



QueenslandWater

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

Issue 8

Celebrating the Queensland Water Directorate's First Decade

On Thursday, 28 November **qldwater** celebrated its tenth anniversary at a dinner with staff, members and other industry leaders who have played a substantial role in the formation and growth of the organisation. It was a great opportunity to reflect on the past and also to pay tribute to those whom we believe have made a lasting impact in the industry.

Although the urban water industry can boast many amazing people, our Technical Reference Group wanted to take the opportunity to recognise people who, over the years, have gone above and beyond their normal duties to make a difference. The "**qldwater** David Wiskar 10th Anniversary Awards" were presented to acknowledge Industry Contribution and Industry Leadership.

Congratulations to Alan Kleinschmidt from Toowoomba Regional Council and David Brooker from Mackay Regional Council who received the Industry Contribution Award and Industry Leadership Award respectively.

Other nominees receiving a commemorative plaque and gift included Dick Went from Gold Coast Water, John Roworth from Longreach

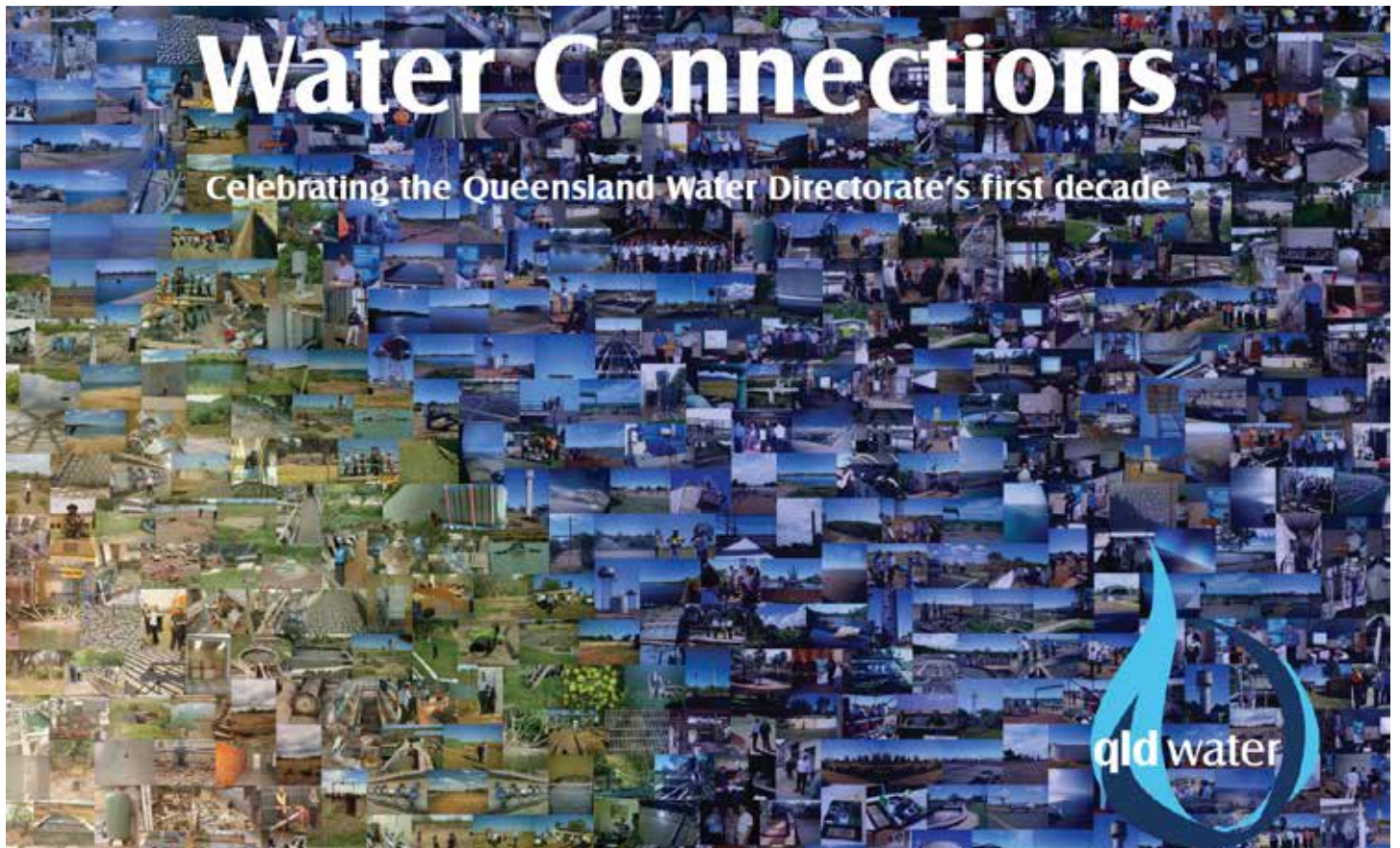
Regional Council, Daryl Ross from Logan City Council and Jason Devitt from Mackay Regional Council.

