



QueenslandWater

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

Issue 10

2014 Award Winners

"The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand."

– Vince Lombardi

Each year, **qldwater** sponsors two awards at the Water Industry Operators Association (WIOA) State Conference where we get the opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of a couple of high achievers.

This year the spotlight was on Matthew Cook from North Burnett Regional Council and Sarah Walton from Seqwater who won the 2014 Operator of the Year Civil/ All Rounder and Young Operator of the Year Awards respectively.

In charge of the day to day operation of seven water schemes (intakes, treatment and reticulation) and five sewerage schemes (reticulation, treatment and disposal) with water supplies ranging from artesian, ground water and surface water, Matthew has achieved respect from his workforce through his knowledge and dedication to the job.

When the North Burnett region was severely hit by the 2013 floods leaving five water schemes out of operation and three sewerage schemes severely affected, Matt worked relentlessly with his skeleton crew and a relief team from Townsville in restoring water and sewerage services to the community.



Our Young Operator of the Year, Sarah Walton (pictured above) already had a Bachelor of Science under her belt when she joined the Seqwater trainee program. She has since completed a Cert II in Water Operations, commenced a Cert IV in Occupational Health and Workplace Safety and is completing a Masters in Environmental Science at the University of Queensland. Her team members at Seqwater nominated Sarah for her delivery of exemplary service and her very practical and enthusiastic approach to workplace health and safety, customer service standards and operational systems.

Matthew and Sarah will join the WIOA delegation on the New Zealand Study Tour in 2015 which includes the Water Industry Operations Group Annual Conference.

Congratulations must also go to Julie Smith from Isaac Regional Council who received the AWA Queensland Leon Henry Operator of the Year Award – a great achievement for Julie and her council.

Left: Matthew Cook receives his award from TRG Chair Trevor Harvey.

Update from A/CEO

Welcome to Issue 10 of the *qldwater* newsletter. I'd like to start by acknowledging and thanking our 2014 event hosts and participants, especially those involved with our tour of South West Queensland a couple of months ago as the tour gave our guests from the state an excellent appreciation of some of the challenges facing service delivery in regional Queensland.

The model for the events will likely change a bit in 2015 – while the feedback at each event is overwhelmingly positive and the taste test competition has been fierce, creating a speaking program for the events gets more challenging with each one we do but you can still expect to see a few regional conferences, potentially with more informal networking opportunities next year.

June saw the finalisation of significant changes to legislation impacting our industry, and for the most part these have been positive. It also saw the publication of the State's WaterQ strategy after a couple of years in the making.

I had the opportunity to deliver a presentation at the AWA North Queensland event in late July which examined some of the gaps between historical industry and state priorities, and we will publish a discussion document to explore some of these ideas with members in the coming month.

The initial feedback we have been getting from members about WaterQ has generally been less than enthusiastic, but it's important to recognise what it is and what it has the potential to deliver. It has a strong emphasis on customers and strong (political) messages around reducing prices in an environment which is already challenged by funding, with little likelihood of changing. However, it is the first time that there has been an attempt to present a coordinated state-wide strategy with urban water needs articulated. There are plenty of synergies with industry priorities and we believe

it's worth the effort to work with the state to progress these while continuing to challenge the obvious omissions.

We are also pleased to have direct involvement in helping to deliver the vision of WaterQ, with Rob Fearon appointed as a member of the Water Expert Panel.

Finally, if you haven't heard already it's time to lock 26/27 November in your diaries for the first industry-led innovation event in Brisbane which has been developed by our technical reference group. This forum will provide an opportunity for presenters from water and sewerage service providers to promote their most interesting innovations and opportunities for the future to their peers with a view to collaboration. The registration fees will be kept to a minimum through sponsorships still being finalised. To date Trility has signed up, and LGAQ has kindly offered a small number of grants to assist representatives from smaller councils to attend.

This event is expected to have a strong profile with the state and the WaterQ Innovation Panel, with the Minister for Energy and Water Supply confirmed as speaking at the event.

Below: The Water Expert Panel meets for the first time. From left to right: Chris Tanner, Leith Bouilly, Mark Pascoe (Chair), Minister Mark McArdle, Dr Steven Cork, Dr Cara Beal and Dr Rob Fearon.



qldwater and WSAA formalise collaboration

qldwater members will have improved access to an extensive library of resources and tools through a formalised collaboration with the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA).

