

Taste Test Goes Global

Annual Forum attendees selected water from Livingstone Shire Council's Capricorn Coast Scheme as the state's top drop in the 2017 Ixom Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test held at the QUU Innovation Centre at Luggage Point on Wednesday, 6 September 2017.



Around 60 forum delegates participated in a blind taste off of six water samples from across Queensland, using a scientifically proven water wheel to judge the entries by colour, odour and taste. The runner up was Seqwater with water from the Tugun Desalination Plant coming in at a close second.

Livingstone Shire Councillor for Water, Waste Management and the Environment, Adam Belot said the winning drop came from a pristine dunal water system at Waterpark Creek and treated at a conventional water treatment plant.

"As a Council, we are committed to providing the highest quality water to residents throughout the Shire," Cr Belot said.

"Our crystal clear water has long been recognised as being some of the purest water in Australia... and now it's official! I would like to congratulate the dedicated and professional Council team who operate the Woodbury Treatment Plant. They are constantly striving to maintain the highest quality water for our residents and best practice treatment techniques and are doing a great job."

We look forward to working with Livingstone Shire Council early in the new year to produce a promotional run of craft beer made from their winning water.

While the Queensland competition had been running

for several years, it has now grown to become a coveted national competition with the Water Industry Operators Association (WIOA) introducing it in NSW, ACT, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.

Toowoomba Regional Council have been basking in glory for the past year, taking out the 2016 Queensland title as well as the 2017 Water of Origin against NSW, where Queensland has reigned supreme for the past four years .

Toowoomba continued their winning streak, taking out the 2017 Ixom Best Tasting Tap Water in Australia competition in Launceston in October. A sample of Toowoomba's Mt Kynoch scheme will now go on to represent Australia at the International Water Taste Test conducted in Berkley Springs, USA in February 2018.

Next year's National Final will take place in Toowoomba on 18 October 2018 .

We are always looking for new ways to reinvent the taste test, and next year we plan to reintroduce a number of regional competitions prior to the grand final event to be held at the Annual Forum .

Images (left to right): Max Baldry from taste test sponsor Ixom hands the award to Michael Dalton from Livingstone Shire Council; Annual forum delegates putting their taste buds to the test.

Message from CEO

In this column I would like to focus on water industry benchmarking, which is underpinned by the Statewide Water Information Management System (SWIM).

Benchmarking is a structured and continuous process that allows service providers to assess performance and identify and adapt fit-for-purpose practices. Transparent reporting of performance linked with regulatory incentives and penalties is common in many jurisdictions and is seen as essential for competition by comparison. Queensland was criticised in the Draft Productivity Commission report released in 2017 for a lack of mature competition by comparison. However, performance reporting processes are well established across the State through SWIM and the State's mandatory KPI framework.

The major challenge facing competition by comparison is the diversity of communities (and the utilities servicing them):

- 72 entities service the state, and over 50% of the potable schemes in Queensland have fewer than 500 people;
- There is clearly a significant difference in the capability available to a small community which is part of a larger regional council, compared to a very remote area;
- Further complicating factors (contributing to costs and impacting efficiency) include density, community habits including water use, the quality of source water, environmental sensitivity in the catchment and even soil types which can contribute significantly to how long an asset can remain in service.

As we move towards 2018, we continue to look for enhancements to established processes, developing comparison groups and benchmarking trials for the

ultimate benefit of Queensland's urban water and sewerage customers.

SWIM currently captures annual compliance data and following a series of QA processes, reports it to regulatory agencies including the state Department of Energy and Water Supply (DEWS), Bureau of Meteorology (for National Water Act and National Performance Report purposes) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. While the system is capable of dealing with data at any level, most regulators only require key indicators to be reported at a whole of provider level, rather than at the "scheme" which is necessary as a minimum for effective benchmarking.

qldwater has produced a series of voluntary benchmarking reports since 2011/12 which were designed to get service providers used to the concept, with de-identified comparative reports prior to that. Many councils continue to use the information in these reports as an evidence base to justify investment. DEWS produced its first mandatory comparative report based on 2014/15 data. Voluntary benchmarking takes time to build participation, but it is also an ideal model to refine and improve indicators, "clusters" of similar service providers initially, and eventually more detailed scheme-based comparisons.

