



The Queensland Water Directorate Annual Report 2023-24





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Corporate Structure

For 21 years, the Queensland Water Directorate (*qldwater*) has represented the interests of our members, taking on a central leadership role in supporting the Queensland urban water sector.

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

We pride ourselves on being adaptable and responsive to unexpected and emerging issues affecting the water sector, providing our members with:

- a strong, dependable and united voice
- accurate, reliable and timely information
- critical technical and professional resources

qldwater is a dedicated advocacy association 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 & Northern Territory (IPWEA-QNT), reporting to the Institute's Board.

- links to essential skills and training programs to help improve industry capabilities and assist career development sectoral 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 the sector's needs
- opportunities for knowledge sharing and the establishment of collaborative networks.

Board



QUEENSLAND NORTHERN TERRITORY

IPWEA

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC WORKS
ENGINEERING AUSTRALASIA



Message from Strategic Priorities Group Chair



As Chair of the **qldwater** Strategic Priorities Group (SPG), I have been privileged to guide and facilitate gatherings of members from across the Queensland Water sector.

The commitment by **qldwater** to ensure Local and other Government water teams are connected into a peer group for advocacy purposes and networking cannot be under-estimated.

The appointments of Dr Georgina Davis as CEO and David Wiskar as Program Director for the Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program (QWRAP) have provided the Directorate with the right advocacy skills, experience and connections to take the lead and be a strong voice for Queensland's urban water sector.

The commitment to regional collaboration continued with the completion of another successful Water Connections Tour. This year **qldwater** staff drove representatives from various State Departments and other organisations across six Council areas in the North-West Queensland region to gain a perspective on the issues and challenges facing regional water service providers.

The annual tour of water, sewerage and treatment plant infrastructure in remote and regional Councils provide an opportunity to share up to date technical and policy information and to explore and understand issues facing small and remote communities.

The collaboration through QWRAP continues to build in maturity and over the past year the Directorate has played a key role in revisiting the vision, mission and strategic direction for the program in partnership with the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water and the Local Government Association of Queensland. With nine regions covering most of Queensland, QWRAP continues to drive innovation and collaboration across regional and remote communities.

The **qldwater** team have demonstrated, time and again, why the Directorate is such a vital voice within the water sector in Queensland.

Trevor Dean
SPG Chair

Strategic Priorities Group

The Strategic Priorities Group meets quarterly to help set the strategic priorities for **qldwater**.
Membership of the SPG is open to all **qldwater** members.

Active members include:

Chair:

Trevor Dean (Fraser Coast Regional Council)

Deputy Chair:

Shaun Johnston (North Burnett Regional Council)

Banana SC
Bundaberg RC
Burdekin SC
Cairns RC
Cassowary Coast RC
Central Highlands RC
Charters Towers RC
Cherbourg SC
City of Gold Coast
Fraser Coast RC
Gladstone RC

Gladstone Area Water Board
Goondiwindi RC
Gympie RC
Isaac RC
Livingstone SC
Logan CC
Mackay RC
Maranoa RC
Mareeba SC
Mount Isa Water Board
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

Message from Chief Executive Officer



I am writing this on my one-year anniversary of joining **qldwater**. During my tenure I have seen the range of issues impacting the sector (many of which are compounding) as well as emerging opportunities.

Less than 1.2 percent of all water on earth is available for human use and the United Nations has predicted a 40 percent shortfall of the available water by 2030. While a Global Water Security and Sanitation Partnership report (2021) noted that 6 out of 10 countries are at risk of having unsustainable water resource usage by 2050. Indeed, demand for water (particularly high reliability products) across Queensland is set to significantly increase with policies on green hydrogen, critical minerals, sustainable fuels and irrigated agriculture, coupled with growing populations.

There are 370 water supply schemes and 265 sewage schemes across Queensland. Our members currently service 1,916,519 sewerage and 2,117,663 drinking water connections and these numbers are set to substantially increase with the current and projected population growth.

Despite this growing demand for our services and a more challenging environment, the resources and investment required appear to be missing (if not diminishing). It seems that we are being asked to do more with less – a myth that simply damages efficiency and effectiveness, adding more work for already exhausted team members, and which negatively affects the quality of any organisation's results.

Water security is becoming a growing problem as the climate crisis alters the global water cycle, resulting in stronger, more frequent droughts and periods of extreme rainfall. While all drought declarations have recently been revoked for Queensland (for the first time in eleven years), we have experienced water security challenges as a result of weather events, not least Tropical Cyclone Jasper which was recorded as the wettest tropical cyclone in Australian history.

Given the catastrophic outcomes to some communities and their urban water services and networks from Jasper, the Australian Water Sector Mutual Aid Guidelines were used to establish a Mutual Aid Coordination Cell (MACC). A coalition was stood-up (within days of Jasper) incorporating all relevant government departments, impacted local government areas and industry.

I have been involved in disaster recovery and cleanups over many years, however, the highly organised and supportive way that the sector pulled together was more powerful and effective than I have ever experienced. This is testament to the truly collaborative nature of the sector. Despite all the many challenges, Queensland's urban water sector continues to grow and deliver critical services to its communities, keeping them safe and vibrant.

Image below: Fully stocked trucks (one from Urban Utilities and one from Unitywater) and pipes leaving SEQ for NQ following Cyclone Jasper.



qldwater's mission to support the sector to maintain and improve the safety, health, wellbeing and sustainability of our communities and to provide a strong single advocacy voice has never been more important, as are the outcomes delivered from the programs and services that we facilitate with the sectors support.

This year we provided 26 submissions in response to a range of diverse consultations, and we represented the sector in Departmental and Ministerial meetings, and in Parliamentary Committee hearings. We have also had several wins, from demonstrating to the ABS that a new occupation code for the sector was needed to adding two more RTOs to the Skills Assure Supplier platform, providing improved access and more choice of subsidised training. We also produced several new tools and products.

We continue to strengthen our relationships with other organisations, signing new MoUs with the Water Industry Operators Association (WIOA) and the RSL and developing new partnership agreements with valuable stakeholders. We also continue to maintain a close working relationship with the NSW Water Directorate, sharing resources across skills and workforce opportunities.

Taking stock of the existing and new content on our webpage and the watertraining webpage reinforces the significant amount of Intellectual Property held by **qldwater** as well as the volume of work delivered this year. This content is leveraged and contributed to by our members, and it provides us with the information required to provide a strong united voice across policy and regulatory matters.

I want to personally thank our members for the time and knowledge that they contribute to **qldwater**, be it through participation in the various groups and programs, attending events, or through individual contributions to webinars, videos and training content, and in so many other ways.

qldwater is a member-focused organisation with a clear purpose, excelling in both how it achieves that purpose and its ability to translate members' ideas and requirements into operational support. I am extremely proud of the **qldwater** team, their knowledge, professionalism, passion and their positive and sustained contribution to the sector.

Dr Georgina Davis
CEO



Our Members 2023-24

In 2023-24 *qldwater* had a total of 73 full members, representing all urban water service providers.

