



QueenslandWater

The Water Industry's Resource for News, Events and Information

Issue 3

SO WHO HAS THE BEST TASTING TAP WATER IN QLD?

We are working our way towards answering this question with three regional winners of the infamous Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test now confirmed.

North Burnett Regional Council's Eidsvold scheme earned them bragging rights in the South East corner after a tough competition against Bundaberg Regional Council, Gympie Regional Council, Unitywater, Queensland Urban Utilities, Wide Bay Water and Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council.

Recent floods in the South West area reduced the number of entries in this region, but Toowoomba Regional Council still earned their place in the race after knocking Balonne and Murweh Shire Councils out of the competition.

Last week, Rockhampton Regional Council joined the grinners when they took the Central Queensland award against Isaac and Central Highlands Regional Councils.

Designed to stir up some friendly rivalry between our members, the aim of the competition is also to bring our regional members together to network and talk about issues affecting our industry and how best we can manage these.

The quest continues with three more regional finals in the pipeline before the finals to be decided at the Water Industry Operators Association (WIOA) Conference on the Gold Coast on 7 June. **qldwater** will pay for flights and accommodation for one representative of each regional winner to attend the finals.

Have a look at our website at <http://www.qldwater.com.au/Mini-Conferences> to figure out which event is closest to you, and come along to hear a range of speakers discuss issues and case studies related to your region.

AND DON'T FORGET TO BRING A WATER SAMPLE!!

Thanks to our taste test sponsors:



Winners are grinners! George Lech presents the South West region's winning trophy to Graham McKeon, Kevin Flanagan and John Betts from Toowoomba Regional Council.



Trevor Harvey, from North Burnett Regional Council, accepted the limited edition lego water treatment plant on behalf of his region.



George Lech with Central Queensland winners Jason Plumb and Bill van Wees from Rockhampton Regional Council.

Update from A/CEO

Welcome to the 3rd edition of Queensland Water.

The state election is over and by the time you read this council elections will be getting pretty close as well. We know now that there are several substantial changes to state departments and what this means for water and sewerage services will soon become apparent.

Most of the pre-election announcements around water have been focussed on South-East Queensland and our colleagues at LGAQ are working with **qldwater** to ensure the new government is well briefed on key issues for urban water service providers.

We welcome a new chair of our Technical Reference Group in Bruce Gardiner from Cairns Regional Council and Deputy Chair in Trevor Harvey from North Burnett Regional Council. There are a number of changes to the operations of this group in 2012 to improve the way members have input into qldwater activities and the way issues identified at TRG are communicated to members.

Our former chair, David Wiskar has taken up a new role at NT Power and Water. I'd like to take the opportunity on behalf of myself and Rob Fearon to thank David for his dedication and guidance – while the establishment growth of the Directorate for the first six years can

be attributed to a number of people it's safe to say that it would not have been as successful without him. We join with members who have wished David well in his new role.

We are firmly entrenched in regional conferences and forums with members and so far each event has been fantastic with a lot of interaction. The taste test is going down a treat – it has been a bit of a baptism by fire for me in the ways of the media. Don't miss the chance to attend the remaining events around the state; you aren't going to see a better value for money networking and professional development opportunity.

Finally, we're taking advantage of the regional forums to start to capture a few more pictures and stories from members. You'll start to see some of those things infiltrate this newsletter and other future circulars. This is all part of building the Queensland Water industry brand. We all know that it's full of great people and a collaborative culture but if we are to compete in the new world for skilled employees and the attention of decision makers, we have to get a lot better at promoting that.

Dave Cameron

A/CEO

Need a pat on the back?

There are a number of ways to show your employees that they have been doing a great job, and we plan to make it easier for you with a number of awards that not only serve as a pat on the back to your valuable staff, but also showcases the programs or systems you have implemented successfully in your workplace.

IPWEAQ Excellence Awards

Each year the IPWEAQ presents Excellence Awards to encourage, well – you guessed it – excellence in the innovation, development, completion and management of local government and public works projects. There are two main categories – people and projects – and each year **qldwater** sponsors project-driven awards for Water, Waste Water, Sewerage and Drought Management.