While it has taken Queensland some time to catch up to other jurisdictions in realising the benefits of reporting and benchmarking, we are blessed with the best system in the country to support these activities and look to 2018 to start taking real advantage of that capability.

Our 2018 events plan is well underway and we look forward to connection with as many members across Queensland as possible. In the meantime we thank you for a productive year and wish you a safe festive break.

*We wish you a
Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year*

*Dave, Rob, David, Heather,
Desiré and Ryan*



IPWEA Queensland 2017 Excellence Awards Winners

IPWEA Queensland presented its Excellence Awards at the Queensland State Conference and Gala Dinner held in Townsville on 25 October 2017. Congratulations to all award nominees and winners, particularly the recipients of the Water Project Awards. We were particularly pleased to see two QWRAP regions receiving accolades for joint programs that have delivered significant progress for the respective alliance communities.

The winners of the Water Project Awards were:

Water Projects over \$5 million - Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils

The Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils (WBBROC) collected the award for water projects over \$5 million for its Joint Sewer Rehabilitation Program, supported through the Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program.

The WBBROC comprises Bundaberg Regional Council, North Burnett Regional Council, Fraser Coast Regional Council and Cherbourg Aboriginal Council, South Burnett Regional Council and Gympie Regional Council.

After an extensive period of planning, the collaborative group delivered a large scale joint procurement of sewer relining services to extend the life of sewer assets and deliver efficiencies for water and sewerage customers due to the significant efforts of the collaborating councils, and specific leadership of Fraser Coast Regional Council.

Water Projects \$2 million to \$5 million – Bundaberg Regional Council

The Burnett River Discharge Facility for Rubyanna Wastewater Treatment Plant is the result of significant planning to address regional growth, regulatory compliance and to improve water quality in the Burnett River. The project attracted cultural heritage challenges, time and cost pressures but technical innovation delivered a river pipeline through an environmentally sensitive river bank, protecting the cultural heritage significance of the area and ensuring that the final flood resilient solution was fit for purpose.

Water Projects under \$2 million – Outback Regional Water Alliance

The Outback Regional Water Alliance comprising of Barcaldine Regional Council, Barcoo Shire Council, Blackall-Tambo Regional Council, Boulia Shire Council, Diamantina Shire Council, Longreach Regional Council and Winton Shire Council has taken out the award for water projects under \$2 million for its Regional Outback Water Quality Infrastructure Program.

The infrastructure program, seeks to bring improved water quality to the region through collaboration and innovative approaches whilst meeting the individual needs of each of the communities across the seven contributing councils.

Over the past twelve months the alliance has delivered infrastructure works and cleaning on water reservoirs, joint audits of Drinking Water Quality Management Plans along with inspections, condition assessments and cleaning of water mains across the region. The collaboration is supported through the Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program.

Innovation in Water Award – Mareeba Shire Council

Mareeba Shire Council has also taken out two accolades at this year's Excellence Awards. The Council collected the award for innovation in water, waste water, sewerage and drought management for the upgrade of Mareeba's Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Council completed a \$16 million upgrade to the Mareeba Wastewater Treatment Plant to cater for population growth over a 20-year horizon and deliver significant environmental benefits. Through innovative planning, Council has upgraded the existing infrastructure to deliver a cost-effective wastewater treatment solution at half the cost of a new treatment plant.

Mareeba Shire Council's Acting Director Infrastructure Services Glenda Kirk also took home the Woman in Engineering Award. As Acting Director Infrastructure Services, Ms Kirk has been responsible for the delivery of a number of council's large scale and complex engineering projects including the award-winning Mareeba Sewerage Treatment Plant Upgrade and the partially completed Mareeba Airport Upgrade. Ms Kirk is well recognised for her strong leadership and professional approach and she delivers projects on time and within budget for the benefit of the Mareeba community.