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



Our Affiliate Members 2023-24

Affiliate memberships allow *qldwater* to build relationships with organisations who are aligned with our vision and mission for safe, secure and sustainable urban water and sewerage services to all Queensland communities.



Department of Energy and Mining

Department of Health

Department of Environment, Science and Innovation

Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water

Media Partner



Key Programs

swim DATA REPORTING



The Statewide Water Information Management (SWIM) program has simplified reporting of water and sewerage data from utilities and Councils as required by numerous State and Commonwealth agencies saving up to 0.5FTE per member.

swimlocal DATA MANAGEMENT



swimlocal provides cost-effective integrated data management for water authorities. It currently has 64 subscribers across Australia.

Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program



The Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program (QWRAP) is an industry-led initiative with 57 members in 9 regions to investigate regional collaboration on water and sewerage services in regional Queensland.

waterskills PARTNERSHIP



The Queensland Water Skills Partnership is an award-winning industry collaboration of 50+ Councils to address critical skills needs and workforce development in the urban water sector.

Queensland Water Careers



The Queensland Water Careers website is an initiative of the Water Skills Partnership to promote career pathways and opportunities in the urban water and sewerage industry in Queensland.

Water Training



Home of the Aqua and Brown Card training courses, the water training website is a growing resource of courses developed by the industry, for the industry and the contractors that service it.

SWEAP environmental leadership



The Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP) provides advice on environmental management and regulation and fosters collaboration on joint submissions on policy issues.

qCRAC influence + research



The **qldwater** Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Contaminants is a partnership among 11 Queensland Service Providers focused on research and policy on contaminants of emerging concern.

CHEMICAL CONCOCTIONS



The Chemical Concoctions website is an initiative of qCRAC to inform the community of chemicals of emerging concern that may be hiding in our homes, and to provide advice on what we can do to reduce exposure.

Key Highlights 2023-24

Advocacy and Representation

qldwater has continued to represent the Queensland water sector on key issues and negotiations with state and federal governments throughout 2023-2024.

Our advocacy resulted in the establishment of a Cross Government and Cross Urban Water Sector Group which met for the first time March 2023 and includes Queensland Health, the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT), Regional Development Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW) and the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (DSDIGLP).

Over the past year:

- We invested in the preparation of a **Telco Land Access Agreement** to assist our members when dealing with a licensed carrier seeking to deploy low impact facilities (in particular, via a LAAN pursuant to Schedule 3 of the Telco Act).
- We negotiated a **General Exemption Application for the activity of High-Pressure Water Jetting (HPWJ)** of Asbestos Cement pipes under section 684 of the *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011*. The requirement for HPWJ cleaning of AC pipes underpinning this submission relates to sewerage networks, and the water authorities who manage this infrastructure and Local Governments who own and manage this infrastructure and their contractors.
- We organised two **Water Connections Tours** (February and May 2024).
- We worked closely with the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW) and the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) on a **new website and portal for the QWRAP** program to streamline bidpool applications and other administration tasks to fully utilise the program as a vehicle for change and innovation in small and remote communities.
- Following an engagement workshop on skills and training in February 2023, we worked with LGAQ and a HR Consultant to develop an **HR/IR Toolkit** to help our members attract and retain staff.
- Advocated to the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) to open the **Skills Assure Supplier (SAS) platform** to give more RTOs access to subsidised training, resulting in two more RTOs that can provide subsidised training on the National Water Package to our members.
- Successfully secured funding from DESBT to develop a **suite of critical micro-credentials** for the sector.
- Developed **five non-accredited training courses** covering basic skills for the sector.
- Developed and released the **Green Card** which provides an overview of the importance of, and regulatory requirements for minimising environmental harm when working in, on or near water, sewerage and recycled water assets.

Key submissions on behalf of members this financial year include:

- Submission to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water on the **Reform Options for Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme Landfill Gas Methods** (options paper) supporting the need to minimise methane emission but warning against setting baselines too high, which will diminish the ability for industry to conduct Source Separated Organic Waste (SSOW) and Alternative Waste Treatment (AWT) while also making it more difficult for investments to occur in Landfill Gas projects. Local Councils (our members) are already under significant financial strain and reducing incentives for Landfill Gas projects will have a detrimental financial impact on these local councils.
- Submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications regarding Glencore's proposed **carbon capture and storage (CCS) project within the Great Artesian Basin (GAB)**, raising serious concerns about the risks to drinking water assets and supplies and urging the Committee to reject the proposal and implement policy parameters to prevent any future CSS incursions into environmental assets such as the GAB.

Key Highlights 2023 - 24

- Submission to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW), stating the proposed new objectives for the **National Water Agreement** to compare very poorly with the objectives in the original NWI, which provided a strategic direction for tangible and measurable improvements in water policy and management. Our submission includes some suggested Urban Water objectives that are more likely to achieve measurable and tangible water reform outcomes.
- General Exemption Application for the activity of **High Pressure Water Jetting of AC pipes** under section 684 of the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011. The requirement for HPWJ cleaning of AC pipes underpinning this submission relates to sewerage networks, and the water authorities who manage this infrastructure and Local Governments who own and manage this infrastructure and their contractors.
- Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport's inquiry into the **financial sustainability and funding of Local Government** with a focus on the provision of critical urban water services.
- Submission to Queensland's Health, Environment and Agriculture Parliamentary Committee regarding the **Environmental Protection (Powers and Penalties) and Other Legislation Amendments Bill 2024** reiterating our serious concern about unintended and perverse outcomes that may arise from some of the proposed amendments primarily relating to the lack of an adequate descriptor of who a 'polluter' is, the uncertainty and lack of utility in the proposed duty to restore the environment absent direction about how contamination that has migrated off-site can be remedied, and the stealthy mechanism for amending an environmental authority condition, resulting in lack of business and operational certainty.
- Submission to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water in response to the **Restoring Our Rivers: Draft framework** for delivering the 450 GL of additional environmental water. **qldwater** proposes a Murray Darling Basin Local Government Water Recovery Program to deliver across all three key principles that the Commonwealth has developed for water recovery. Investment by the Commonwealth in more efficient urban water infrastructure will enhance environmental outcomes, minimise socio economic impact and achieve value for money as water demand management is the most cost-effective way of delivering water security outcomes for communities.
- Submission to Queensland Treasury regarding the Queensland Government **Carbon Credits Policy** Consultation Paper, highlighting local governments as critical stakeholders in the development of regulation given the potential impacts on the urban water sector.
- Submission to the Department of Transport and Main Roads regarding the draft **Non-Transport Utility Management and Design Manual** raising concerns about the potential for wide-ranging and adverse impacts to water and sewerage service providers, especially for regional and remote Councils where the changes will place additional financial pressures on our members.
- Submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into **National Water Reform**, with a focus on skills to ensure access to a basic level of service, improved planning as one of the NWI modernised objectives (water entitlements and planning advice), implementing principles for best practice independent economic regulation and governance of regional and remote services through QWRAP.
- Submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission strongly supporting the **Application for Authorisation (AA1000657)** made by the Water Services Association of Australia seeking permission to secure adequate supplies and equitable distribution of gaseous chlorine for the Australian water sector.
- Submission to the Brisbane City Council in response to **proposed rebates for insinkerators** to be installed at homes as a measure to reduce the landfill tax payable by Council, outlining the significant risk insinkerators pose to urban water infrastructure as well as the potential misalignment of the existing public education campaigns to divert wastes, oils and greases from disposal to sewerage.
- Submission to the State Development and Regional Industries Committee in response to the **Planning and Other Legislation (Make Developers Pay) Amendment Bill 2023** introduced by Michael Berkman MP, Member for Maiwar, supporting full autonomy for local governments and other urban water service providers to charge developers for both new and upgraded trunk (urban water) infrastructure according to the cost of delivering that infrastructure. Under the current arrangements, existing rate payers and councils (mostly through debt) are subsidising new development and developers.
- Submission to the Department of Environment and Science consultation paper on improving the **powers and penalties provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1994** recognising that many of the proposed changes are positive and are intended to ensure the broader environment is sustainable against the needs of industry, but raising concerns that several of the proposed amendments are an over-reach, unnecessary,

