



QueenslandWater

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

Issue 9

2014 events launch in a very wet Bundaberg

If you're struggling with drought, just organise a **qldwater** event and we can guarantee that the heavens will open up! But a bit of rain wasn't going to stop us from enjoying a great networking event as we kicked off with the SEQ Regional Conference at the Bargara Community Hall on 27 & 28 March 2014.

Kindly hosted by Bundaberg Regional Council, the two-day event covered wide-ranging topics and case studies like construction and commissioning processes, dealing with floods, beneficial use of biosolids, floating wetlands technology and more.

Bundaberg confirmed its claim to the top drop in South East Queensland when conference attendees gave it top scores in the first regional final of the 2014 Orica

Australia Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test.

For the second year in a row, water from Bundaberg's Lovers Walk Scheme was selected as the best tasting tap water in the SEQ region, trumping water samples from North Burnett, Unitywater, Queensland Urban Utilities and Gympie. This champion drop will now be retired, making way for a new entrant in 2015.

Scott Reid from BRC took away the first "best palate" prize, successfully picking two of the three samples tested in the elimination challenge.

Day two included a very warm technical tour and site visits to Lovers Walk and Branyan Water Treatment Plants. The contrast between the WTPs is significant;

Branyan is a large conventional plant treating water from the Burnett River while Lovers Walk is very simple, with quality source water pH corrected through limestone beds followed by disinfection.

The tour also visited the Thabeban Wastewater Treatment Plant which is in the process of being upgraded for growth, commissioning later in 2014.

Below (left) BRC Manager Water & Wastewater Process Operations, Jeff Rohdman, gives Lovers Walk the big thumbs up; and (right) "best palate" finalists Brett Kronk (Bundaberg RC), Matt Dawson (Trility) and Scott Reid (Bundaberg RC) putting their taste buds to the test.



A big thanks to our sponsors who help us keep the costs of these events low:

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Update from A/CEO

Welcome to issue 9 of the *qldwater* newsletter.

Regional conference season kicked off in Baramba this month and we enjoyed catching up with members and tasting a lot more water. We are continually trying to reinvent both the conference events and the taste test and aim to create an engaging and informative program with tours, a diverse range of speakers and the best palate competition in each location. While the lego treatment plant prizes are impossible to replace, I'd like to think we have come up with something more "classy" this year which will still stand out just as well in your trophy cabinet.

Thanks to sponsors to date and our willing hosts in each region, and remember, the best received presentations are the ones members deliver – there is nothing better than finding out more about what's going on in each region and applied projects that show how innovative members are being in an environment of declining resources.

While we have all been busy with a number of key projects, I suppose the big strategic issues on the agenda have been the (delayed) release of the State's 30 Year Water Sector Strategy, but more recently the passage through parliament of the Water Supply Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. At the time of writing, parliament's State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee had held a number of hearings and was preparing to provide recommendations to parliament on the Bill. *qldwater* and LGAQ made both submissions and public appearances on behalf of members.

It's always difficult to speculate on results as the sitting date for final debate for the Bill is yet to be scheduled. However, transcripts of the public hearings have been published, and brief commentary against the "stated objectives" of the Bill is possible, with our full submission available on our web site. The interest in the Bill has been disproportional to the volume... while the SEQ "utility" model makes up more than half the document, the installation of water meters has completely dominated both public submissions and the hearings.

- The new SEQ "utility" model seems likely to pass without fundamental change. Some concerns have been raised around proposed timelines and the capacity for distributor/retailers to implement the required changes.
- The changes to remove many management plans and essentially replace them with a Key Performance Indicator Framework also seems likely to be accepted. *qldwater* has strongly advocated for regulatory simplification for many years and while the solution is not perfect, it represents a substantial improvement on the status quo and industry has been heavily consulted in the process. This is perhaps the most significant change for the majority of members. Practically, notices about the KPI framework have either been issued by DEWS or are in the process of being issued, data collection starts from 1 July 2014 with the first

reports due in October 2015. DEWS is conducting workshops in several regional locations in April, and we will attend those we can. SWIM and SWIMLocal are being modified to deal with the new indicators and we have a new interface which greatly simplifies the data collection and lodgement process.

- Changes to recycled water legislation which will see the registration of all RW schemes and the limiting of Recycled Water Management Plans to higher risk schemes also seem likely to pass. Similarly, the proposed arrangements to remove the requirement for SEQ businesses to publish draft charges, increase the number of councillors allowed on distributor/retailer boards, amend the appeal provisions for dam safety and repeal the *Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Act 1909* seem likely to pass without objection.
- The proposed amendment to Plumbing and Draining legislation to allow "authorised persons" to install water meters is highly contentious. In essence the Bill seeks to open the market, giving water service providers the power to decide who is appropriately skilled to install meters. This can include licensed plumbers, or other skilled staff. At the request of members, *qldwater* and LGAQ have been strongly advocating for these changes and have put a very large effort into supporting this part of the Bill. Plumbing unions are united against the changes. There have been media campaigns, letters to MPs, videos showing sewage into stormwater connections, demonstrations associated with world plumbing day and a lot of other submissions. It is disappointing to see the significant amount of misinformation being generated, and as an observer, the parliamentary committee has seemed confused by a lot of conflicting statements, thus making an outcome difficult to predict. As a general comment, our observations are that the current State Government does take notice when it gets large numbers of submissions and there is a strong sense that local government and local government owned entities are listened to. This Bill is critical to our industry but the committee process was not particularly well supported. We garner opinion from members and it is our job to make representations on your behalf. Where you feel an issue is important, I can only strongly encourage you to consider putting pen to paper, and we are always around to help out.