Annual Forum Highlights

The 2017 Annual Forum kicked off with an excellent tour of some of Brisbane’s historical water and sewerage infrastructure, including the Spring Hill Reservoir and Eagle Farm Pump Station.

Ken Vaheesan’s presentation at the pump station clearly illustrated what a critical piece of Brisbane’s infrastructure it is, and Col Hester’s seemingly infinite knowledge of the history of water and sewerage in the region made for another great session. We thank Queensland Urban Utilities for hosting the technical tour, taste test and presentations at their Innovation Centre.

Day 2 included useful discussions around our regulator theme, while other case studies and workshop sessions allowed participants to learn and share experiences about automated metering solutions, resource recovery and more. The most commended presentations

included Greg Hoffman’s analysis of ratepayer surveys and how to elevate the profile of water and sewerage to improve investment, keynote presentations from Boston Consulting Group and Isle Utilities, and Andrew Connor’s thought-provoking response to the challenging “collateral damage” topic.

Thanks again to our event sponsors **Royce Water Technologies, Lonza, Water RA, Hydramet and Aqseptence**, along with **Ixom** and **Dial Before You Dig**.

On behalf of the **qldwater** Technical Reference Group, thanks again to all who were able to make the time to participate. The event left the TRG with more than enough topics for workshops and other events in 2018, including an expanded DEHP discussion, future governance of the sector, buried infrastructure and the infrastructure “cliff,” automated metering and system leakage as well as cybersecurity.





Royce boys winners of the Vendor Pitch session

The Vendor Pitch session, introduced at the 2017 Annual Forum, aimed to fund the newly created Queensland Water Regional Communities Innovations Program (QWRCIP) which allows approved scholarship holders to spend time visiting SEQ service providers, attend the Annual Forum as well as a Technical Reference Group meeting.

Both **Geoff Rintoul** and **Nathan Litzow** demonstrated that they were worthy recipients of the QWRCIP scholarships – you can read Nathan's report in this edition. Kudos to QUU, Logan and City of Gold Coast for making people available to help with their professional development at a challenging time of year.

We caught up with **Royce Wellings**, winner of the inaugural Vendor Pitch session, to see what the win means for him and his company:

Can you please tell us a bit about your decision to enter the pitch and your subsequent win – what does it mean for you / Royce Water?

Thank you for including a vendor pitch session. I have been in the water sector for almost 15 years. Our customers are used to the "Royce Boys" turning up with new toys and technologies to solve their problems. These toys are usually imported from manufacturers in the US, UK and Europe. I wanted to let my customers know we now have a manufacturing capability to make some of the equipment they use in their water and wastewater plants in Brisbane. Hopefully they will ask for and support a Queensland manufacturer.

What are you / your organisation trying to achieve with the sector and what excites you?

"Insanity is a journey that starts with a good idea"

With much of the equipment we import, we need to make a local modification so the sensor will suit the local conditions. When there is a supplier price rise it is too easy to keep passing the increased cost on to the customer. Eventually you look at the price and ask yourself if you can make the item yourself for less money and still maintain good margins. With the galvanic dissolved oxygen sensor we have been able to redesign the sensor to improve the functionality and accuracy of the sensor, as well as lower the cost to the customer for the similar sensor from overseas.

What do you think about the current technologies available now and what it means for the water industry?

I started Royce Water in 2004 because generally the quality of process instrumentation available to the water sector was quite poor and outdated. The first step was to find new reliable technologies from overseas and introduce into the Australian market. I identified innovative SMEs overseas who are the development houses for new sensing technology and formed relationships to distribute these new technologies in Australia. In this we have been successful. The next step is to supplement these technologies with locally manufactured sensors.

Is there anything exciting in the pipeline that you are looking at bringing to the market?

Yes, but I cannot say at present. We are in R&D on new sensing technologies for use in water and wastewater treatment. It is all very exciting and a game changer in the area of analytical measurement. More on this next year!