Key Highlights 2023 - 24

and/or may have unintended consequences resulting in business and operational uncertainty. It asks for the urban water sector to be recognised as a critical stakeholder in the development of future tools and Guidelines and requests an immediate exclusion from the 30% fee for local councils seeking major amendments to their Environmental Authorities.

- Submission to the Department of Environment and Science raising several issues in relation to the **draft End of Waste Code for Biochar**.
- Submission to the NSW Environment Protection Authority on the development of an updated **Biosolids Regulatory Approach for NSW**. The Queensland End of Waste Code for biosolids leans heavily on the NSW Biosolids Guidelines, and the submission was developed with that in mind.
- Submission to the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, Community Engagement Review Taskforce drawing urgent attention to several outstanding issues arising from the deficiencies in the **regulatory legislation framework surrounding telecommunication deployment** under telecommunication carriers under the Telecommunication Act 1997 impacting on the water sector.
- Submission to the Transport and Resources Committee reporting a significant and growing number of **thefts of metal components and infrastructure** from water and wastewater treatment facilities mostly linked to the removal of electrical components and infrastructure and, more recently, renewable energy technologies (solar photovoltaic panels and inverters). *qldwater* welcomes the inquiry into the matter as the direct risks to community safety, worker safety and the increasing financial burden to the urban water sector (and our customers) must be addressed.
- Submission to the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning raising concerns about the lack of planning for water and sewerage services in the plan and calling for meaningful consultation with the urban water industry to address the liabilities caused by the changes to the **Queensland Development Code (QDC)—Building Over or Near Relevant Infrastructure**. It calls on the Department to use water data from the Statewide Water Information Management (SWIM) system to provide quantification on the risks and opportunities for water security, the interaction of the urban water environment with key indicators such as catchment health and, amenity and recreational values.
- Submission to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water on the proposed **IChEMS Schedule 7** decisions supporting the listing of Pentachlorobenzene, PFOS, PFOA and PFHxS chemicals, and by extension associated precursor compounds and associated chemicals. Concerns raised include the high proposed limit for unintentional trace contamination, the timeframe for implementation and review of the decision too long, regulation should be expanded to include all members of the PFAS class of compounds and labelling of all products containing PFAS is required.
- Submission to the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) discussion paper on the development of a **Queensland Vocational Education and Training Strategy**. Recommendations include opening the SAS platform to give more RTOs access to subsidised training, increase the number of subsidised units of competency and increased subsidy levels for Higher Level Skills.
- Submission to the Department of Energy and Public Works on the **Sustainable Liquid Fuels Strategy: Options and Opportunities Paper, May 2023**. The submission urges the Department to urgently consider the water use of all these strategies and for the urban water sector to be represented at government forums like the Hydrogen Taskforce and the Ministerial Energy Council.
- Submission to the Australian Bureau of Statistics regarding its comprehensive review of the **Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO)** to reflect the contemporary labour market and better meet stakeholders' needs, outlining several job roles not currently identified and poor accounting of the occupations within the water sector.
- Submission to the Review of the **Electrical Safety Act 2002** (Final Report 2021) raising matters of particular consideration for the urban water sector.
- Letter to The Hon Michelle Rowland, Minister for Communications, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, drawing urgent attention to several outstanding issues arising from **deficiencies in the regulatory framework surrounding telecommunications deployment** by telecommunication carriers under the Telecommunications Act 1997 impacting upon the water sector.
- The 2022 Queensland Water Directorate **Urban Water Industry Workforce Composition Snapshot Report: Tracking trends in workforce, skills and training issues for the Queensland Urban Water Industry**.

Major Programs: SWIM & swimlocal

Data Management and Reporting



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 performance and provide customer confidence.

The 13th annual *qldwater* Water and Sewerage Benchmarking Report was published in the period. The report is published as a package that includes two sets of slides in PowerPoint with charts for all water reporting entities separated into:

1. medium, large and extra-large service providers, and
2. 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 73 of Queensland's council owned urban water/sewerage utilities.

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. This year Seqwater and Mount Isa Water Board have signed up to use SWIM for the first time.

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 2022/23 NPR report and dataset was published in February on the [Bureau's Water Information website](#).

qldwater continues to work with DRDMW on the NPR Indicator Review Recommendations, particularly around reporting requirements for Service Providers with <10,000 connections who will be expected to start reporting from next year.

In preparation for these changes, *qldwater* hosted training sessions all across the State as well as an [Essentials Webinar on Changes to NPR Reporting on SWIM](#), and recently 'grouped' TEAMS meetings with most Councils, and more to follow.

swimlocal



With 64 Service Providers currently using the full licensed version of **swimlocal** (and still growing), the program continues to evolve in line with customer needs. Queensland Health (Cairns) have signed up to the **swimlocal** data management tool for their legionella and water quality data management.

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
- Automated Lab data uploads are available from several Labs across the State
- Task module which allows SPs to manage their 'regular' maintenance tasks
- Alerting via SMS/email, QA/QC processes, mobile data entry and other enhancements
- Graphing and Dashboard functionality to improve data analysis and use

We also released a major upgrade of the **swimlocal** software with lots of new functionality including a direct link to the Department of Environmental, Science and Innovation's Water Tracking and Electronic Reporting System (WaTERS), and *qldwater* is currently talking to the Water Supply Regulator about the possibility of automating the transfer of Drinking Water Quality Management Plan Annual Data straight from **swimlocal** to them which will result in the current 'weeks' of data collation being a simple 5-10 minute task.

Major Programs: Water Skills Partnership

Queensland Water Skills Partnership



Since winning the Queensland Training Premier's Industry Collaboration 2021 Award, the Queensland Water Skills Partnership continues to deliver beneficial programs of work and sound advice to support broader Federal, State and industry investment strategies.

The Partnership's priorities are determined by its subscribers with two formal meetings per year, as well as regular engagement via email, online forums and input from the broader sector gathered at the annual Water Skills Forum.

