (DES) followed by discussion on preferred analysis techniques and development of guidance on methodology and data requirements for EOW Code.

### Barcaldine Regional Conference - May 2021

The West Queensland Regional Conference focused on service delivery in the west including a site tour of the Barcaldine Water Ski Park, presentations and panel discussions. It also featured the return of the Best of the West Water Taste Test ten years after its inception in 2011.

## Webinars

### Essentials Webinars

When COVID-19 prevented our usual regional events from going ahead, we pivoted and immediately started to offer a series of webinars to keep our members engaged.

Topics have included:

- THM Management in Drinking Water Networks (panel session chaired by David Sheehan from Coliban Water, Victoria)
- A seven-year major sewer upgrade project (Urban Utilities)
- Preparing future leaders to transition from tools to team (Troy Pettiford from Whitsunday Regional Council)
- Innovation in asset management (Asset Institute Australia)

- The Trusted Information Sharing Network (TISN) Mutual Aid Guidelines (Water Services Sector Group)
- TigerNix Asset Failure Predictive Analytics (Townsville City Council)
- Lagoon pH Licence Amendments (Fraser Coast Regional Council)
- Megashut! (Urban Utilities)
- Biosolids to Bioproducts (Unitywater and Verterra)
- CRC-p the WSAA Perspective (WSAA)
- Logan gasification demonstration plant (Logan City Council)
- Show me the money! Options for demonstrating sustainability in a water business (Strategic Asset Management)
- Long Term Recycled Water Release Program – constructing marine crossings on the Gold Coast (City of Gold Coast)
- The Sunwater Cultural Journey (Sunwater)
- Protect Sewer: Investigate sewer corrosion using multidisciplinary techniques (Advanced Water Management Centre, UQ)
- Our program management software – Monday.com. Capital delivery success (Bundaberg Regional Council)
- Productivity Commission Review of National Water Reform (Productivity Commission)
- *qldwater* Response to the Productivity Commission Review (*qldwater*)
- CCTV and asset data management at Gladstone Regional Council (Gladstone Regional Council)
- Managing PFAS in biosolids at the City of Gold Coast
- Smart Linings CRC Learnings (Urban Utilities)
- High-tech tools for high risk condition assessments (Unitywater)
- The national ColoSSos Project (Water Futures)
- Microalgal and anaerobic water treatment at Helidon Regional STP with a focus on efficient nutrient recovery and greenhouse gas reduction (Urban Utilities)

## Fundamentals Webinars

With financial support from the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, *qldwater* (through the Water Skills Partnership) started a series of Fundamentals Webinars to provide practical demonstrations of the most common water and wastewater treatment and network operations tasks, presented by industry experts. All presentations and recordings are available **on the *qldwater* website**.

Topics this year have included:

- Electrical safety when working on metallic pipes (Murray Thompson)
- The Fundamentals of Pumps (Terry Fagg)
- Chemicals and Hazardous Substances (Murray Thompson)
- Backflow / Cross Connection Awareness and Control (Murray Thompson)
- Water Main Flushing and Environmental Impacts (Murray Thompson)
- Water Hygiene – Working on Water Mains & Services (Murray Thompson)
- The Fundamentals of Chlorine Disinfection (Terry Fagg)
- High-Pressure Water Jetting – Clearing Sewer Chokes & Blockages (Murray Thompson)
- Media Filter Backwashing (Terry Fagg)

## Annual Forum - September 2021

While the Annual Forum skipped a beat in 2020, we are looking forward to a great event this year including an Automated Metering Workshop, site tours on North Stradbroke Island, an Asset Management Workshop and a strategy session to keep building on the roadmap. These events provide an exceptional and cost-effective means of networking and information sharing.

## Water Connections Tour

Due to COVID-19 the annual Water Connections Tour was put on hold, but plans are underway to recommence in 2022. The five-day intensive tours of water, sewerage and treatment plant infrastructure across remote and regional councils were introduced in 2005 to introduce State agency representatives to key staff and elected representatives to improve understanding of the challenges faced by our members in delivering water and sewerage services.

The tour delegation generally includes *qldwater* staff and key representatives from LGAQ, the Strategic Priorities Group Chair and representatives from 4-5 state agencies.