More information on Royce Water Technologies products is available on our website at <http://www.qldwater.com.au/qldwater-blog/2017-vendor-pitch-winner>.

QWRCIP Scholarship

Central Highlands Regional Council Assistant Water Engineer Nathan Litzow was one of the recipients of our inaugural QWRCIP scholarships, funded by corporate sponsors through the “vendor pitch” session at the qldwater Annual Forum in September. The scholarship provided a unique opportunity for Nathan to spend time visiting with SEQ service providers as well as attend the qldwater annual forum and Technical Reference Group meetings. In 2018, we hope to be able further scholarships aligned with our regional events.

Nathan kindly provided the following account of his experiences:

For the first two days of the program I enjoyed the hospitality of the City of Gold Coast’s (CoGC) Water and Waste directorate. Time was spent with the network reliability team where I heard of the assets management challenges that the team is facing. They included the everyday issues around budgeting, reproducing good work programs and improving poor ones. We also discussed the bigger event challenges like those related to withdrawing from Allconnex – the jointly-owned distribution and retail entity at a cost of more than \$80 million and many other losses in terms of asset management and history.

Another topic we looked at was the effects of Ex TC Debbie and some of the projects that it created within the Council and at the border with Logan City Council. We also looked at planning for the Commonwealth Games with one highlighted issue being the maintenance restrictions called blue (pre and post) and black (during) outs.

A unique opportunity was to see and have explained CoGC’s vacuum sewerage system in the north end of the Gold Coast. Ben Pennell, Queensland’s WIOA Young Operator of the Year (2016), showed me the system and explained the reasons for experimenting with the technology, the challenges they have faced maintaining the system and the rewards that have yielded from increasing the network of vacuum monitoring sensors.

When visiting the systems control team I spent time in the 24hr operations room, watching and learning from the operators and their supervisor. Total network monitoring is not only vital for the Council to operate their assets and react to issues, but it seems to be a source of pride for the team to bring the big picture view. It was noted also that recent influence has allowed the control room operations to take an active role in leading the teams out on the ground and be empowered to use their big picture perspective to get the best possible solution in different situations.

A great example of the size and scale of the Water and Waste directorate was in meeting the product quality team. They have product officers- specialising in Wastewater, Recycled water or Drinking water – dedicated to ensuring their treatments plants are producing within the specifications of each regulator, that their bulk suppliers (e.g. water) are complying with the contract specifications and that quality is maintained within the reticulation

network. The network reliability team also have a conflicts officer dealing with internal and external projects that will affect or conflict with their water and waste water infrastructure.

Unfortunately, due to illness going around the Water and Waste office, I didn’t get to catch up with the Executive Coordinator for Asset Investment Planning from the Service Sustainability team. However I have his contact details and have had a quick conversation to plan a time to catch up in the near future. That has reminded me to contact all those that I visited to follow up on topics they shared and to continue this rewarding networking opportunity.

The later part of the week was based in Brisbane with a technical tour, presentations, forum and group meeting over three days.

It was very informative and rewarding to visit historic and current infrastructure hidden from plain view around the CBD and eastern suburbs. The photos below show some of the size and grandeur of what we saw.

At the huge Luggage Point Treatment Plant, Queensland Urban Utilities (QUU) hosted some innovation presentations in their innovation centre. The University of Queensland partner with QUU to do test work for new and developing technologies in their above ground sewerage system and an overview of some of that work was presented. Three companies also presented on some innovative products they have available in the market and through that the scholarship program was fully funded.

There was a wide variety of topics presented at the Annual Forum but highlights to me were technologies and investments that can defer or reduce increased capacity capital costs and the panel sessions with the regulators (Department of Energy and Water Supply and Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.)

These sessions gave insight into how other perspectives impact on our regulatory journey and there were some current examples of how some utilities are working differently with the guidelines to achieve the same outcome.

The final part of my scholarship program was an invite to attend the Technical Reference Group meeting on the Friday – it offered insight as to how the Queensland Water



Directorate gets member feedback from a diverse group and guidance on its direction and initiatives. The way I would describe it is big picture guidance and industry shaping discussion and was a motivating way to finish my program.

