



## Lover's Walk water wins bragging rights in SEQ taste test

Two weeks after the massive flood event that devastated Bundaberg, water from the town's Lover's Walk Scheme was selected as the top drop in the South East Queensland regional final of the Orica Australia Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test.

Bundaberg Regional Council's Manager, Water and Wastewater Process Operations, Jeff Rohdman, said this was a great result for the team.

"After recent events this win will certainly help lift our spirits - not to mention the opportunity to establish some healthy rivalry with our neighbours. On a serious side the win places focus on the water and wastewater operations team for the great work they continue to undertake providing a 24/7 service to the community".

Lover's Walk groundwater is drawn from the Elliott Formation consisting of a sand and gravel aquifer between 20 and 40 metres below ground level. The groundwater drawn from Lovers Walk is a very soft water free from impurities. The untreated groundwater is very "aggressive" water due to the high carbon dioxide content, low pH and alkalinity.

The treatment process consists of the groundwater being pumped to an aeration spraybed, where excess carbon dioxide is removed. The aerated water then filters through a bed of limestone for pH correction and neutralisation prior to being gravity-fed to a collection chamber and then chlorinated on its way to a storage reservoir, and pumped to the reticulation system.

Utilities that battled it out in the first semi-final included Bundaberg Regional Council, Gympie Regional Council, North Burnett Regional Council, Unitywater and Wide Bay Water/ Fraser Coast Regional Council.

The six regional finalists will contest the grand final prize to be held at the Local Government Association of Queensland's National Conference in Cairns later this year.



Above: Bundaberg Regional Council's Mr Scott Casey accepting the winning prize of a custom made lego water treatment plant from Mark Farrey, Opus International Consultants.

**qldwater** CEO Dave Cameron said he was pleased that utilities from a number flood-affected communities had still been able to enter samples in the test.

"There was only a whisker between each of the top rated samples from Bundaberg, Maroochy, Monto and Gympie supplies but I thought all of the samples were up there. This year we took a different approach with over 30 people participating in the test itself. The result is a great reflection of the pride that all of the entering organisations take in providing a quality product to their communities 24/7, especially following the devastation in the region this year," Mr Cameron said.

Kindly hosted by Gympie Regional Council, the SEQ semi final was the first of six regional finals to be held across the state. See page 8 for more information on upcoming conferences and taste test events in your region.



## Update from A/CEO

Welcome to Issue 6 of the *qldwater* newsletter, the first issue for 2013. It's been fairly hectic since the events of the Australia Day weekend and a number of our members will be recovering for a long time to come.

We've recently completed a 30 year strategy discussion paper response on behalf of the urban water industry and tried to assist members in also providing direct input. The strategy is likely to dominate our negotiations with government for the remainder of 2013.

After a couple of information sessions, technical meetings, a lot of talking to members and a lot of writing it's hard not to be impressed by the energy the people of the Department of Energy and Water Supply are devoting to leading what has become an unfortunately rushed process. Only time will tell if that enthusiasm extends to political will and if the wherewithal and expertise exists to make it work. We are excellent at articulating problems, but there are some really difficult strategic questions to be answered and clearly no one-size-fits-all solution.

We are heartened that there appears to be a commitment for further consultation and engagement in planning and decision making. However, the current rhetoric raises a number of red flags including costs and sustainability, proposed regulatory models, and how institutional reform might be handled. We are disappointed that some substantial industry-led initiatives did not get a profile in the discussion paper and have been doing what we can to fix that for the strategy. Our submission will be published on our web site, and we will keep everybody informed of progress through e-flashes.

It is our intention at this stage for Rob Fearon to keep working for a large proportion of his time on the Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program up to the end of 2013 as it is a key initiative to feed information into the strategy. What happens beyond that relies on our ability to attract targeted grants and other funding offsets to support key programs including SWIM and industry skills.

Our communications and engagement programs continue to build slowly and Desire has recently finished pulling together resource packs and the web site for the *qldwater on tap* campaign which is available for members to use to support their own public education initiatives.