## Water Taste Tests 2020/21

Usually hosted in conjunction with the *qldwater* Annual Forum, the 2020 COVID-19 version of the taste test included a fun and interactive trivia session with members dialing in from across the state as a panel of judges made their way through the samples.

Livingstone Shire Council made a comeback with water from a pristine dunal system at Waterpark Creek and treated at the Woodbury Water Treatment Plant selected as the top drop in the 2020 Sigura Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test.

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.

The taste test returned to its roots out west with the Best of the West Water Taste Test held in Barcaldine in late May. The statewide taste test will again be hosted as part of the Annual Forum in September 2021.



# Ongoing Programs and Activities

## **qldwater website – a wealth of industry relevant resources**

During the 2020/21 Financial Year the **qldwater** website moved across to a new platform, a major migration of more than 2,500 documents, all categorised and placed in various secure zones.

New “portals” created on the website this financial year includes:

- Reef Councils program pages including Wastewater Treatment Options, Life Cycle Analysis and Investment Strategy as part of the LGAQ Cleaner Wastewater Initiative.
- qCRAC Knowledge Portal
- Careers in Water, including recordings of interviews with trainees and water industry workers
- Essentials and Fundamentals Webinar Series (including presentations to download and recordings embedded on the site)

The **qldwater** website averages approximately 10,000 hits per month. After the home page, the **qldwater** blog page accounted for the most hits at 3,300 for the year followed by Upcoming Events (3,029), Reporting and Benchmarking (2,462), Essentials Webinars (2,304) and QWRAP (2,244).

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 including the Aqua Card and Brown Card (hosted at [www.watertraining.com.au](http://www.watertraining.com.au))
- Induction to the Queensland Water Industry
- Water Industry Risk Management (free for members)
- Industry Forum (Zoho) and blog

## **Communications**

Each year **qldwater** sends approximately 50 e-flashes and 12 skills e-flashes to inform the industry on relevant matters such as legislation changes, events and other industry news.

Quarterly newsletters keep members up to date with past and upcoming events, program updates and case studies / features. This year we also introduced paid advertising into these publications.

Email notifications and forum posts are used to update members on SWIM indicators and reporting requirements. The Zoho forums have experienced significant growth since COVID lock-downs. They are a particularly useful mechanism for establishing new interest groups, storing records of discussion and useful documents.



# 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. In 2020 Dave was presented with the Australian Water Association (Queensland) Distinguished Service Award.



**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. Rob received the AWA regional service award in recognition of his pivotal role with QWRAP and promoting regional collaboration.



**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.



**David Scheltinga**  
**Manager, SWIM**

David commenced with *qldwater* in 2011 and is responsible for managing the SWIM program.

David works remotely from Hervey Bay but travels across Queensland to provide SWIM training and assist member Councils with reporting and benchmarking queries.



**Desiré Gralton**  
**Manager, Communications**

Desiré commenced with *qldwater* in 2011 and manages *qldwater's* communications such as corporate publications, online training courses, newsletters, promotional materials, and website updates. She also assists with events and other projects.



**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.



**Louise Reeves**  
**Program Research Coordinator**

Louise joined *qldwater* in 2019 with a position funded through the Reef Stewardship contract.

Louise provides support to QWRAP, SWIM and the SEQ Code and recently took on the coordinator role for the newly established consortium for contaminants of emerging concern (qCRAC).



**Naomi Carragher**  
**Project Support Assistant**

Naomi joined the Directorate in 2020 and has quickly established herself as the friendly face of *qldwater*.

Naomi organises all *qldwater* events, handles customer queries and provides support to the *qldwater* team.

# 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, 2019/20 and 2020/21. 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 Us

In 2020, *qldwater* moved to new premises in Eagle Farm as part of the IPWEAQ Public Works Professionals building. The new facilities have a range of training and meeting rooms for hire with several booking and catering packages available.



**PWP**  
PUBLIC WORKS  
PROFESSIONALS

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WITH US!



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“The Queensland Water Directorate (*qldwater*) is the central advisory and advocacy body within Queensland’s urban water industry and represents members from Local Government and other water service providers across Queensland.”