The dinner at the Allan Border Field was also an opportunity to launch our commemorative publication entitled '*Water Connections: Celebrating the Queensland Water Directorate's First Decade*,' which provides an overview of the events that have shaped the Queensland urban water industry over the past ten years.

Copies of *Water Connections* will make its way to members in time for Christmas – our special gift to you. We hope you will enjoy the stories, ideas and beautiful photographs as you get some well deserved downtime over the Christmas break.

We would also like to thank everyone who contributed to the publication – your stories are what make this publication so special.

Additional copies of '*Water Connections: Celebrating the Queensland Water Directorate's First Decade*' are for sale for \$20 plus actual postage by contacting Heather Gold at hgold@qldwater.com.au.



Update from A/CEO

Welcome to issue 8 of the **qldwater** newsletter.

Our hectic 10th anniversary year is drawing to a close and we are starting to take stock of the results, and catch up. This year (with the development of the State's 30 year draft water sector strategy and constant stream of regulatory reform) has been firmly characterised by advocacy, however, we've managed to enjoy a very large number of **qldwater** and other events including conferences, training programs and project meetings around the State. Representatives of 37 members attended our mini-conference and taste test events.

It was great to catch up with members at our anniversary dinner in Brisbane on 28 November. Congratulations to our award nominees and winners – there are countless people who make the **qldwater** network what it is, and it's nice to be able to recognise some of those who seem to go above and beyond.

For those who were unable to make it to the dinner, you should have copies of our anniversary publication in December. Special thanks to all members who have contributed material – I don't think we have knocked anything back and the photographs and stories do a great job of reflecting the diversity that is water management in Queensland. Thanks also to Desiré Gralton, our tireless communications manager for pulling it all together. I won't say never again, but not in the foreseeable future.

Season's greetings and best wishes for a safe break. Our office will be closed from 25 December to 1 January, but for any urgent matters ring Rob Fearon on 0428 300 208 or Dave Cameron on 0407 761 991.

Dave Cameron



Cooktown Boasts Top Drop!

Cook Shire Council has taken out the 2013 Orica Australia Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test at the LGAQ State Conference in Cairns on 22 October with the water from Cooktown selected as the best by conference delegates through some 300 individual "tastes."

Cook Shire Council Mayor, Cr Peter Scott, touted the win as a fantastic result for the Shire.

"I'd just like to thank the sponsors and **qldwater** and acknowledge the great work of our water crew," Mr Scott said.

The LGAQ conference provided a great opportunity to raise awareness of the water industry to local councillors and the community.

While the taste test is about how good tap water tastes, it is also meant to help inform the community about how much effort goes into providing quality drinking water.

As usual in the state finals, the results were very close and Cooktown narrowly pipped Bundaberg to take the honours.

30 members competed in regional finals held during the year with the following six regional winners fighting out the grand final:

Region	WSP	Scheme
South East Qld	Bundaberg Regional Council	Lover's Walk
South West Qld	Goondiwindi Regional Council	Inglewood
Central Qld	Gladstone Regional Council	Agnes Water
Western Qld	Diamantina Shire Council	Bedourie
North Qld	Whitsunday Regional Council	Mt Julian
Far North Qld	Cook Shire Council	Cooktown



Above: Taste test sponsor Orica Australia's George Lech, LGAQ President Cr Margaret De Wit and **qldwater** CEO Dave Cameron presented the coveted gold lego treatment plant trophy to an excited Mayor, Cr Peter Scott.

Planning is already underway for the 2014 taste test events, with Bundaberg, Warwick, Gladstone and Mackay so far confirmed as hosts.