The program and the opportunities it provided were very helpful for my growth in the water utilities team into council and was an intense period of learning, networking and participation that will continue to offer benefits to myself and in turn the council into the future.

I will be recommending and encouraging others from this council and other qualifying councils to apply for a scholarship in the coming years and that the time away from your day job can be very rewarding for those who participate and their employers.

To that end – thank you for supporting this opportunity and my participation in the program.

Fijians inspired by Central Highlands water

A little part of the Central Highlands might have played a quite a big part in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) last month.

The International Water Centre, along with councils from the Central Highlands, Gold Coast and Toowoomba, hosted 15 fellows from the International Water Centre’s Australian Award Fellowship program for Fiji on ‘Improving water security through resilient water and sanitation systems and governance’.

The UNDP has 17 Global Goals that are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Goal 6 is to ensure universal access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030.

The visiting Fijians represented the three government departments and the Water Authority of Fiji who are working collaboratively to develop a policy that will govern how their country will meet its targets under sustainable development goal 6.

As part of their four-week Australian visit, the group spent four days in the Central Highlands specifically to find out how we deliver safe, clean water to remote communities.

They visited Emerald, Rolleston, Springsure, Blackwater, Capella and the Sapphire Gemfields during some unusually cool and overcast Central Queensland weather that apparently had them reaching for some warm clothing.

Apart from the excursions to the various water and sewerage treatment facilities, the Fijians enjoyed the Blackwater International Coal Museum, a tour of Fairbairn Dam and an underground experience of a sapphire mine.

Central Highlands Chief Executive Officer Scott Mason said he much appreciated the enthusiasm and commitment of General Manager Infrastructure and Water Utilities Gerhard Joubert and his team in ensuring the trip was such a success.

Assistant Engineer Nathan Litzow, who accompanied the Fijians around the region, said they were, ‘exuberant and entertaining in their reactions to what they experienced’.

‘They were very excited to see their first camel and thought the Fairbairn Dam was spectacular,’ he said.

‘Although we face a few challenges here in terms of water management, we are actually blessed with our infrastructure and we shouldn’t take clean water for granted.’

According to the International Water Centre Project Officer Edith Kamundi, the fellows voted their trip to Central Highlands the best during the month.

Image: The 15 Fijian visitors and their chaperone visited water and sewerage treatment plants in October.

Credit: Central Highlands Regional Council



Statewide Water Information Management (SWIM)

After many years of hard work and continual refinement the Statewide Water Information Management (SWIM) system is entrenched as an essential tool for water and sewerage reporting in Queensland and is the envy of utilities nationally.

The 2016/17 reporting period saw 54 of the 55 non-Indigenous Service Providers and 11 of the 17 Indigenous Councils (up from 6 last year) use SWIM to successfully deliver data to DEWS (QG KPIs), ABS, BoM and NPR.

Over the last month, program manager David Scheltinga has been working with DEWS, BoM and NPR to validate the data.

SWIMLocal software

The evolution of SWIMLocal continues as part of our ongoing aim to increase the value of the SWIM service. Other than the minor tweaks and upgrades requested by users, we are pleased to announce some further improvements to the SWIMLocal system including:

Getting data from external labs (e.g. Qld Health) uploaded straight into SWIMLocal

Recent meetings with Qld Health (QHFSS) to provide results in a consistent format that can be uploaded directly into the SWIMLocal Operations tool will remove the need to manually retype data from pdf files. This is progressing well and once we have confirmation of the file format to be used, we can set up a new importer to accept these files.

Transferring STP data directly from SWIMLocal to the WaTERS database

While the 'backend' of SWIM is already able to export data in specific formats to DSITI, we are working through several issues in relation to their database structure and 'on-reporting' to DEHP. The way they 'batch' data and how we push any SWIMLocal corrections/changes of data to them are also being worked through.