On 20 June 2014, *qldwater* signed a Memorandum of Understanding with WSAA for a period of two years, recognising the complementary roles of our organisations in improving water and sewerage services for our members.

Under the terms of the agreement,

- *qldwater* will receive access to the WSAA members' portal;
- *qldwater* members with 20,000 connections or less will receive a discount of 50% on WSAA codes and standards;
- *qldwater* will establish a means of regularly communicating details of new WSAA projects and initiatives and promote benefits of WSAA membership where appropriate;
- both *qldwater* and WSAA will seek collaborative opportunities. As mentioned above, planning for an innovation event in November this year is already underway.

We look forward to benefits that members of the two organisations will reap through the collaboration.

Reflecting on the benefits of awards

While our 2013 Operator and Young Operator of the Year Award winners Jason Vade and Tyren Cavanagh are getting their passports and bags ready for the WIOA tour of water and wastewater facilities in New Zealand, our 2012 winners Tammy Beddow and Ashley Reidy have been reflecting on their trip and the importance of having good connections in the water industry to get the job done.

While Tammy and Ashley immensely enjoyed the all expenses paid trip to New Zealand and attending the Water Industry Operations Group NZ conference in May 2013, the close connection they now forge stands out as a highlight of the whole award process.

Ironically both Tammy and Ashley are working in two of the most challenging regions in Queensland. Currently Senior Operator at Blackwater Water Treatment Plant, Tammy has her job cut out for her with water quality coming under immense scrutiny in the media and the general public. As Supervisor at Isaac Regional Council's Middlemount and Dysart treatment plants Ashley faces similar problems, and according to the pair the fact that they can now call on someone who understands their position is invaluable.

"Winning the award has given me access to more resources and opened up a communication network with Ashley where we can ring each other and give support. Ashley is going through the same thing as I'm going through, so we can talk about trials, what works and what doesn't, and sometimes just have a general vent to each other."

According to Tammy, the other NZ tour participants were impressed by the challenges some remote Queensland service providers faced with less funding, less people and older technology.

"Because Blackwater is dealing with Iron and Manganese problems we have been facing a lot of negativity from the community, and a few social media pages put water complaints online first before contacting Council to ask for problems to be fixed. We need to know first to fix the main, do flush-backs or whatever needs to be done to rectify the problem. This has caused some problems with low morale in the water section, and we are trying to work with the public to set up better systems of communication."

Ashley agrees, adding that it is sometimes disheartening that operators never get recognition from the community for a job well done, only scrutiny when there are problems. And when the problems can only be fixed with additional infrastructure, it can feel like you are always putting out fires.

Tammy says winning the award has been a real confidence booster for her personally, and she has been promoting the **qldwater** Awards and WIOA Conference to other plant operators.

"Just being able to talk to people and see the interesting technical papers was a big eye opener to me personally – it might be something that you had thought about and somebody had already written a paper on it."

Although Tammy is grateful for the recognition, she feels like her whole team needs a pat on the back for the overtime and tremendous effort they put in.

Both Tammy and Ashley spoke highly of the value of conferences and networking events and wish they had more people on board so all team members could attend these types of events.

Below: Group shot of the 2013 NZ Tour Group.



Water of Origin

We may have lost the rugby league State of Origin this year, but we have some of the best tasting water in the country with Bundaberg Regional Council (BRC) claiming the “top drop” title at the Water Industry Operators Association of Australia (WIOA) Conference in Logan in June. Conference attendees gave the BRC sample top scores in the 2014 Orica Australia Water of Origin Water Taste Test, beating the 2014 NSW Taste Test Winner, Bega Valley Shire Council.

The winning sample from Bundaberg’s “Lover’s Walk” scheme was a last minute entry due to difficulties in transporting the sample from 2013 Queensland winner Cooktown, however as Bundaberg was last year’s state-wide runner up and winner of two regional finals we knew we had something good.

In the 2013 Origin our sample from Ayr went down to Taree by a whisker and with due respect to our colleagues in NSW, even NRL refereeing couldn’t have made a difference to the result with a margin like this year’s. If only the Maroons could have replicated our form in the State of Origin!

Bundaberg Regional Council Manager of Process Operations Water and Wastewater, Jeff Rohdman was thrilled with the result.

“Certainly the award was well received by the team and draws attention to the great work they undertake to provide a quality 24/7 service to the community.”