The purpose of the Water Skills Partnership is to ensure that all water sector 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 sector 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 initiative for progressing the skills agenda for the urban water sector in Queensland – both in developing a focus for implementing strategy and ensuring the State and Federal governments invest appropriately in this essential service.

The Queensland Water Skills Partnership hosted its seventh annual Water Skills Forum on Friday 19 April at Parliament House, Brisbane. Over 80 people attended the event with our key stakeholders in attendance including water managers, HR professionals, Registered Training Organisations, Government officials and more.

The theme for the event was The Urban Water Workforce - Recognition & Resilience. Over the past twelve months, significant progress has been made across a range of workforce and training initiatives. This Forum showcased some of those projects from a range of organisations and outlined several new workforce resources designed by the sector for the sector.

The Forum was opened by The Hon Lance McCallum, Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, with the Director-General for the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, Linda Dobe, providing an update on the Urban Water Risk Assessment being undertaken by the Department.

There are currently 51 subscribers to the Water Skills Partnership who worked together during 2023-24 to deliver the following initiatives:



Major Programs: Water Skills Partnership

2023-24 Key Projects

- Continued role as the Industry Skills Advisor (ISA) Water for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training as part of a contract to provide skills advice through to December 2024.
- As an ISA, the role includes completing a Price List Review to inform DESBT on the levels of subsidy, funding mechanisms and issues around qualifications or units of competency based on industry feedback and experience. **qldwater** called for maintaining the highest Priority 1 level for Cert II, Cert III, Cert IV and Diploma of Water Industry Operations, greater flexibility on subsidies and a review of location loadings as a possible barrier to participation.
- Continued advocacy with DESBT for an increase to Higher Level Skills subsidies, particularly the Certificate IV qualification. **qldwater** having already been successful in 2023 in securing a 50% uplift in the existing level of subsidy. The Certificate IV continues to show strong demand and serves as a pathway to leadership for the sector.
- Continued advocacy on the number of Skills Assure Suppliers (SAS) has yielded a doubling in the number of providers able to access subsidy mechanisms for training. Water is the only sector that has seen new SAS entrants at this moment in time.
- A successful application for DESBT Micro Credential funding in their latest (and heavily oversubscribed) round of micro credential funding - leading to the development of four new courses, including fluoride, SCADA, making use of water quality data and the operators' role in effectively implementing a DWQMP. The courses will be delivered by expert trainers known and used by the sector later in 2024.
- Building a topic-based resource library of 38 Fundamentals Webinars covering common water and wastewater treatment and network operations and maintenance.
- Developed a Water Workforce Toolbox as a *one stop shop* for valuable resources around skills and training, human resources, drinking water, wastewater, reporting and management with more topics to be added over time.
- Building on the significant increase in workforce data received for the 2022 Workforce Composition Snapshot Report, successfully applying for QWRAP funding to prepare an independent Queensland Water Skills Survey 2024 report by Balmoral Group Australia. The report included a range of recommendations for future actions ranging from policy and practical steps to bridge skills gaps, enhance workforce capabilities and mitigate risks associated with insufficiently qualified personnel.
- Continued to progress the Water Industry Operator Registration Framework in partnership with the Water Industry Operations Association of Australia (WIOA).
- Building relationships with the new BuildSkills Australia (BSA) Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) established as part of the federal Vocational Education and Training system reforms, attending meetings and inviting the National Manager - Water Sector Industry Engagement to speak at the Skills Forum and Annual Forum to ensure that the water sector gets the visibility it deserves.



Major Programs: Water Skills Partnership

- In its role as Industry Skills Advisor to DESBT, **qldwater** has formulated the Queensland Water Industry Reference Group (QWIRG) to gather the views and issues of the sector and communicate these to both the Department and the new JSC. The QWIRG consists of members from SPG, the wider **qldwater** member base, as well as non-member stakeholders. The QWIRG replaces the previous Industry Reference Committee model.
- In partnership with the NSW Water Directorate, migrating the online training platform at watertraining.com.au to Moodle Workplace which allows better functionality around reporting and administration.
 - The site currently hosts the Aqua Card (QLD & NSW), Brown Card (QLD, NSW and SA), the Green Card (released 2023).
 - This year we have also started to build a series of introductory courses with course materials provided by Trility. The first course, an Introduction to Chemistry, was developed in partnership with an experienced Operator and is now open for registrations. The other Trility courses including Isolation, Monitoring, Fluid Flow and Calculations, will be released over the coming months.
 - The four new Micro-Credential Courses will also be developed on the Moodle platform.
- Continued growth in our online training platform at www.watertraining.com.au with the following number of completions in Queensland to date:
 - **2,481** Aqua Card (an induction course for people working on or near water infrastructure)
 - **1,497** Brown Card (an induction course for people working on or near wastewater or recycled water assets)
 - **325** Green Card (an overview of the importance of, and requirements for minimising environmental harm when working in, on or near water, sewerage and recycled water assets)
 - **293** Introduction to the Water Industry course.
- Working closely with the Water Industry Worker (WIW) Coordinator to develop regional training hubs linked to QWRAP activities.
- Working with the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) on an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) Project to promote careers in the sector, resulting in the launch of a new Careers In Water website.
- Participating in workshops as part of the Water Research Australia Operator Benchmarking project.
- Continued updates of the dedicated careers website at www.qldwatercareers.com.au to promote careers in the water sector. The website includes information about career pathways, qualification requirements and testimonials from recent trainees about their roles and training experiences through recorded interviews.
- Ongoing partnerships with key agencies and organisations, and increased collaboration with DSDILGP and Queensland Health to support indigenous council skilling activities.



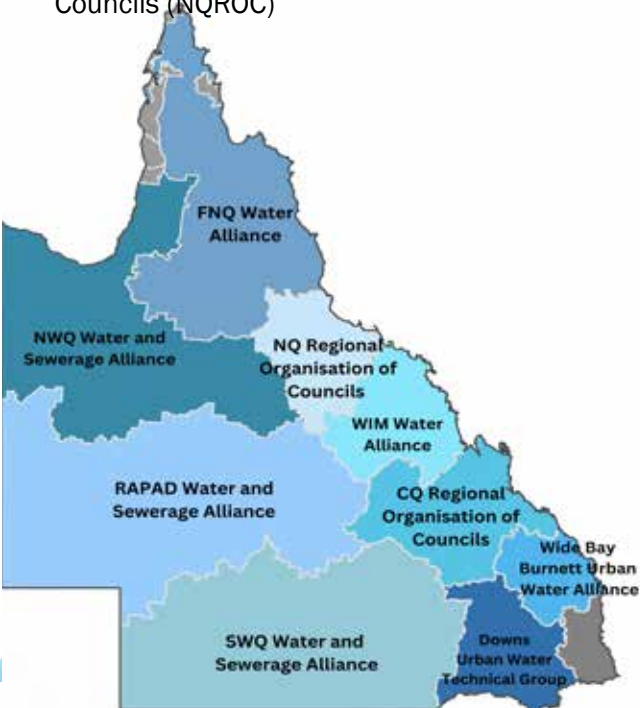
QWRAP is an industry-led initiative to investigate regional collaboration on water and sewerage services in regional Queensland. QWRAP is a partnership between the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), the Queensland Water Directorate (*qldwater*) and the Queensland Government with 56 councils engaged across several regions.