Dashboards and graphic displays of SWIMLocal data

Connecting the SWIM database to a third party, web based software platform means SWIMLocal can now provide analysis, visualisation and performance monitoring tools. The use of Infrastructure Data (ID) software developed by New Zealand IT company Lutra Ltd has been trialled with Barcoo Shire Council to display trends of important water quality parameters and to automatically generate reports on key performance targets for treatment plants and distribution networks. Goondiwindi, Torres Strait Island Regional Council and Burdekin (and possibly Gympie and Whitsunday) trials are currently in development.

In developing our partnership with Lutra, we considered their strong understanding of processes and flexibility in taking advices from operations experts and other SWIM users to tailor the layout of dashboards and reports.

"As a company of water and wastewater process engineers and data management specialists, Lutra understands the problems we are trying to solve and how to get best value from operational data."

SWIMLocal users are also starting to use Windows SQL software for custom graphing and reporting.

The pricing for standard ID functionally starts at \$1,100 per year (\$21/week), but Lutra is refining their pricing scheme in light of the unique Queensland industry setup. Users can access additional tools and functionality upon request. You can find out more about ID at the web site www.infrastructuredata.com

Lutra Testimonials

"We are delighted with infrastructure Data. The set up was very fast and painless and the support has been outstanding. The team at Lutra go the extra mile and are a pleasure to work with."

**Mike Monaghan, Treatment Plants Manager,
Palmerston North City Council**

"The evaluation panel was unanimous in selecting Infrastructure Data as the preferred solution. Lutra's technical ability, understanding and responsiveness distinguished them from all other tenderers. The way they engaged, answered questions and worked with us throughout the tender negotiation phase has been like a breath of fresh air."

Tender Evaluation Team, Tauranga City Council

"Infrastructure Data is very user friendly and very fast. We have a high degree of trust in the accuracy of the Infrastructure Data reports. The level of support we get is awesome."

**Murray Clayton, Water Operations Manager,
Matamata Piako District Council**

From the horse's mouth...

SWIMLocal was substantially modelled on a system developed by Gympie Regional Council to help manage its own internal reporting needs as well as collate information for SWIM reporting. We asked Shaun Johnson, now Manager Water and Waste Water at Burdekin Shire Council (previously from Gympie Regional Council), what he thought of SWIMLocal:

Do you find the SWIMLocal system to be user friendly?

I should admit that I might be a bit biased here. When we designed the predecessor to SWIMLocal it was done in a way that made it look and work largely like a spreadsheet, so it would be familiar to operators who were used to working in Excel. This feature has remained. So has ease of use in the mobile interface, even though its appearance is very different to the original format.

Reporting keeps getting easier and more powerful, as do the data importation tools. It shows all of the qualities you would expect from a user-focussed development team.

Can you give us an example of how SWIMLocal has improved your day to day job as a water operator / engineer?

As a manager, there is huge value in having readily available data in repeatable report formats. Annual reporting is a snip compared to the bad old days. All operational data is in one place and can be easily manipulated to create not only annual, but all sorts of meaningful periodic reporting.

The ability for variations and exceedances to be highlighted on entry of the data means there is no reason for them to go un-noticed, un-rectified, or unreported any more. Being able to run reports on any exceptions saves even more time in the office.

Big data can be daunting and quite often we don't know what to do with all these numbers... are you excited by SWIMLocal's improved analysis, visualisation and performance monitoring tools, and how can you see that being used in your organisation?

I honestly don't think about the big-data picture in relation to SWIMLocal and our WSP enterprises yet. Perhaps this is because I see our need for data in two different lights. Firstly, we need to store individual pieces of data to meet regulatory requirements. Secondly, we need to be able to quickly group and analyse data to provide us with the information we need as operators, engineers and managers. SWIMLocal does this very well for us, so the spectre of big data has not really raised its head on

my radar. Which is how it should be, right? Not to say we haven't moved into that world, but that we haven't had to think about it too much as the software and the developers have largely done that for us.

Where do you see SWIMLocal going in the future (any additions or improvements)?