We categorise these into:

- projects over \$10million,
- projects \$5million to \$10million,
- projects \$1million to \$5million,
- projects under \$1million (new category), and
- projects using innovation and/or introduction of new and/or improved techniques

Entrants are also encouraged to present on their entries at the IPWEAQ conference in October 2012.

For more details including formats for submissions, visit <http://www.ipweaq.org.au/Queensland/Education/AwardsScholarships/> or email cwarne@ipweaq.asn.au. Nominations close 27th July 2012.

WIOA Operators Awards

Established in 2010 by **qldwater** in conjunction with the Water Industry Operators Association of Australia (WIOA), the Young Operator of the Year and Operator of the Year (Civil) awards will again recognise the achievements of operational staff employed in the Queensland water industry.

The awards aim to encourage outstanding operational performance of Queensland water industry employees, and will be presented to operators who showed excellent performance, initiative and all round attention to detail.

The awards will be presented at the WIOA Annual Queensland Water Industry Operations Workshop Conference Dinner at the Gold Coast on 7 June 2012. The winners will receive an all expenses paid trip (value \$2,000 each) to join the WIOA delegation on a tour of water and wastewater facilities in New Zealand as well as attending the Water Industry Operations Group NZ conference in May 2013, a perpetual plaque which their employer keeps for 12 months plus an individual trophy which is kept by the winner.

Please visit <http://www.qldwater.com.au/qldwaterAwards> for more information, nomination details and application form. Nominations close on Friday 11 May, so **ACT NOW** to recognise the efforts of your operational staff!

Skills / Training Update

Queensland Water Skills Partnership

We welcome the Banana Shire Council as the most recent member to join the Queensland Water Skills Partnership. Established in 2011, the partnership managed to attract 12 water service providers in the first year to provide input into the projects to be undertaken with its small operating budget as well as priority areas for state skills investments in water.

The partnership has set a number of key priorities including

- Coordinate a Water Skills Video Library for the collection of a suite of videos for key tasks/activities (pending successful funding application).
- Legislative responsibilities training: develop a training course (online and face-to-face options) for training in key water industry legislative responsibilities and requirements.
- Develop application to include water industry in Skills Queensland Gateway to Schools Program.
- Regional Training Alliances: develop a mechanism for regions to coordinate training activities between providers, including shared calendar and regional training hubs. Pilot a number of short course training workshops in regional hubs.
- Continuing representation for Queensland on numerous national water skills reference groups including key project steering committees.

Annual membership is based on \$25 per water/ sewerage employee and while the investment to date does not support a huge program, it clearly demonstrates to the State and Commonwealth that our industry is committed to collaboration around skills, which in turn strongly helps our capacity to attract further investment. Along with \$600,000 towards Certificate IV and higher VET qualifications through the Strategic Investment Fund, this partnership has been able to successfully lobby for generous support and open access to traineeships in water operations resulting in many millions of dollars invested in the industry.

Asset Management Training Pilot

Asset management training was identified as the number one training priority by members of the Queensland Water Skills Partnership in late 2011. As a result, **qldwater** is trialling a South-East Queensland pilot in the Vocational Graduate Certificate in Asset Management. The course will comprise of face-to-face workshops over six days as well as completion of workplace assignments. There are sixteen participants in the pilot course from a variety of Councils and water entities. The course will be subsidised by funding secured by **qldwater** from Skills Queensland's Strategic Investment Fund.

The training will be provided by the newly established Institute of Quality Asset Management (IQ-AM), a private registered training organisation working in conjunction with the Australian Water Association.

Feedback will be gathered from participants to inform future asset management training courses and to support future funding applications.

Short Course Programs

Following up on requests and interest from members, **qldwater** has recently begun developing and trialling low cost short course training workshops targeting gaps identified by members. At the moment the courses include a Supervisor Training Workshop and Water Legislation (including reporting) Training Workshop, both targeted at operational staff. These workshops will be continually reviewed and modified to best meet the needs of the industry. If you are interested in hosting one of the workshops, or have suggestions for other short courses you would like **qldwater** to investigate, please contact Michelle Hill at mhill@qldwater.com.au or on 3632 6853.