The first water taste test in the new format was trialled in Gympie in February and it looks like being a great success in other locations. For those yet to experience it, we have for now switched from a testing panel to a system where all conference delegates can taste and decide on each sample. You'd think that might mean a bigger gap between the results but at least half the samples scored consistently highly with only a few points separating first from fourth.

The conferences too are coming together well – while it's always a bit stressful in getting people lined up to speak and register while maintaining our informal approach, the events are working really well with sustained positive feedback.

Hope you enjoy the read and look forward to catching up with everybody as we are out and about a lot in 2013.

## How many water connections are there in Queensland?

The number of water connections is an indicator used by urban water service providers to represent their number of customers, but it is also a commonly used surrogate for the service provider's size.

As many other factors can be directly correlated to number of connections it is important to have an accurate estimate of this indicator. It could also be useful to see how geographical spread affects service providers with similar numbers of connections (e.g. western councils that have numerous schemes spread over a large area versus a single dense city of connections).

Number of connections is a key indicator collected voluntarily through SWIM but not all councils have reported their number of connections in the last three years.

A best-estimate of the number of connections for each urban water service provider in Queensland in 2012 with projections for 2016 and 2031 has been developed in a Discussion paper for the Queensland urban water industry. Members can download this document from [www.qldwater.com.au/connections](http://www.qldwater.com.au/connections).

The 2012 estimate is the number reported to SWIM in the 2011-2012 period (when available) or an estimate was derived from the OESR population numbers using the most recent data on connections and population for a council. Numbers of connections for 2016 and 2031 were estimated using OESR population projections and the most recent ratio of connections to population. The estimated numbers of connections will be less reliable for those councils with no recent data or with high rates of urban development.

Comments are invited from members on the accuracy of the current and future estimates for their councils. When all comments have been analysed the discussion paper will be broadened to include the number of connections for all water schemes across the state and sewerage schemes will also be analysed.

Please send any feedback or suggestions to Rob at [rfearon@qldwater.com.au](mailto:rfearon@qldwater.com.au).





## Ready to tap?



Campaign materials for the **qldwater on tap** campaign are now ready and will be distributed to interested members on request.

**qldwater on tap** is a positive campaign to raise awareness of the water industry in the general community. To us, the positive outcome of reducing plastic waste in our communities is an added bonus to a campaign that really aims to show our communities the benefits of safe, secure and sustainable water services.

Based on Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM), the campaign helps to identify barriers to change and then find ways to drive down barriers and increase benefits of change. It doesn't matter how many reusable water bottles you hand out, if there is nowhere to refill them people will always take the easy and convenient option to buy bottled water.

The aim of the campaign is to find meaningful ways to engage with your communities, whether it involves setting up hydration stations at events, or commissioning local artists to work with community groups to paint unsightly water infrastructure. It's only through face to face interaction with our communities that meaningful discussions can develop and where the more vocal can feel like they're being heard. While brochures and websites play a big part, nothing beats effective two-way communication!

The **qldwater on tap** website and Facebook page offer a platform for our members to use to engage with their communities.

Campaign materials include logos and branding, co-branding options for marketing collateral, ideas to engage your communities, case studies and literature reviews, media distribution lists and media release examples, fact sheets and more.

With your help, the campaign will grow over time and we

plan to keep adding more resources. At the moment, students at Central Queensland University's School of Humanities and Communication are helping us design an editorial, posters and fact sheets and we look forward to adding their best designs to our campaign materials.

We have also teamed up with the Savewater! Alliance's **Refillit** campaign as we trust their extensive research to find the most environmentally friendly water bottle and we like the idea that \$1 from each bottle sold is going to WaterAid to fund water and sanitation projects in developing countries.

**Refillit** aims to raise \$30,000 with this initiative, enough to provide clean drinking water to an entire community in East Timor. **qldwater on tap** partners will receive a discounted price on **Refillit**'s new Tritan bottles. Their bottle filled with our water seems like a match made in heaven!