Through the QWRAP program Local Government Water Service Providers can access support for their water and wastewater activities through;

1. Active technical and strategic support from *qldwater* to assist water and wastewater delivery,
2. Government Funding (DRDMW) to pay for a regional co-ordinator to support collaboration on a regional scale and
3. Government Funding through a bid pool to provide small amounts of funding to support regional collaboration.

During 2023-24 there were nine participating QWRAP regions:

- Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC)
- Remote Area Planning and Development Water & Sewerage Alliance (RAPADWSA)
- Wide Bay Burnett Urban Water Alliance (WBBUWA)
- Downs Urban Water Technical Group (DUWTG)
- Whitsundays, Isaac and Mackay Water Alliance (WIMWA)
- North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NQROC)



- Southwest Queensland Water and Sewerage Alliance (SWQWSA)
- North-West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NWQROC)
- Central Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (CQROC)

QWRAP has been funded by the Department of Regional Development Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW, formerly Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) since 2011 with significant leverage of cash and in-kind contributions from other partners.

QWRAP supports Queensland Local Governments to drive regional partnerships and initiatives to enhance service providers ability to deliver sustainable services. *qldwater* Program Director also works actively with Councils to assist them to access infrastructure and other funding support from State and Federal Governments.

The aim of QWRAP is to ensure safe, secure and sustainable water and sewerage services for the more than 300 water schemes outside of South East Queensland, which include 25 councils that own and manage some of the smallest water schemes in Australia.

The regions participate either as a Water Alliance (RAPADWSA, WIMWA, WBBUWA, SWQWSA, FNQWA), technical group (DUWTG) or with funded trial projects (NQROC and NWQROC). This expands coverage of QWRAP to all of Queensland council areas outside of the Cape York First Nations councils and South East Queensland.

In December 2021, it was announced that QWRAP was to be permanently funded by the Queensland Government with funding increased to \$2 Million per annum as a permanent allocation, emphasising the benefits collaborative water and sewerage management has brought to regional Queensland and the potential of the program.

Since its inception, QWRAP has provided a formal opportunity for councils to consider and test collaboration and alternative regional arrangements for managing essential W&S services.

Regions involved in the program have matured in the degree of collaboration over the course of QWRAP and further development is encouraged through competitive funding for projects that build future collaboration.

QWRAP has evolved over time and now includes joint projects across multiple alliances, information sharing, and common planning and strategic activities within regions.

Following the announcement of ongoing funding, a Partner Steering Committee (PSC) was created to endorse the principles of a new three-year QWRAP deed between the three parties and a new communication approach, which will include a standalone portal/ website hosted by **qldwater**.

The first QWRAP Chairs and Coordinators forum was held at the **qldwater** office on Friday 21 July 2023 to update the regions on the revised QWRAP program, including a workshop where participants shared their top issues. The top five shared issues identified were:

1. Education and training
2. Attraction and retention
3. Ageing infrastructure
4. Lack of visibility of the sector
5. Legislative pressures

During 2023-24, **qldwater** has delivered a range of key projects and tools to assist Local Government Water Service providers to address their key issues.

QWRAP Regional Updates and 2023-24 Highlights

Remote Area Planning And Development Water and Sewerage Alliance (RAPADWSA)

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:

- Investigating Sewerage Treatment Plant upgrade options assessment,
- Identifying the likelihood (condition) and consequence (criticality) of water and sewerage assets as part of the Infrastructure Cliff project,
- Joint procurement for regional sewer relining services,
- Joint procurement for reservoir cleaning, and water mains air scouring and cleaning across the region, (attracting quality service providers to the region and delivering savings for Council budget)
- Regional training hub for staff to complete their Certificate III in Water Industry Operations. (delivering qualified operators across the region and creating training scale to make the program economic for the training provider)



Key deliverables have included;

- A HR\IR Toolkit for Local Government Water Service Providers,
- Online Non Accredited Training Packages,
- Agreements for Local Government Water Service Providers to protect water infrastructure through the co-location of telco towers and other infrastructure.
- The Water Industry Worker Training Program and the training data capture through the SWIM Platform.
- A Business Case looking at the opportunity for a designated training facility for the urban water sector.

The QWRAP Program is driven by Regional Water Service providers. The water leaders from these communities are best placed to identify the priority issues. The role of the QWRAP partners (LGAQ, DRDMW and **qldwater**) is to support regional water service providers working through the QWRAP regional structures to deliver priority collaborative projects.

Whitsunday Isaac Mackay Water Alliance (WIMWA)

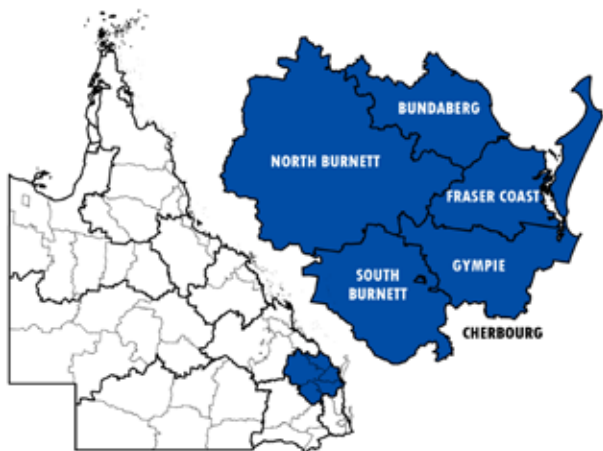
The Whitsunday Isaac Mackay Water Alliance has arguably the most ambitious raft of projects. State Government funding has been secured to support a wide range of priority initiatives for the region including:

- Collaborative CQU Research Project – assessing the presence of contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) associated with WWTP discharges,
- Extension of the WIW Learning and Development (L&D) Coordinator to facilitate the WIW Training Program and extend the framework to deliver regional training,
- Alignment of waste management approaches through a Regional Waste Management Collaboration working group,
- Investigating opportunities to align SCADA systems and a regional control room,
- Uniform regulatory responses to sewerage and water environmental matters,
- Aligned annualised salary packages for operations staff,
- Review of modelling software used across the region,
- Regional smart metering trial evaluation,
- Workforce Planning and resource sharing arrangements.



Wide Bay Burnett Urban Water Alliance (WBBUWA)

The WBBUWA is located immediately north of SEQ and has been operating since 2019. Participating WBBUWA Councils include: Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, Gympie, Fraser, South Burnett, Bundaberg and North Burnett Regional Councils.



Recent projects include:

- Ongoing regional sewer relining, (delivering significant cost savings to participating Councils),
- Joint water quality testing for treatment optimisation, (enhancing access to timely and cost effective water quality data),
- Review of WBB Design and Construction Code to ensure donated assets are of appropriate quality and standard,
- WBBUWA Industry Skills Enhancement (WISE) program to establish relationships with universities and develop an ongoing program with students,
- Extension of the Regional Water Industry Worker program.