The taste test keeps evolving, and next year we propose to include a "Best Palate" competition for tasters. The festive season is a great time to perfect your tasting skills, and we look forward to some serious competition next year.

Thanks also to both our major sponsors (Dial Before You Dig and Orica Australia) for their ongoing commitment to these events.



Regional Conferences end on a high note in Rocky

The final mini-conference and taste test for the 2013 Water Connections Tour was held in Rockhampton on 1 August, kindly hosted by Rockhampton Regional Council.

The CQ regional taste test event started a couple of weeks earlier when Rockhampton Regional Council's Mayor and Councillors conducted their own taste test of tap water from their various town water supplies, with the three most palatable samples entered into the semi-finals on the day.

Their success was unfortunately short-lived when Gladstone Regional Council's Agnes Water scheme was awarded top drop for the region.

Chair of Rockhampton Regional Council's Water Committee and **qldwater** Management Committee representative, Cr Greg Belz, welcomed attendees at the regional conference.

The excellent speaker program was ably supplemented by a bus tour to the Emu Park STP. Tour leaders Jason Plumb and Bill Van Wees showed delegates through the plant, recently upgraded to cope with population growth and improve odour control.

Emu Park STP boasts a two-tank (expandable to three tank) Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR).

Based on a conventional sewerage reticulation system with the capacity to treat 246 ML/year, the system includes gravity sewer mains, sewerage pump stations, sewerage rising mains, a sewage treatment plant, treated effluent reuse and treated effluent disposal.

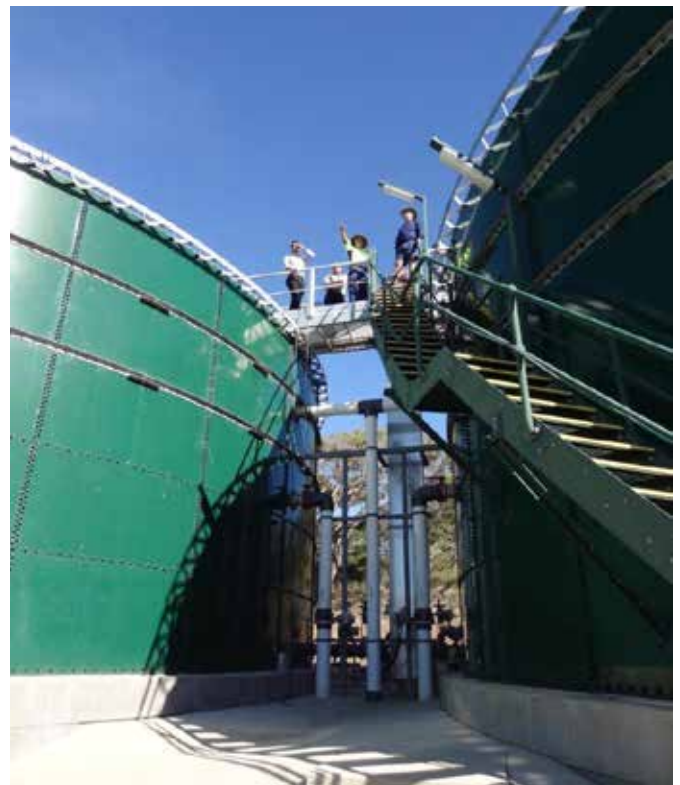
The STP is located beside the Emu Park Golf Club and is based on conventional extended aeration technology.

There is no nutrient removal treatment process. In dry weather conditions, all treated effluent is re-used by the Emu Park Golf Club. The system is monitored via Council's radio telemetry system.

The scheme services a population of approximately 3,000 with 1,356 connections.

The Rockhampton event managed to lure the largest number of attendees to the pub afterwards – always a good indication of a successful networking event.

Below: Bill Van Wees showing attendees the Emu Park STP.



Summer time is Storm Season

The **qldwater** Technical Reference Group has for some time been trying to negotiate a clear role in coordinating assistance for water and sewerage recovery among members affected by significant events during storm season as there is a strong willingness to offer assistance from many utilities.