The **qldwater on tap** learning portal links to interesting games and educational material and we are happy to promote our campaign partners' websites on this page.

Have a look at our website at [www.qldwaterontap.com.au](http://www.qldwaterontap.com.au) and please like us on Facebook!

Please contact Heather Gold on (07) 3632 6850 or email [hgold@qldwater.com.au](mailto:hgold@qldwater.com.au) to order your campaign pack.

refillit working with qldwater on tap  
introducing the reusable refillit water bottle -  
rethink the way you drink!

qldwater on tap + refillit = 😊



## Time to shine for Gympie's BNR STP!

Attendees at the SEQ Regional Conference were treated to a special tour of Gympie's new Biological Nutrient Removal (BNR) Sewage Treatment Plant.

Ian Schiefelbein showed us around and obviously has great pride in the end product!

The plant consists of one bio-reactor, two sedimentation tanks, a control building, an aerobic digester, a new intake structure and an upgrade of an incoming capacitor plant.

The 75m long, 37m wide and 5m deep bio-reactor stabilises micro-organisms and removes their biological oxygen demand, leading to cleaner and more environmentally friendly effluent.

The effluent is first treated in the bio reactor and then flows into the sedimentation tanks where all the solid waste falls to the bottom and a clear liquid is separated from the tank and then disinfected. The sediment, which is mostly micro-organisms, goes back through the plant processor.

The micro-organisms that are used in the process can last up to 25 days before they are no longer of use. Once the bio-mass passes the 25-day mark the sludge is transported off site.

Below: Moving along...lots to see!



Below: Enjoying a drink after a hard day networking!







Above: Waiting for the slow pokes to catch up. (r) Gympie Pump Station. Below (l): The grass is always greener on the other side!



Above (r): Checking out the clarifier. Below: Ian is passionate about the end product!



Hmmm, smells nice!



## National Workforce Development Fund Application Approved!

The **qldwater** application for National Workforce Development Funding (NWDF) to partially fund training places in the Queensland water industry has been successful. The government assessment panel were impressed by the capacity to benefit the learner, the organisations and the water industry in Queensland as a whole as a result of this initiative.

The application was submitted by **qldwater** on behalf of nine organisations in the Queensland Water Industry and will partially fund training places for 63 learners at a total cost of \$392,839. The funding amount for participating organisations varies depending on organisation size:

- Small Organisations (under 100 employees) receive 67% funding per qualification,
- Medium Organisations (100 -199 employees) – 50% funding and
- Large Organisations (> 200 employees) - 34% funding.

The application targeted qualifications at Certificate IV level and above in water operations and project management as there is already generous state funding for Certificate II and III level qualifications.

We anticipate lodging another application on behalf of the Queensland Water Industry in the latter half of the year. A call for expressions for interest will be sent out at that time.

If you would like information on the NWDF or any other funding opportunities for water industry training please contact Michelle Hill on [mhill@qldwater.com.au](mailto:mhill@qldwater.com.au) or (07) 3632 6853.

## QWRAP to help inform 30 year plan

The Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program (QWRAP) is progressing successfully with strong support in three pilot regions.

The first group to form (RAPAD) is ahead of schedule having completed comprehensive reviews of services and nearing completion of their third and final report on the costs and benefits of alternative institutional arrangements.

The second group (FNQRoC), has commissioned an external consultancy to examine the risks and strengths across their region and analyse the likely impact of alternative collaborative models. The third region (WBBRoC) was delayed by local elections, intense regional flooding and is meeting in April to map any work needed in the area.

Meaningful engagement and ownership has been the priority for QWRAP as progress on the controversial issue of regional water reform is possible only with trust and a shared vision within each region. In building this level of trust, QWRAP has been slowed by wariness of change processes because of state and local elections, the 'untidy' SEQ institutional reforms and memories of council amalgamations during the Size Shape and Sustainability Process. Nevertheless, significant momentum has now been established in each pilot region. This is demonstrated by the endorsement for participation of the project at both political and technical levels in councils across all three regions.