Downs Urban Water Technical Group (DUWTG)

November 2021 marked a shift in the landscape of the Downs and Surat Basin Water Group (DASB) with two of its Councils (Balonne and Maranoa) joining the new SWQ Water Alliance for collaboration opportunities. The remaining four Councils – Goondiwindi, Southern Downs, Toowoomba and Western Downs have agreed to continue to collaborate as the Downs Urban Water Technical Group (DUWTG) in a technical capacity, with Maranoa keeping an eye on opportunities with both groups.

The DUWTG group has had some significant successes at a technical level, most notably:

- A project to develop regional SCADA standards,
- Completing a water supply security template trial,
- Completing a Cyber Security audit and risk assessment,
- Alignment of DWQMP Audits,
- Promoting regional collaboration for workers by holding a Regional Operator Forum and Field Day.



South West Queensland Water and Sewerage Alliance (SWQWSA)

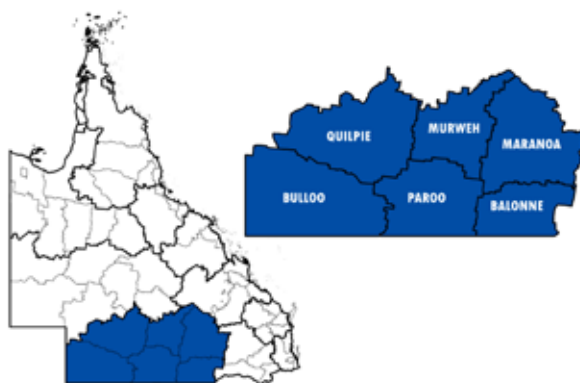
The SWQ Regional Organisation of Councils have agreed to form the SWQ Water and Sewerage Alliance to cooperate on urban water issues. The group is comprised of Balonne, Bulloo, Maranoa, Murweh, Paroo and Quilpie councils, providing water services to 27 communities. A regional water and sewerage technical group is driving extensive regional collaboration.

During 2022-2024, the South West QWRAP Region has completed a detailed asset condition assessment project across all asset categories (ie. reservoirs, bores, water treatment, water reticulation, sewer mains, sewer pump stations and sewer treatment. This work identified infrastructure that is at and beyond effective asset life.

Critical risks identified through the study include:

- 11% of the bores in the region are more than 100 years old and at critical risk of failure (many communities only one bore)
- A further 20% of bores are more than 80 years old and judged to be at a serious risk of failure (many communities only one bore)
- CCTV camera inspections of sewers have identified that 12% of the entire sewer network is at critical risk of failure.

qldwater is working with the region to secure State and Federal Government funding to address the asset risks identified through the QWRAP Collaborative Project.



Other key recent projects include:

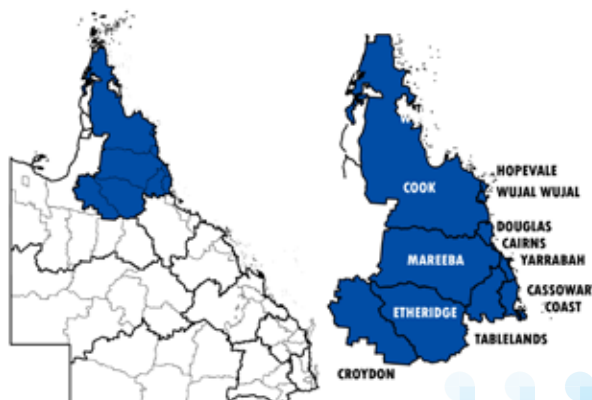
- The hiring of regional graduate water engineer as a resource to be shared by the QWRAP Region.
- Alignment of Drinking Water Quality Management Plan (DWQMP) audit and review of anniversary dates, delivering regulatory consistency and cost savings.
- Training of all operators across the region in appropriate Certificate III qualifications (leading to improved asset operation and improved drinking water outcomes for the community).
- Mutual knowledge and experience sharing between City of Gold Coast, Bulloo Shire Council and Quilpie Shire Council to provide technical advice, mentoring and staff exchanges.

Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC)

There are 11 Councils in the Far North Queensland region operating under the auspices of the FNQROC Board.

The group has been progressing the FNQ Regional Water Capability Project, developing a detailed plan that addresses the most challenging issues impacting its water and wastewater businesses. The plan involves four stages:

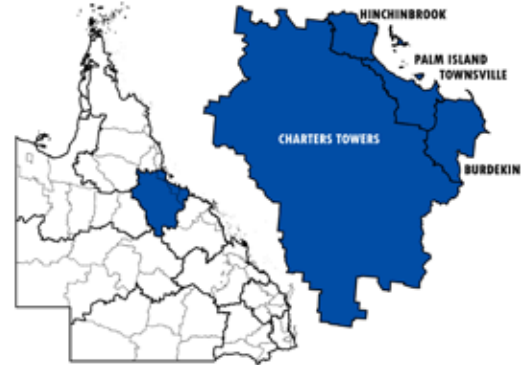
- Stage 1 – Identifying the areas of water and wastewater that pose the most significant capability challenges through a series of workshops and a detailed survey undertaken by the Queensland Treasury Corporation (QTC). The capability challenges and causation factors were analysed for both core and business functions, and primary causation factors were identified.
- Stage 2 – The findings were then workshopped and the initiatives that the Water Alliance wished to investigate were identified in relation to people, systems & data and processes.
- Stage 3 – QWRAP Bid Pool supported project to undertake an options analysis which will lead to the development of a Capability Plan along with an implementation plan with prioritised short, medium and long-term actions.
- Stage 4 – Implementation of agreed solutions.



North Queensland ROC (NQROC)

As a new region, the North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NQROC) kicked off with a number of projects including:

- The Development of an asset code for donated assets across the region. (This project will enhance the quality and overall value of donated developer assets across the region and ultimately reduce future costs for ratepayers.
- Operators Training Day in Townsville to deliver high quality training and build support networks amongst operators across the region.
- Research partnership among five councils and James Cook University on treatment options for biosolids in North Queensland,
- Skills development for reticulation employees through the regional Water Industry Worker program,
- Regional training cohorts for water and wastewater treatment operators to enable standardised approaches and content across all councils,
- Smoke testing training.



Central Queensland ROC (CQROC)

The Central Queensland ROC (CQROC) Technical Group is the latest addition to the QWRAP program with representatives from Central Highlands, Woorabinda, Rockhampton, Livingstone, Banana and Gladstone councils.

The CQROC invited presentations and information on QWRAP participation in June 2021 and have applied for Regional Coordinator funding in 2022. The region services a population of 226,000.