While a formal response has not been received, we offer the following advice to members for the upcoming storm season:

1. It is critical that you continue to operate through your local disaster management arrangements. This includes raising a formal 'Requests for Assistance' (RFA) through your Local Disaster Management Group in the first instance. This also helps to maximise eligibility for NDRRA or any other available funding support.
2. If you identify a need for urgent assistance in restoring water supply or sewerage services that you believe could be efficiently met by another water service provider, you could also consider contacting either:

Dave Cameron at dcameron@qldwater.com.au or 0407 761 991 or

Rob Fearon at rfearon@qldwater.com.au or 0428 300 208 with details.

qldwater will make initial contact with other utilities to alert them of a possible need, evaluate options and discuss these with the LGAQ disaster management coordinator. Any assistance will only proceed with approval from the CEOs of both the organisation offering assistance, and the organisation being assisted, and with the knowledge of the disaster management coordinator. It is hoped that an early alert process like this will hasten any recovery efforts.

10th Anniversary Dinner, Awards and Book Launch





Skills Update

Technical Assessment, Capacity Building and Mentoring Program Kicks Off

After successfully securing a grant from Skills Queensland (now the Department of Education, Training and Employment), the Technical Assessment, Capacity Building and Mentoring Program for Regional and Remote Drinking Water Operators has kicked off in two regions with the following Councils committing to participate in the project:

Longreach and Western Qld Region

- Longreach Regional Council
- Barcoo Shire Council
- Barcaldine Regional Council

Burnett and Surrounds Region

- South Burnett Regional Council
- North Burnett Regional Council
- Banana Shire Council
- Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council
- Bundaberg Regional Council
- Toowoomba Regional Council

The Longreach/Western Qld region technical assessment site visits with technical consultants took place in September, and included a skills analysis of operators on site. The Burnett region visits followed in November, resulting in a review of 22 water treatment plants by the technical consultants and **qldwater** staff.

A full technical report for each treatment plant, including suggested improvement actions, has since been provided to participating councils.

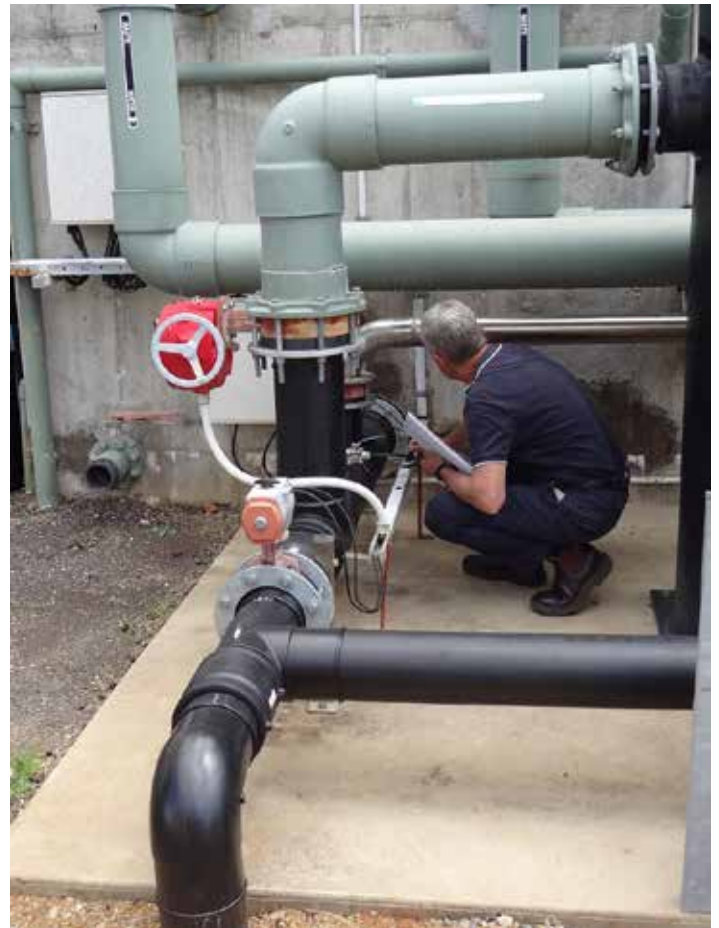
Regional training workshops for both Longreach and Burnett region will be scheduled for March 2014. These training workshops, conducted by the technical consultants in collaboration with **qldwater**, will provide practical training aimed at addressing some of the skills/training gaps identified during the technical visits.