Below: Michelle Hill with the taste test samples at the WIOA Conference.



Regulation of Sewage Pumping Stations to get a make-over

Sewage pumping stations form a major element of sewerage services across Queensland with an estimated three and a half thousand of varying size across the state. Pumping stations are usually located in low points of the landscape and are often designed as a ‘safety valve’ for the emergency release of sewage avoiding overflows occurring on private property and inside houses (e.g. during floods). Building sewerage systems large enough to cope with the entire potential wet weather flows in sub-tropical and tropical Queensland is prohibitively expensive, so overflows are a necessary feature of many sewerage networks after heavy rain and must be managed carefully to avoid risks to the public or broader environment.

Regulation to avoid environmental impacts of overflows from pumping stations has been in place since 2009 and the industry has been working with the Environmental Regulator since then to design fit-for-purpose rules to mitigate overflows and avoid environmental harm. Significant changes have been made over the past few years but more work is necessary to make the current Standard Conditions achievable.

Early in 2014 the Environmental Regulator proposed removing pumping station Regulations if the industry created a voluntary Code of Practice which could allow more fit-for-purpose solutions across the state while protecting environmental values. A survey of urban service providers has yielded overwhelming support for transitioning to a Code

Regional Taste Tests

The end is drawing near and tension is building in our ongoing quest to find Queensland's best tasting tap water. Five regional finals have been held to date, with the following councils currently perfecting their water quality in preparation for the grand final event to be held at the annual Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (Qld Div) State Conference in Caloundra from 7-10 October this year.

- Bundaberg Regional Council's Lovers Walk Scheme in South East Queensland
- Toowoomba Regional Council's Mt Kynoch Water Treatment Plant in South West Queensland
- Rockhampton Regional Council's Glenmore Water Treatment Plant in Central Queensland
- Mackay Regional Council's Nebo Road Water Treatment Plant in North Queensland
- Richmond Regional Council's pilot filtration plant in Western Queensland

A definite highlight for this year's competition (for **qldwater's** resident nerds if no-one else) is that the nation's favourite science communicator, Dr Karl Kruszelnicki will be launching the Orica Australia Queensland Water Taste Test final during his keynote address at 3pm on Wednesday, 8 October. There's no predicting where a presentation from Karl might go but you can be assured it will be interesting and in this case, watery!

qldwater will host a booth at the conference where visitors will get the opportunity to sample the six best tasting tap water samples from regional events around the state and ultimately decide the winner. We will also be running the popular "Best Palate" competition for delegates.

Presentation of the taste test winner will take place during the excellence awards ceremony on the Thursday evening, and the Best Palate competition final will happen on Friday 10 October.



Clockwise from left: Jason Plumb (Rockhampton), Stuart Boyd (Mackay), Mark Samblebe (Aeramix - for Richmond) and Martin Schelberg (Toowoomba) receiving their taste test trophies from Dave Cameron.



of Practice (CoP) and **qldwater** has commenced a process to develop a draft document for industry feedback.

Under the Environmental Protection Act, an Industry Code of Practice is a guideline created by an industry, describing optimal operations, maintenance and planning. Adhering to the Code is voluntary but can be used as a defence against a charge of causing environmental nuisance or harm or other offences like releasing contaminants to waters. Operators who have an overflow and do not comply with the Code would need to prove that they had complied with the General Environmental Duty (under the Act) to avoid enforcement action. Further information on Codes can be obtained on the **qldwater** website

or members may contact enquiry@qldwater.com.au for a list of relevant documents and links.

There will be a number of opportunities for industry members to provide input to the new CoP as it is developed over the next six months. Progress will be summarised on the **qldwater** web page and through regular e-Flashes inviting industry feedback on draft versions of the document. In addition, all members are able to provide nominations for the expert panel developing the Code. If you wish to provide comments or nominate to be involved in the development process, please contact enquiry@qldwater.com.au or ring Rob Fearon on 0428 300 208.

Skills Update

Drinking Water Operator Certification Queensland Pilot

The discussion draft of the business case to support operator certification in Queensland is now available for industry review on the **qldwater** website.

qldwater has been working through the Water Skills Partnership and an industry steering committee to develop this document since October 2013. Its main purpose is to provide a report to the national Water Industry Skills Taskforce and Department of Energy and Water Supply on the Queensland Pilot program undertaken to test the national Certification Framework.