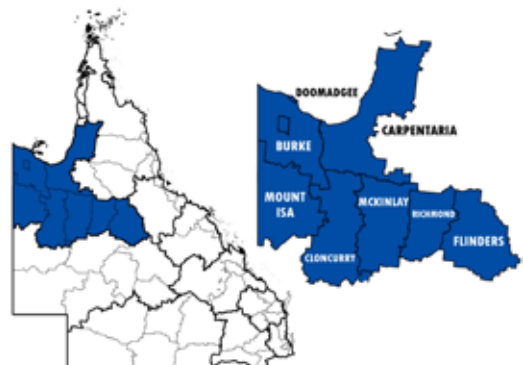
North West Queensland ROC (NWQROC)

The NWQROC consists of eight participating Councils including Burke, Carpentaria, Cloncurry, Doomadgee, McKinlay, Kowanyama, Mount Isa and Richmond.

Recent projects include:

- Establishing key governance documents for the collaboration including the Constitution and Memorandum of Understanding,
- Conducting a strategic workshop to identify an agreed vision, mission and objectives for the alliance,
- Completing an audit and analysis of SCADA systems of four participating councils,
- Completing a Skills Needs Analysis to determine skills gaps relating to plant types in the region,
- Joint procurement for lagoon desludging, reservoir cleaning and water mains air scouring.

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 DRDMW who fund the program through LGAQ.



Major Programs: Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel

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 sector from reactive environmental management towards a focus on stronger leadership with the following objectives and priorities:

- Foster partnership and sectoral 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.

The group meets every three months, with out of sessions meetings held as required. Information is shared through an online Zoho Forum. The Chair of SWEAP is currently Monique Gastaldin (Urban Utilities) with Anna Whelan (Townsville City Council) serving as Deputy Chair.

During this Financial Year the group:

- Lobbied for legislation to protect Australian drinking water and wastewater agencies from legal liability in relation to PFAS, similar to legislation proposed in the US.
- Facilitated consultation sessions for State and Commonwealth industry consultations including:
 - The PFAS NEMP 3.0.
 - The scheduling of PFOS, PFOA and PFHxS and associated compounds on the Industrial Chemicals Management Standard (IChEMS) register.
 - The draft End of Waste Code for Biochar.
 - The NSW Biosolids Regulatory Review.
 - Changes to the Queensland Environmental Protection Act (Powers and Penalties).
 - Input to the development of Sewer Acceptance Criteria as part of the revision of the Wastewater Quality Management Guidelines.

- Invited guest speakers to present at SWEAP meetings including:
 - Researchers at the Transforming Biosolids ARC Training Centre on the Biosolids Transformation Technology Assessment (BTTAS) tool used to narrow down technology options based on available feedstocks and desired product applications.
 - A Techno-Economic Analysis for Biosolids Pyrolysis by James Cook University.
 - A Scalable and Cost-Effective Biological Process for High-Ammonia Wastewater Management: Case Studies for Landfill Leachate and Centrate Treatment by QUT.
 - Challenges for project delivery with respect to the reform of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
 - Water Quality Offsets at Urban Utilities.
 - Regular updates from the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation.
- In partnership with WSAA, provided feedback on proposed changes to PFAS NEMP 3.0 and continue to keep an eye on other potential concerns from increasing regulation,
- Developing a position statement on a proposal from Brisbane City Council to incentivise the installation of insinkerators to resolve waste levy issues.
- Launching the “Green Card” training course on the watertraining website.
- Participation in the Water Quality Offsets Trading workshop leading to The St Lucia Declaration on Water Quality Trading in Queensland 2023.
- Conducted consultation sessions on Recycled Water and PFAS Management for Construction.



Major Programs: Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Contaminants of Emerging Concern (qCRAC)

Individually, most councils do not have the resources to maintain membership in national research organisations or to influence the direction of research. At the behest of the SWEAP group, a cooperative consortium coordinated through *qldwater* was established in 2019 to provide opportunities to direct research in technology and policy at state and national levels on this important topic. 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 currently has 11 member water utilities, with Jeanette Harold (Fraser Coast Regional Council) serving as Chair. Andrew Murray (Toowoomba Regional Council) serves as Deputy Chair.

The group have worked together with *qldwater* to deliver the following:

- A 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.
- Launched a public information website/ campaign materials to educate the community about contaminants of emerging concern in their homes – see www.chemicalconcoctions.org.

- A research project “Understanding Concentrations of Contaminants of Emerging Concerns in Residential and Non-residential Areas within Queensland Wastewater” with the University of Queensland researchers from Queensland Alliance for Environmental Health Sciences is underway.
- A collaborative partnership in the Transforming Biosolids ARC Training Centre, which conducts research into sustainable technologies for biosolids. The group will consider investment in an ARC Hub Transforming Municipal Organics, which will follow on from the Transforming Biosolids ARCTTC, which winds up next year.
- An ARC Linkage application with University of Queensland researchers from the Queensland Alliance for Environmental Health Sciences for a research project “Identifying sources of contaminants of concern entering Australian sewers” is pending.
- A research project through James Cook University and Townsville City Council. An application is pending for an Advance Queensland Fellowship. Project “Investigation of wastewater treatment plant generated biochar’s local and regional reuse and its impact on sugarcane productivity and soil health”.

The Consortium continues to actively pursue 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 sector.



A long list of contaminants are hiding in all our most private spaces

Events 2023-24

Webinars

Each year **qldwater** hosts a series of Essentials and Fundamentals Webinars.

Essentials Webinars

qldwater's Essential webinars bring together our members, regulators and industry to network and exchange information through interesting and interactive sessions to help inform and influence **qldwater** priorities, presented by industry experts.

Topics covered during 2023/24 included:

- Regulatory Requirements for Telcos on Critical Water Assets
- Changes to NPR Reporting on SWIM
- Land Use Safety Planning for Chlorine Gas Facilities
- Arc Flash Risks, Causes and Management
- A four-part series on Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) including:
 - BOM climate and water outlook for the coming season
 - Managing HAB through your DWQMP
 - Health Aspects of HABs
 - Service Provider experiences with HABs
- Workplace Exposure Standards for H2S and other chemicals: what to measure and how.

Fundamentals Webinars

qldwater's Fundamentals webinars provide practical demonstrations of the most common water and wastewater treatment and network operations tasks, presented by industry experts.

Topics added this year have included:

- An introduction to SCADA
- Using Data Effectively
- Drinking Water Quality Management Plans
- Fluoridation of Drinking Water Supplies

[Recordings of all Fundamentals Webinars are available here.](#)

Annual Forum

The **qldwater** Annual Forum was held from 5 - 7 September 2023 at the Toowoomba Turf Club.

The forum was hosted by Toowoomba Regional Council starting off with site visits to Perseverance Dam Pump Station and the Wetalla Wastewater Reclamation Facility which included the LGI Biogas generation facility and the BNR sewage treatment plant and advanced water treatment plant.

Day 2 focused on celebrating 20 years of the Directorate's achievements as we caught up with past award winners and looked back at the history and success of our major programs.

The final day included a workshop hosted by DRDMW around their Urban Water Risk Assessment Project along with other interesting speakers.

[A more detailed overview of the day is available here.](#)

Water Taste Tests 2023

Hosted in conjunction with the **qldwater** Annual Forum, the 2023 Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test saw Fraser Coast Regional Council taking the title with water from the Burgowan Water Treatment Plant selected as the top drop.