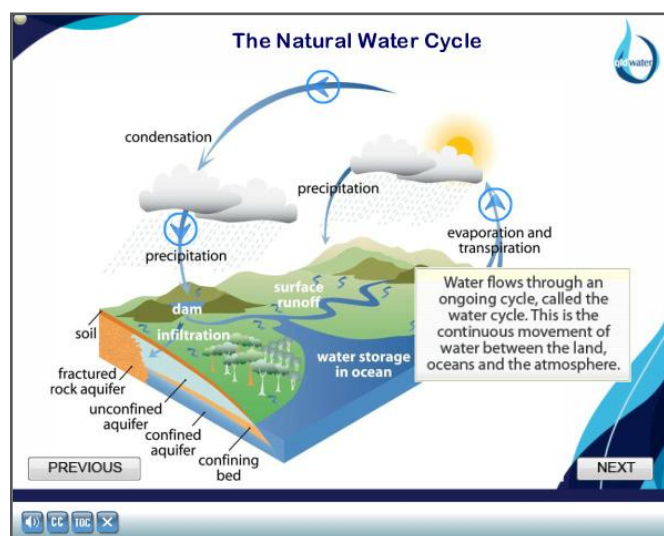
As part of a project to develop regional training alliances **qldwater** has also begun coordinating short course training programs provided by other training providers, such as WIOA, at regional locations.

Coordination of these training workshops enables members in regional locations to attract attendees from surrounding areas thereby reducing overall costs. They also provide a great opportunity for staff members to share ideas and knowledge.

If you are interested in holding a training workshop in your area please contact Michelle Hill at mhill@qldwater.com.au.

Induction Program

Our industry induction program is now available on our web site and has enjoyed very positive feedback to date. We are in the process of looking at different versions for different audiences, including the opportunity to promote to school kids interested in careers in the industry. If you haven't seen it yet, check it out at www.qldwater.com.au under "Skills and Training."



A new government - what does it mean for the water industry?

The Local Government Association of Queensland has welcomed the new state government and **qldwater** looks forward to working with LGAQ to establish a strong working partnership with the new ministers and restructured agencies at an early stage.

Prior to the election, the LNP released a statement indicating their commitment to implementing a Four Point Water Plan to reduce the cost of living for Queenslanders (albeit focussed on South-East Queensland), including:

- Amalgamating the four bulk water entities into one entity to reduce the cost of supplying water;
- Hand back control of water distribution and retailing to councils;
- Write off non-performing water grid assets to reduce sharp price rises; and
- Adopt a 40 year price path to repay the existing water grid debt over the economic life of the assets, to also reduce the cost of water.

LGAQ and **qldwater** have identified a number of key initiatives based on industry feedback and are making representations to the new government. These include:

- Reintroduction of a capital subsidy scheme for council water and sewerage infrastructure in smaller communities, focussing on upgrades of urban water and sewerage systems to meet increasing regulatory standards;
- Ongoing support for established alliances with key agencies including DERM;
- A focus on an outcomes-driven regulatory and reporting framework including reduction of duplication in existing legislation and removal of some key conflicts in legislation;
- To implement adequate support programs for mandated fluoridation of urban water supplies; and
- To support the ongoing work of Skills Queensland and consider expansion of the current Strategic Investment Fund to support strategic workplace planning for essential services.

Memberships - why it's well worth it...

Membership income is the fundamental basis on which **qldwater** operates – it allows us to pursue other grants and provide an ROI to members of between 4:1 and 25:1 based on recent estimates derived from members. This excludes millions of dollars the **qldwater** collaborations have been able to attract from governments directly to industry, especially in training investment.

Apart from the obvious benefits of SWIM and our Skills and Training projects, we have achieved a number of successes over the past year. Some of the highlights include:

Advocacy

qldwater works in close partnership with LGAQ to ensure the needs of members are clearly communicated to regulators. This approach has seen some reduction in duplication around management plans and reporting with more expected as the activities of the Memorandum of Understanding with DERM evolve.

Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program (Q-WRAP)

With three regional collaborations underway (Central-West Queensland RAPAD group of Councils, Central-East Queensland and Far North Queensland) LGAQ and **qldwater** are leading a project to explore voluntary alliances and other governance models to help regional water service providers achieve the economies of scale and scope necessary to be sustainable into the future.