Given the importance of this initiative to the broader industry, we have released the draft document for review. The full document, which includes an appendix with detailed costings, is available on request.

The work has been an agreed industry priority for some time and is also recognised in WaterQ. The document presents a case for a complete state-wide roll out with commensurate costs – whether recommendations are accepted and any funding is made available to support implementation is still a matter for discussion with the state. These negotiations will commence once the steering committee has reviewed industry feedback and the final business case is published.

New funding for VET Qualifications

The State Government has released their 2014-15 Annual VET Investment Plan, which details the Government's planned \$615 million investment in vocational education and training (VET) over the coming year. The list of qualifications that will attract a government subsidy from 1 July 2014 under the Plan are detailed in the Queensland Training Subsidies List and includes Certificates II, III and IV in Water Operations. The Certificate IV in Water Operations will attract funding of between \$2,954 and \$3,587 for existing workers in the industry who do not already hold a Certificate IV or higher-level qualification (not including qualifications completed at school and foundation skills training). For further information visit the Department of Education, Training and Employment website at www.training.qld.gov.au.

Technical Assessment and Mentoring for Regional and Remote Drinking Water Operators Project Complete

In May 2013, **qldwater** secured a grant from Skills Queensland (now the Department of Education, Training and Employment) to undertake a project trial in two stages, focussed on support for drinking water operators in small and remote communities. The project was an exciting opportunity to trial ways of improving drinking water management through expert technical support and ongoing mentoring, and targeted two key regions: Longreach and Central West Queensland and South Burnett and Toowoomba regions and surrounds.

The project has been highly successful and well received by the industry and provided an opportunity for water service providers to critically analyse the operation of their water treatment plants and approach to operator training and workforce development.

The Water Treatment Plant Operators involved directly in the practical side of the project have been enthusiastic and welcoming of the project goals and have provided very positive feedback on the technical support and training provided through the program, leading to more of this training being delivered in these and other regions. Further, many operators are keen to be involved in future mentoring and operator exchange opportunities that will inevitably result from the project.

qldwater, through the Queensland Water Skills Partnership, will continue to provide a coordination role for training activities as well as promoting opportunities for industry mentoring and operator exchange arrangements. For a copy of the draft project report, please contact Michelle Hill on mhill@qldwater.com.au.

News Bites:

- *Data collection for a third Queensland Urban Water Industry Workforce Composition Snapshot Report has commenced, with expected publication late 2014. To participate, please contact Michelle Hill on mhill@qldwater.com.au.*
- ***qldwater** has taken first steps towards a voluntary certification program for wastewater treatment staff. A second meeting to progress the framework is scheduled for 27 August.*
- *The National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF) application made on behalf of six employers to support VET training has been approved and Tri-Party Agreements executed. The NWDF program has now ceased, to be replaced by a new Industry Skills Fund on 1 January 2015.*
- *A report on the Water Industry Worker program is currently being finalised – a draft is available for those interested with a final version to be presented at the next Skills Partnership Industry Leaders' Group meeting in September/October.*
- ***qldwater** representatives met with the Assistant Education Minister on 6 August to discuss skills and workforce needs in the water industry. The importance of continued funding for Certificate II and III Water Operations was emphasised, along with other funding needs for the industry. While local government employees are not eligible on paper for the newly established Industry Skills Fund, we were advised that the department has some discretion so will continue to execute an argument for members to be eligible and prepare a coordinated bid for the next funding round.*

SWIM Update

It's Reporting Time!

The 2013/14 SWIM annual data reporting period has started with BoM data due in by the last week of August. We have still not been advised of a submission date for NPR data but are requesting all annual data (ABS, NPR and DEWS) be submitted in the last week of September as has been the case in previous years. If you are having any trouble downloading or completing your SWIM annual data template, please contact David Scheltinga at dscheltinga@qldwater.com.au.

Due to cuts in federal funding, the National Water Commission (NWC) - which manages the National Performance Report (NPR) - will end as of 31 December. In light of this, DEWS has decided to look into streamlining the reportable KPIs and the auditing arrangements for large Queensland service providers (>10,000 connections), and released a draft document suggesting the removal of some indicators for 2014/15 reporting. Please contact David for more information.

For 2014/15 reporting, **qldwater** will be moving to a database system (SWIM*Annual*) that will help prevent many of the common issues we currently have with Excel and greatly streamline the management of indicators and data submission.