Collectively, the pilot regions comprise 38% of the state by area and 31% of the population outside SEQ. This position has been achieved through real engagement at both political and technical levels in all of the 17 participating councils. Although QWRAP is funded initially by DEWS with in-kind support from LGAQ and **qldwater**, the project has seen significant co-investment from participating Councils. By June this year co-investment will total more than \$200,000 in cash with in-kind contributions exceeding \$100,000.

The real success of QWRAP will be measured by the outcomes following the completion of the project. The recommendations of the three national reviews of the urban water industry were that Queensland (and NSW) should review institutional models to determine whether communities could be better served through regional cooperation. These recommendations are currently being revisited in the DEWS 30 Year Plan consultation process with the State's discussion paper specifically mentioning the QWRAP. The investigations undertaken over the two-year life of the program will inform the State planning process and as well enable each council to make evidence-based decisions on the future of their region.

QWRAP is scheduled to finish late in 2013.

## 2011-12 BENCHMARKING REPORT AVAILABLE ONLINE

Queensland's second water and sewerage benchmarking report has been completed using 2011/12 data and is available from the **qldwater** website at [www.qldwater.com.au/reporting](http://www.qldwater.com.au/reporting).

In total 28 Service Providers decided to participate in the public release of their data in the 2011-12 report which is a significant increase on the 17 that participated last year.

The benchmarking of Queensland's water and sewerage data allows competition by comparison and is nationally and internationally accepted as the best tool to improve the water and sewerage industry.

**qldwater** strongly supports the use of performance reporting and benchmarking to promote transparency and assist Service Providers in the continuous improvement of the services they provide to their community. Performance reporting and benchmarking provides valuable comparative data that enables each Service Provider to critically examine its performance by investigating trends in its indicators and by benchmarking these against those of similar Service Providers, and particularly against high-performing Service Providers and implementing the best-practices identified.

This report also provides a strong foundation for negotiation with the State which is currently considering mandatory performance indicators as part of a broader suite of regulatory simplification.

## SWIM Update

The 2012-13 reporting year will see some significant changes to the Annual Water and Sewage Data indicators and reporting.

In 2012 the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) altered some of their indicators to align more with the National Performance Report (NPR). In addition, the National Water Commission is currently reviewing all NPR indicators and products.

A survey was released by the National Water Commission to try and get some information back from WSPs on the use/benefits/failings of the NPR and a workshop is to be held in May.

In recent weeks **qldwater** has been meeting with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to discuss a better way of handling their 'water and sewerage supply survey' indicators. It is likely that we will be including all the ABS indicators into SWIM for the 2012-13 reporting year – which will save members the trouble of filling in their hard copy survey (many of the ABS indicators are already included in the SWIM database).



Above: Julian Tickle (TCC Water Treatment Engineer), Nick Ouston (Trility Water Treatment Operator) and Mick Hurst (TCC Water Treatment Operator) off to lend a helping hand.

## Mates helping mates

Australians are renowned for their generosity after extreme weather events as proven by the mud armies who come out of the woodwork after floods, cyclones and super storms to help their communities back on their feet.

It's no different in the Queensland community of Water Service Providers, with many cases of assistance documented over the last few years.

And so, armed with earplugs and some water, a relief team from Townsville Water set off on an EMQ charter flight to Gayndah at 7am on Saturday, 2 February 2013. Their mission:

to assist and relieve the North Burnett Water Operators in restoring water services to Gayndah, Mundubbera and Eidsvold after a severe flood event over the Australia Day long weekend.

Townsville Regional Council CEO Ray Burton and Director of Water and Waste Ken Diehm had already volunteered the Council to provide support to anyone who needed it.