Does it make me a bit of an old foggy to say I think it is already a mature system that I see needing few changes into the future? It is already doing lots of useful stuff and I think even the most advanced of its users are quite some way from gaining full leverage of its power yet. The new BI dashboard will broaden its appeal to less technical people in the management area and extend its value to operators. And we could do better at merging the SWIMLocal data into the annual report module. We have lots of work to do to maximise the value of the scheduling capacity of the application still. The big change I see being needed is for it to get into the hands of more (all) WSPs where we can all benefit from using and developing and sharing knowledge on the same platform. This is my biggest hope for the next couple of years.

What are the benefits of SWIMLocal over your old data management system (did you have one, what did you do previously)?

SWIMLocal takes the best parts from Excel, databases and the Cloud to give an all-round more functional result. It is a simple way to enter data – one time only.

The data is stored securely and available for access by multiple interested persons in various locations at once. Some critical sorting of outlying values is done automatically, alerting us to issues on entry of the data. Data entry is available everywhere.

There are powerful reporting functions to simplify management of large volumes of data and now we have a visual dashboard under test to provide real-time monitoring of data. Even if you look at the latest commercial BI systems for WSPs from the US (which have been slow to catch up with the need in this area), they don't do this in near the user-friendly or customer focussed way SWIMLocal does.

Skills Update

The departure of Michelle Hill from **qldwater** after working with us for over 7 years leaves a significant gap in skills and expertise (and a shortened skills update this edition!).

Michelle made a major contribution to the industry, championing skills issues at a state and national level and successfully leading a range of projects which have ensured significant investment in the sector. We wish Michelle all the best in her new role with Brisbane City Council. We will be recruiting first thing in the new year.

Image: Michelle at the 2017 Annual Forum dinner.



Quick updates

Save the date! The **Queensland Water industry Skills Forum** has been rescheduled to Wednesday 28th February in Brisbane.

This will be a free event for all current Queensland Water Skills Partnership subscribers. Check out <http://www.qldwater.com.au/Events> for more details.

The draft **Diploma of Water Industry Operations** was released for comment in November.

qldwater is represented on the Technical Advisory Committee and has provided feedback on behalf of members to ensure this important qualification reflects individual and business needs.

We continue to champion **Operator Certification** in Queensland and are trialling an annual intake program. Certification is an independent validation process which assists in developing career paths for operators, and gives employers assurance that staff have the skills necessary for their roles and are committed to ongoing professional development. For more information, visit www.wioa.org.au/certification/index.htm or contact Dave Cameron.

Infrastructure Cliff Research

The state of buried infrastructure in Queensland is surfacing through the extensive data collected for the QWRAP research project on buried pipes and infrastructure.

With a sizable amount of data and first hand experiences collected from around 40 participating entities, it seems clear that we are standing at the edge of an infrastructure cliff waiting for a tidal wave that is appearing on the horizon.

The data covers around 70% of Queensland's buried infrastructure with almost 30,000 km of the 42,000 km water mains and 20,000 km of the 33,000 km sewerage mains accounted for.

Project Coordinator Ryan Cosgrove said there was great interest in undertaking further research into areas including the remaining water and sewerage assets (e.g. plants and pumps), replacement technologies and methods to sweat the assets; and how to connect asset management accounting techniques with the council financial techniques.

The final report, expected to be finalised by the end of the year, will give us an understanding of just how big the impact will be on the Queensland water industry.



Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program Update

The Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program has three Water Alliances (**Outback Regional Water Alliance**, **WBBROC Water Alliance** and **WIM Water Alliance**) and a fourth group (**FNQROC**) working collaboratively on water projects.

A fifth group based in the **Downs and Surat Basin** region (comprising Maranoa, Balonne, Goondiwindi, Southern Downs, Western Downs and Toowoomba councils) has been discussing forming a QWRAP region for some months and the majority of the participating councils have now confirmed they intend to do so.

Councils in **North Queensland** and **Central Queensland** have also commenced meetings at a technical level to discuss regional collaboration opportunities.