New Task Module for SWIM*Local*

There are now 15 Queensland and one NSW water service providers using the SWIM*Local* software, with others trialling and 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 has been released and rolled out earlier this year, allowing users to set up scheduled tasks which result in email/SMS alerts if not completed on time. Development of a tablet (iPad and Android) data entry module will start in the next month or two. If you are interested in trialling SWIM*Local* or the new Task Module, please contact David Scheltinga.

How do you compare?

Queensland's third water and sewerage benchmarking report has been completed using 2012/13 data and is available from the **qldwater** website at:

http://www.qldwater.com.au/_literature_168513/2012-2013_Benchmarking_Report

Good rap for QWRAP

The Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program (QWRAP) received a good rap last month with the Minister for Energy and Water Supply, The Honourable Mark McArdle, choosing to visit the first pilot region for the program to promote the release of WaterQ.

Talking at the Outback Regional Water Alliance's (ORWA) showcase event in Longreach, Minister McArdle said a key element of the State's 30 year strategy was regional alliances, and that the ORWA was driving the agenda.

At the heart of this Outback collaboration sits the Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD), a unified local government organisation that has been successfully assisting and facilitating the growth and development of the Outback region for almost a decade.

In 2011 the RAPAD Board acted to jointly improve urban water services in the region and endorsed their participation in the Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program (QWRAP), a state-wide initiative of the Local Government Association Queensland (LGAQ) and managed by the Queensland Water Directorate (**qldwater**).

The RAPAD group of Councils was the first to sign up to this program, establishing the ORWA comprising the six local government areas of Barcaldine Regional Council, Longreach Regional Council, Barcoo Shire Council, Boulia Shire Council, Diamantina Shire Council and Winton Shire Council to take a leadership and coordination role in urban water. All of these councils with the exception of Winton have agreed to collaborate further following a detailed review of risks, gaps and strengths, governance arrangements and new business models. The ORWA agreed on 21 June 2014 to proceed to trial the alliance, signing a Memorandum of Understanding for an initial period of three years.

Eighteen communities are set to benefit from the alliance with QWRAP investigation showing cost benefits from joint activities and improved service levels by combining the strengths and expertise of the diverse ORWA councils.

The other QWRAP regions include the Far North Queensland, the Wide Bay Burnett and the Whitsunday Regional Organisation of Councils.

Below, from left: P.J. Cullivan, Rob Fearon, Greg Hoffman, Minister McArdle, Joe Owens and John Roworth at the ORWA Showcase event in Longreach.



Events Calendar

August

29 TRG Meeting

September

TBC Water Skills Partnership Industry Leaders Group Meeting

11 FNQ Regional Conference and Taste Test, Innisfail

17-19 AWA Enviro '14: Pathways for Better Business, Adelaide Convention Centre

October

8 IPWEAQ State Conference – Dr Karl's Keynote Address

9 IPWEAQ State Conference – Water Stream

9 IPWEAQ Excellence Awards and announcement of the 2014 Taste Test Winner

November

17-19 Government Skills Australia National Conference and Water Industry Advisory Committee Meeting – Adelaide

19 Management Committee Meeting

26 Innovation forum tour (afternoon) – QUU Innovation Centre Luggage Point

27 *qldwater* Innovation Forum, Allan Border Field, Albion

28 TRG Meeting

What's New: Product Showcase

Not a product this time, but a great initiative nonetheless.

As part of the technical investigations/ mentoring program mentioned earlier which visited 22 sites around central west and Burnett regions, consultants Peter Mosse and Bruce Murray from Citywater identified a number of significant needs in smaller and remote councils for basic monitoring and other equipment.

The wish list included:

- On line turbidity meters suitable for monitoring either filtered water or raw water
- On line chlorine analysers
- Portable laboratory turbidity meters
- Portable laboratory pH meters
- Portable laboratory chlorine meters
- Jar testing equipment

Peter Mosse put out a call for help to contacts in Western Port Water in Victoria and Seqwater, and while logistics took a while to sort through, both organisations were kindly able to provide a number of items to fill gaps from recently decommissioned plants.

The equipment is in the process of being distributed to councils in the Outback Regional Water Alliance and Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council.

qldwater is happy to try to "match-make" in similar circumstances if members are faced with critical needs or excess equipment. Please email enquiry@qldwater.com.au or visit http://www.qldwater.com.au/Queensland_Water_Directory_Equipment_Sharing.



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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."