Further, a shared calendar will be developed to support a 'regional hub' training model approach, expanding scope to include ongoing training needs. An example is compliance training such as confined spaces where there is a potential incentive in cost savings to be realised by employers. Once participants are used to the process, it is hoped that regional training can be conducted through an annual intake. This helps to reinforce the mentoring/ information exchange network which had proved successful in the past with the Water Industry Worker program in SEQ.

The training plan needs link in well with the "National Certification Framework for Operators within Drinking Water Systems Queensland" pilot studies (see following page). This program will see around 26 drinking water treatment operators reviewed against the draft framework by the Water Industry Operators Association, with gap training (in individual unit processes) identified. Longreach Regional Council and Toowoomba Regional Council are participants in both projects.

The capacity building work will also develop a mentoring framework for the region and initial desktop research on national and international industry mentoring programs has been undertaken. Operators have shared several examples of industry collaboration and assistance during emergency events including operator assistance from larger councils. These provide a great example of the potential for industry to work together and it is anticipated that this project will extend these exchange opportunities to outside of emergency events.

Below: Technical consultant Peter Mosse assessing the Mundubbera Water Treatment Plant.



National Workforce Development Fund Application submitted

Michelle Hill has submitted a second National Workforce Development Fund application on behalf of eight **qldwater** members. Due to the appointment of a new Minister and the Commission of Audit currently being undertaken, we have been advised that there will be some delays in assessment of the application, with an assessment panel unlikely to meet until after January next year.

The previous successful application currently provides eight employers with over \$400k+ total training value, with approximately one third being supplemented by NWDF.

Drinking Water Operator Certification Program

Following two national meetings earlier this year, a workshop was convened by **qldwater** on 18 October to progress the implementation of the proposed "National Certification Framework for Operators within Drinking Water Treatment Systems."

Guests included DEWS representatives, Vic Health, WIOA and a number of industry reps who agreed in principle to support the ongoing national work facilitated by **qldwater** with WIOA undertaking the certification.

Participants also agreed to conduct pilots/ trials of the national framework with four WSPs (Longreach, Toowoomba, Bundaberg and Seqwater), and to refine the current business case through targeted surveys, including all employers to populate a WIOA competency matrix for their operators.

A subsequent teleconference was held among identified pilot participants and an action plan has been agreed. Pre-Christmas is devoted to information gathering with the actual certification and gap training processes likely to commence in February 2014.

Water Industry Skills Meetings

The Queensland Water Skills Partnership Industry Leaders Group met in September. Several initiatives have been approved by the Group including a review of the Water Industry Worker program, work with Unitywater to document some of their innovative programs as case studies, investigation into restricted electrical licensing, investigation into an online "risk management essentials" course for the industry and investigations into operator certification for wastewater operators with the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

The National Water Industry Skills Taskforce and Water Industry Advisory Committee held meetings in early December, with **qldwater** representatives attending both.

SWIM Update

The lodgement of 2012/13 SWIM annual data has been the best ever with more WSPs providing better data than ever before. We also had some new Councils reporting for the first time this year. However, as is the way with technology these days, just as people are mastering the current system of SWIM online and Excel templates, this year will be the last that we use this system. Next year we will be moving to a database system (SWIM*Lite*) that will help prevent many of the common issues we currently have with using Excel and greatly streamline the management of indicators and data submission.

There are now 10 Queensland and one New South Wales WSPs using the SWIM*Local* software, with another seven trialling and six considering the software. The software allows WSPs to manage their own data in a database that synchronises with the SWIM system and thus provides many benefits such as off-site data back-up, direct 'click of a button' SWIM reporting, improved access to all data for all your staff and data with a point of truth.

SWIM*Local* has a full audit trail and currently consists of three modules (Admin – to create sites and indicators, Operations – to enter data, and Reporting – to report on data). A new Task module, which has been funded with the support of Banana Shire Council, is at the stage of user testing and will be ready for rollout in early 2014. Tablet (iPad and Android) data entry is planned for development soon.

If you are interested in trialling SWIM*Local* or the new Task Module please contact David Scheltinga at dscheltinga@qldwater.com.au.

David looks forward to talking with you all soon regarding the release of Queensland's third annual benchmarking report and particularly seeing you in person at SWIM training to be held at multiple locations around the State next June/July.