After some hectic communication between **qldwater**, disaster management coordinators Mark Harvey from Townsville Water and Trevor Harvey from North Burnett, the three

### SWIMLocal

The **SWIMLocal** data management software system has been completed with all three modules (admin, operations and reporting) now functional.

Six Queensland WSPs and one NSW WSP are now using the system with approximately 24 others interested in the software. The system allows WSPs to have ultimate flexibility in their water and sewerage data management while integrating with the SWIM database (SWIM annual reporting) and other local systems.

The annual licence and maintenance price for the software is based on the number of users needed within a WSP and can be provided by contacting David Scheltinga at **qldwater**. Training and set-up help is also available at a reduced price during the remainder of 2013. The SWIMLocal system of pricing is based on a cost recovery model and pricing will hopefully decrease with increased uptake.

Development of the 'SWIM annual indicators' module is underway and we expect people to be able to use the SWIMLocal system to report their Annual Water and Sewage indicators for 2012-13 via the SWIMLocal system.

person relief team of Julian Tickle (TCC Water Treatment Engineer), Nick Ouston (Trility Water Treatment Operator) and Mick Hurst (TCC Water Treatment Operator) was dispatched.

It's during times like these that the true value of collaboration among members is highlighted for us. On behalf of the industry, a big thank you to all involved. We hope to be able to develop a communications process with LGAQ which formalises and streamlines these processes in future.

## Events & Training Calendar

### April

- 17-18 **SWQ Conference and Taste Test, Toowoomba**
- 19 **TRG Meeting - Toowoomba**
- 29 **Day 1 Water Connections Week, Mount Isa**
- 30 **Day 2 Water Connections Week, Cloncurry & McKinlay**

### May

- 1 **Day 3 Water Connections Week, Richmond & Flinders**
- 2 **Day 4 Water Connections Week, Charters Towers**
- 3 **Day 5 Water Connections Week, NQ Conference and Taste Test, Townsville**
- 7-9 **Ozwater '13 Conference, Perth**  
Visit [www.ozwater.org](http://www.ozwater.org) for more information
- 15 **FNQ Conference and Taste Test, Cooktown**  
(Linked to IPWEAQ Branch Conference)
- 16 **IPWEAQ Branch Conference, Cooktown**
- 20-22 **Communicating Water Science and Technology, Smart Water Research Centre, Brisbane.**  
Visit [www.smartwaterresearchcentre.com](http://www.smartwaterresearchcentre.com) for more information.

### June

- 5-6 **Water Industry Operators Association (WIOA) Conference, Gold Coast**
- 14 **TRG Meeting**
- 17-21 **Activated Sludge and Biological Nutrient Reduction, Smart Water Research Centre, Brisbane**  
Visit [www.smartwaterresearchcentre.com](http://www.smartwaterresearchcentre.com) for more information.
- 25 **Water Quality Awareness and Distribution System Management Workshop (WIOA) - Mackay**
- 26 **Sampling and Water Quality Training (presented by Dr David Scheltinga, qldwater) Longreach**
- 27 **WQ Conference and Taste Test, Longreach**
- 27 **Water Quality Awareness and Distribution System Management Workshop (WIOA) - Kingaroy**
- 28-29 **IPWEAQ Branch Conference, Longreach**

### August

- 1 **CQ Conference and Taste Test, Rockhampton**
- 23 **TRG Meeting**
- 25 **NZ Study Tour (jointly hosted by qldwater and LGAQ) - back**  
1 September

### October

- 8-11 **IPWEAQ State Conference, Cairns**
- 21-24 **LGAQ State Conference, Cairns**  
**(Taste Test Grand Final date and time TBC)**

### Can you beat this?

We're building a collection of photographs for our tenth anniversary publication about the Queensland Water Industry.



This image was provided by John Roworth from Longreach Regional Council. It shows the build up in a clay pipe with not much room to spare for water!

If you have any photographs of water infrastructure in your regions that you would like to share with others, please send them to Heather Gold at [hgold@qldwater.com.au](mailto:hgold@qldwater.com.au).



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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."