The water taste test continues to celebrate 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.



Events 2023-24

Water Connections Tour

During this financial year, **qldwater** organised two Water Connections Tours.

The February 2023 Tour was organised on behalf of the DRDMW to inform investment at both a State and Federal level. Participants from Queensland Health, Department of Premiers and Cabinet, Department of State Development and Infrastructure (SDI), Treasury, the National Water Grid Authority, LGAQ and ARUP visited Councils in Cairns, Port Douglas, Northern Peninsula Area, Charters Towers, Longreach, Emerald, Kingaroy and Cherbourg.

The Annual **qldwater** Tour in May welcomed participants from Queensland Health, DRDMW (Strategic Water Initiatives and Urban Water Security Planning), the Drinking Water Regulator, LGAQ and Fraser Coast Regional Council visiting six councils in the North-West Queensland region, giving agency staff the opportunity to directly engage with regional/remote members around challenges. The tour was sponsored by LACKON who also provided a Project Management specialist to assist with technical queries.

The annual intensive tour of water and sewerage treatment plant infrastructure in remote and regional Councils provides an opportunity to share up to date technical and policy information and to explore and understand issues impacting those communities.



Ongoing Programs and Activities

***qldwater* Website - a wealth of relevant resources**

The *qldwater* Resource Library contains more than 2,500 items in a member only secure zone.

Noteworthy updates on the website this financial year include:

A new Water Workforce Toolbox with topics including:

- Human Resources / Industrial Relations
- Training and Education
- Drinking Water
- Wastewater and Environment
- Reporting
- Management

This year we also launched a new public facing website at www.chemicalconcoctions.org to educate people about contaminants in our homes and what we can do to minimise risks.

Communications

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

Two newsletters per year, in June and December, keep members up to date with past and upcoming events, program updates and case studies / features.

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

The Zoho forums have experienced significant growth, becoming a particularly useful mechanism for establishing new interest groups, storing records of discussion and useful documents. In March 2024, the SPG endorsed the creation of two new Working Groups, Safety and Occupational Health, and Drinking Water reflecting the increasing body of work and advocacy required in these areas.



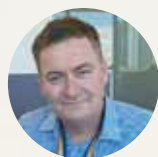
qldwater Staff Members



Dr Georgina Davis
Chief Executive Officer

Dr Georgina Davis joined **qldwater** late May 2023. Georgina has a strong history in advocacy and leading peak bodies including as CEO for the Waste and Recycling Industry Queensland (WRIQ) and previously the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF). She brings great understanding of water planning, pricing, legislation, and the impacts of emerging contaminants on users beneficially utilising the sectors by-products (such as farmers and composters).

Previously with Energy Skills Queensland, Georgina completed workforce plans and workforce development strategies, understanding the challenge to attract and retain good staff, and the safety and wellbeing impacts on those left to carry the burden for an understaffed workforce.



David Wiskar
Program Director, QWRAP

David joined **qldwater** in July 2023, but he has been part of the **qldwater** family since its inception as a member, the Chair of the Technical Reference Group and, more recently, as a funding partner in his role with the Queensland Government.

David has a strong connection to the mission of the Directorate and in providing support to all communities and stakeholders in the delivery of essential urban water services.

David leads the Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program (QWRAP), assisting regional and remote councils to develop economies of scale through combined projects.



Dr David Scheltinga
Manager, SWIM

David commenced with **qldwater** in 2011 and is responsible for managing the SWIM and swimlocal programs. David works remotely from Hervey Bay but travels across Queensland to provide SWIM and **swimlocal** training and assist member Councils with reporting and benchmarking queries.

David is passionate about data integrity and use, streamlined reporting and benchmarking, and is always advocating for better integration with reporting requirements from other organisations and government departments.



Dr Louise Reeves
Major Program Lead

Louise joined **qldwater** in 2019 and since then she has developed a keen interest in the complex challenges faced by the urban water industry. Her recent focus is in managing the Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP) and the **qldwater** Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Emerging Contaminants (qCRAC), both groups grappling with the issue of emerging contaminants in water, wastewater and biosolids.

Louise has a BSc (Hons) in Geology and a PhD in Isotope Geochemistry. Her early interest in science has transformed into a passion for science education, truth in science reporting, and research.

qldwater Staff Members



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.

The **qldwater** suite of communications platforms now include the **qldwater** website, watertraining.com.au, qldwatercareers.com.au, chemicalconcoctions.org and social media networks X and LinkedIn. She also assists with events and other projects including QWRAP and Skills & Training.



Jess Dean

Project Manager - Data & Environment

Jess started with **qldwater** in May 2022, taking on the Coordinator role for the Wide Bay Burnett Urban Water Alliance (WBBUWA) and assisting with the QWRAP program more broadly.

Jess also helps **qldwater** to make sense of big data through integrated maps and other new innovations. Jess has a keen interest in integrated catchment management and water quality, having worked as Waterwatch Coordinator and Catchment Officer for the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee for over six years.



Neil Holmes

Water Skills Partnership Manager

Neil manages the Water Skills Partnership program and looks after all things skills and training related. He has more than 20 years' experience in advocacy, advisory and consulting experience in the commercial water industry sector.

Neil moved to Australia from the UK in 2019, establishing a water cost audit consultancy to help businesses streamline processes to reduce water bills. Prior to moving to Australia, he was Operations Director for Water Watch UK where he managed all aspects of water investigations and audits including analysis of documentation, billing, legislation, policies and Water Acts.

Committees and Reference Groups

Together, **qldwater** staff:

- convene eight significant long term industry reference groups including our Strategic Priorities Group, Water Skills Partnership, and Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel
- represents industry on four major government-convened committees and five major association-led committees
- participates and assists in nine regional alliance groups
- and represents members in numerous committees nationally including various disaster and emergency management groups as required.

Interns

This financial year, **qldwater** also welcomed two interns from Griffith University through the Griffith Sciences Work Integrated Learning Program.

Jarod Booth is a second year Environmental Science student with an interest in environmental risk management, analysis of environmental performance and environmental legislation.

Jaron Verheyen is a fourth and final year student completing a double degree in Science and Commerce. Jaron is keen to practically apply his studies in mathematics and economics.

Financial Overview

As a not-for-profit organisation registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC), all funding received goes to further the aims of the organisation, support the sector and those working within it.

qldwater typically receives half of its annual income from membership subscriptions. The annual budget, including these subscriptions, grant funding and revenue from programs is in the order of \$1.2 million. This provides an operating budget for key projects and employs approximately 7 full time equivalent staff with technical contractors as required. As a mature collaborative industry hub, **qldwater** continues to deliver a significant and growing return on investment to members.

Our membership includes all of Queensland's Urban Water Service Providers across local government, local government-owned authorities and Government Owned Corporations. Representing all water service providers positions us strongly to meet our advocacy objectives with various levels of government and achieve strategic and policy priorities.

Contact Details

qldwater

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www.qldwater.com.au

“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.”