QWRAP

The Queensland Water Regional Alliances program has been running since 2011 as an LGAQ program with funding support from the State via the Department of Energy and Water Supply. This year the Department agreed to extend the program until December 2014 and provided additional funding support. The program is managed by **qldwater**.

Three 'pilot' regions self-selected to take part in QWRAP and have been joined by a fourth group (Whitsunday ROC) as part of the extension of the project in October this year. This new group comprising Whitsunday, Mackay and Isaac Regional Councils is set to commence a review of water and sewerage operations early in the new year.

Councils in the RAPAD region including Barcaldine, Longreach, Boulia, Diamantina and Barcoo agreed earlier this year to proceed to trial the RAPAD Regional Water Alliance – a recommendation from their QWRAP investigation. The formation of this alliance will be facilitated through successful application for funding through the IFMSS pool from the Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience. The total cost of this project is \$196,000 and initial activities to set up and commence operations of the Alliance are proceeding in early 2014.

Also successful with IFMSS funding was the Wide Bay Burnet Regional Organisation of Councils which has commenced a project with a budget of \$92,000 to investigate key collaborative activities for water and sewerage in the region. This project will analyse four identified priority areas for collaboration to identify costs and benefits for participating councils and for the region as a whole.

The Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils makes up the fourth QWRAP region and has recently completed a detailed study of the potential for alternative institutional arrangements across the six councils involved. This draft review is currently being reviewed by the technical committee to be provided to the ROC at their first meeting of 2014 in February.



Focus on the New Zealand Water Industry

The trial **qldwater** and LGAQ “Innovations and Alliances in the Water Industry Study Tour” to New Zealand in late August 2013 provided **qldwater** and LGAQ staff, along with several member representatives, a great overview of different governance models, technologies and initiatives from visits to service providers across New Zealand’s North Island.

While not facing the same distance and climatic challenges as many areas of Queensland, our Kiwi neighbours share many other common issues and have some quite innovative approaches to addressing them. Here are a few observations from the group:

- The NZ water industry has some very big organisations and some very small ones. Watercare, based in and around Auckland, is large by any standard and is an amalgamation of a number of smaller entities. They have some interesting projects around biosolids disposal (being used to rehabilitate an old quarry) and wastewater treatment (enormous UV systems). Watercare is one of only two organisations that have meters in use as part of an overall demand management strategy, and is also driven by lowest cost to serve, i.e. no dividends are returned to owner councils.
- Hamilton and surrounds have some impressive emerging voluntary alliances collaborating on procurement, asset management, shared skills and so on. Water allocations from the Waikato River are also a significant issue for the whole of the North Island.



Images: Checking out Watercare’s facilities in Auckland.

- Tauranga impressed the group with its significant “smart growth” planning programs in which water and sewerage managers are integrally involved. In addition, Tauranga Council had a mature, cost-effective outsourced model for civil construction, maintenance and meter reading. Metering had been rolled out here as a specific response to help defer capital expenditure.
- Taupo boasts a new, interesting membrane plant for drinking water with substantial earthquake protection built into designs. Taupo also has issues around the management of Lake Taupo with sewage overflows and a variable seasonal population.
- Wellington has some amazing technology with a mini-grid allowing for source selection based on water quality and control systems linked to the electricity market to control pump usage, etc. Wellington Regional Council is a bulk water provider selling to nine district councils. Flood protection and rumoured organisational change appear to be the two most significant current issues.

The future of these types of tours is still being decided. While they were invaluable to all who attended, more participants will be required to make these events financially viable.

Member Survey

Thanks to those who responded to our member survey – the results were considered by TRG in late November.

A random draw of responses was conducted and the lucky winners of the two \$100 magazine subscriptions prizes are Croydon Shire Council and North Burnett Regional Council.

Actions agreed from the survey review include:

- Progress the development of Water and Sewerage / Operational Plan template for small-medium service providers
- Further promote “Ask Your Mates” as a useful forum for sharing ideas and addressing technical issues
- Expand current provider listings on the Queensland Water Directory on the **qldwater** web site for laboratory services
- Facilitate a pilot program for operator exchanges in 2014
- Develop further options to promote the uptake of the SEQ Design and Construct Code across the State.



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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.”