In each of the QWRAP regions joint projects are underway to take advantage of critical mass provided by a regional approach. To date all projects have provided immediate financial savings for all participating councils as well as generating service improvements for communities and supporting safe, secure and sustainable water and sewerage services.

QWRAP groups have also formed working relationships with water and environmental regulators to discuss common issues at a strategic regional level providing useful opportunities and savings in compliance costs.

As mentioned on Page 3, two of the projects undertaken by QWRAP groups recently picked up annual awards from the IPWEAQ and one was also short-listed for an AWA annual award.

The regions have also been active in joint responses to changing legislation and government policy. There have been a number of proposed changes to environmental regulations and policies in the past six months and QWRAP regions (along with the **qldwater** Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel – SWEAP) have been active contributors to joint submissions.

The recent Water Quality Offsets policy update and the Great Barrier Reef Water Quality regulations were of particular interest, along with the proposed End of Waste Framework and Waste-Related ERA changes.

QWRAP regions also provided feedback for joint submission to the National Productivity Commission (PC). The recent PC review considered the future of regionalisation in Queensland among other things and noted the success QWRAP to date (despite questioning why more small councils are not yet involved).

In terms of general administration, the current funding round for QWRAP ends in June next year. The Department of Energy and Water Supply continue to be strong supporters and have expressed a desire for the program to continue, but this will be subject to an external review of progress (and Treasury agreement to funding).

The quantum of support for the future of the program is uncertain in the current caretaker period, but LGAQ is working with all parties to advocate for increased support for QWRAP and regional councils in general.

For the final six months of the current QWRAP round a new 'maturity model' for allocating remaining QWRAP funding will be trialled. This will provide for higher level of support for projects that strengthen strategic regional relationships, investigate alternative governance models or encourage joint capital planning and investment.

With a raft of projects underway or under development, new regions discussing their future collaboration opportunities, an independent state-wide review and the advocacy around the next round of QWRAP support, the next few months promise to be interesting times for QWRAP.

Image: The WBBROC Joint Sewer Rehabilitation Program won the award for Water Projects over \$5 million.



2018 Events Calendar

We have an exciting calendar of events lined up for next year and look forward to seeing you around the traps!

2 Feb	Outback Regional Water Alliance meeting
24 Feb	International Water Taste Test, Berkeley Springs, CA, USA
28 Feb	Water Skills Partnership Forum, Brisbane
1 March	TRG Workshop – Industry Governance, following on from CCE workshop
2 March	TRG Meeting
15-16 Mar	IPWEAQ SWQ Branch, Goondiwindi
11 April	qldwater Strategic Advisory Committee Meeting
18-20 Apr	IPWEAQ NQ Conference, Cairns
4-12 May	WIOA NZ Tour
8-10 May	Ozwater 2018, Brisbane
14-18 May	Water Connections Week – Mount Isa, Normanton, Gununa, Burketown, Doomadgee, Cloncurry
18 May	qldwater Mini Conference and Best of the Best Water Taste Test, Cloncurry
31 May	TRG Workshop (Topic TBC)
1 June	TRG Meeting
6- 7 June	43rd WIOA QLD Water Industry Operations Conference & Exhibition, Logan
7 June	Water of Origin Taste Test, Logan
14-16 June	IPWEAQ CQ Conference, Barcaldine
TBA July	AWA NQ Conference, Cairns
18 July	qldwater Mini Conference and Best of the Best Water Taste Test, Goondiwindi
9 Aug	qldwater Mini Conference and Best of the Best Water Taste Test, Bundaberg
5 Sept	qldwater Annual Forum Technical Tour, Gold Coast
6 Sept	qldwater Annual Forum Regulator Day, Gold Coast
7 Sept	TRG Meeting
10-12 Oct	IPWEAQ State Conference, Gold Coast
18 Oct	National Taste Test, Toowoomba
29-31 Oct	LGAQ Annual Conference, Brisbane
7 Nov	qldwater Strategic Advisory Committee Meeting, Brisbane
6 Dec	TRG Workshop (Topic TBC)
7 Dec	TRG Meeting, Brisbane



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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."