Fire flows and ERA 63

These are two examples of recent technical projects where industry collaboration has led to improved outcomes. DERM has run an excellent consultation process around fire flows with strong industry input, resulting in the future production of guidelines which will allow water service providers to effectively manage their networks and extend the life of

their assets through pressure management strategies, while still providing an essential fire service.

ERA 63 specifically relates to the development approvals now required for large sewage pump stations. The strong industry collaborative approach facilitated by **qldwater** has led to removal of a multi-million dollar cost burden to industry associated with seeking retrospective approval of existing pump stations. The remaining requirements still need sharp attention from Service Providers but are more practical and achievable than previous conditions while still protecting environmental health.

A program of qldwater

swim

Statewide Water Information Management

SWIM goes local!

SWIM has become one of qldwater's flagship programs. The compliance and reporting burden on members is significant and SWIM consistently saves hours of data collation by ingesting data from water service providers, applying quality procedures and distributing to key agencies in their required formats. The program continues to grow, boasting an 88% reporting rate in non-indigenous water service providers.

SWIM is in the process of adding an interface with improved data search and refinement functionality and trialling Open Publication reports with a number of providers in 2012. We are also creating licensing agreements to allow service providers to clearly set conditions of use of their data.

Watch this space for more information on training to provide a broad overview of **SWIM** capabilities.

SWIMLocal is a new product which takes the reporting principles to the local level – integrating disparate data sources and reporting systems within the local systems water service providers. The pilot tool is expected to be available for user testing in April 2012. Following user testing the working system will be available on a subscription basis, to support ongoing maintenance (a condition of the development grant from the Bureau of Meteorology) from September 2012. It is expected that subscribers will be able to halve the time taken to collate and manage data and directly improve data quality by enhancing QA procedures at the point of capture.

EVENTS CALENDAR

April

- 11 *Water Legislation and SWIM Training Workshop, Emerald*
- 12 *Taste Test and Regional Conference, Emerald*
- 17 AWA What's New in Water Research Forum
- 19 AWA Cairns Technical Meeting on Membrane Bioreactors
- 20 *TRG Meeting*
- 30 *Start of Water Connections Week:*
Taste Test and Regional Conference, Longreach

May

- 1 *Croydon & Etheridge*
- 2 *Cook & Wujal Wujal*
- 3 *Cassowary Coast & Burdekin*
- 4 *Taste Test and Regional Conference, Bowen*
- 3-4 IPWEAQ South West Queensland Branch Conference, Toowoomba
- 9-10 OzWater National Conference, Sydney
- 16-18 IPWEAQ North Queensland Branch Conference, Charters Towers
- 24 *Taste Test and Regional Conference, Cairns*
- 30 AWA Technical Meeting - Natural disasters and the impacts on water and wastewater infrastructure
- 30-31 AWA Water Industry Capacity Development Skills Workshop, Darwin

June

- 6 *Best of the Best Water Taste Test Finals, Gold Coast*
- 6-7 WIOA Conference
- 8 *TRG Meeting*
- 14-16 IPWEAQ Central Queensland Branch Conference, Bargara
- 21 AWA debate and networking event: Skills retention and motivation, the war for talent still rages in the Qld Water Industry
- 22 IPWEAQ South East Queensland Branch Conference, Gold Coast



Out and about

Russell Hood from Murweh Shire relaxing after the Charleville Best of the Best taste test and mini-conference (and showing that Dr Evil and mini-me impersonations aren't only for try-hards like John Roworth from Longreach - INSET).



Charleville Conference and Taste Test



Left: Dave Cameron giving an overview of *qldwater* projects at the Charleville event.

Right: The judges posing for a media photo in Charleville. (L-R) Russell Hood, George Lech, John Betts and Rob Fearon



Maroochydoore Conference and Taste Test



George Lech, Michael Lever, Trevor Harvey and Jon Black putting their olfactory senses to the test.



MC Clare Edwards kept the audience entertained.



Some audience participation to discuss water literacy.



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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.”