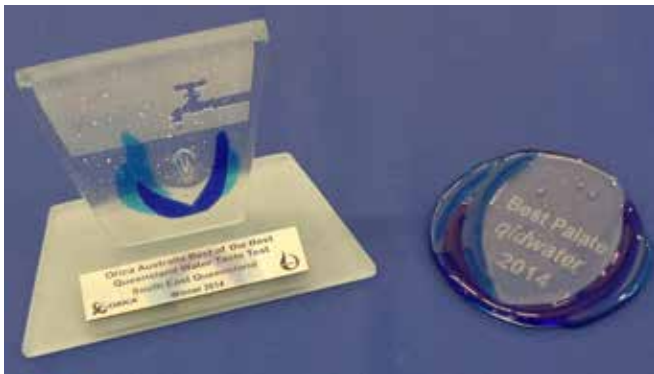
On a positive note, we have several important guests joining us for this year's water connections week in May, visiting Western Downs, Maranoa, Balonne, Goondiwindi and Southern Downs.

DEWS Director General Dan Hunt, Deputy Director General Ken Sedgwick and CEO of the National Water Commission, Kerry Olsson will participate in site visits, discussions with councils and the SW Queensland mini-conference and taste test. These visits provide invaluable exposure to members and their needs and give these senior staff a far better appreciation of their portfolios.

While the driving tour this year was in part designed around a reduced budget (the grants are thin on the ground), the councils to be visited have very diverse systems and challenges and I'm confident our guests are going to learn a lot.

I'd also just like to remind members that our Technical Reference Group meets every couple of months and sets and reviews our work priorities. Around 20 members are represented on this Group. If you have a particular issue or concern, you are always welcome to contact staff here at [qldwater](http://qldwater.com.au) or go through one of these member representatives. Their details are available on the "About Us" section of our web site.

Dave Cameron



End of an Era

Over the past two years our limited edition Lego Water Treatment Plants have become prized possessions for our regional taste test winners – not to mention the "gold plated" versions that now take pride of place in the display cabinets of Cook and Burdekin Shire Councils (2013 and 2012 overall taste test winners respectively). But alas, we have come to the end of an era!

Lego's Design by Me allowed consumers to design whatever they imagined on their computer and have the real model delivered in its own Lego box. Unfortunately the service was closed in January 2012, before our other plant designs could be realised.

This year we turned to local glass artist Gayle Shaw for inspiration. Gayle is a Brisbane artist who uses a range of techniques to bring the luminous quality of glass to light through the use of clear and strikingly colourful glasses in her designs.

We believe she did a great job with this year's trophies and we hope taste test winners will take pride in having such a unique piece of art to display in their workplaces.



Bundaberg Technical Tour

Thabeban Wastewater Treatment Plant



Lovers Walk Water Treatment Plant



Branyan Water Treatment Plant





News Bites:

qldwater Sponsored WIOA Operator Awards – Nominations Now Open.

It's easy to nominate - visit <http://www.qldwater.com.au/qldwaterAwards> to download an application form and to see previous winners.

Draft Water Industry Competency Framework Released for Comment.

To read the project update and review the draft framework please go to the GSA website at <http://www.governmentskills.com.au>.

Water Training Australia now a Pre-Qualified Supplier for User Choice Training (Water)

For further information on RTOs offering Water Operations training in Queensland visit the **qldwater** website at http://www.qldwater.com.au/Skills_Vocational_Education.

Skills Update

Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) successful outcomes

After significantly raising the bar on essential higher level qualifications in the water industry, the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) *qldwater* Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) grant has now come to an end.

The funding of approximately \$540,000 covered 75% of qualification costs for direct training places in the Queensland water industry and resulted in a total of 144 qualification completions in Project Management, Water Operations and Asset Management.

qldwater Skills Manager Michelle Hill said the SIF program contributed directly to addressing skills gap needs within the overarching workforce plan of the Queensland water industry and created an opportunity for the industry to explore essential higher level qualifications required for managers and leaders in the industry.

A Final Report and Acquittal has been prepared for submission to the DETE.

National Workforce Development Fund Application Update

A second National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF) application submitted on behalf of eight *qldwater* members in late 2013 was endorsed by the Government assessment panel in February 2014.

There are now some delays in Ministerial sign off of the application due to the Commission of Audit currently being undertaken, with final approval not expected to be considered until after the Federal Budget is released.

The existing *qldwater* NWDF funding program (approved in 2013) continues and includes six water service providers with a total of 63 participants and a funding value of \$114,398.68 (\$331,886 total project value).

Further opportunities for funding including another possible NWDF application will be explored once the outcomes for the funding are confirmed.

Drinking Water Operator Certification Update

Our Queensland Pilot Program for certification continues with around 26-30 operators from five organisations participating.

Thanks to all members who participated in our survey to support the business case being developed. By combining survey data with that already held by *qldwater*, we now have some useful estimates of the scale of a full program should it proceed in future.

Taking into account all of the utilities which are owned by local or state government, there are an estimated 359 total systems with 174 of those considered low complexity (meaning operators would need to complete some basic units of competency under a certification program) and 186 are considered medium complexity (meaning a Certificate III). While some members identified high complexity systems, an initial review has been conducted in conjunction with DEWS and it is unlikely that these systems would be considered as high complexity, based on the current proposed wording of the Framework's "system complexity rating." All of this is still subject to final negotiation and approval of course.

We have identified 590 staff across the state who would likely be captured by the Framework, with 481 holding existing qualifications. The majority of those not holding qualifications have responsibilities for low complexity systems. It is likely that most staff would require some degree of "gap" training or recognition of prior learning, if only for some of the newer units of competency recognised as mandatory in the Framework.

From here, we will seek to enrol pilot participants in necessary gap training and complete our business case and reports to the national skills task force (WIST).

It's worth mentioning a few of the key findings from the Pilot Program to date which need to be addressed in any broader implementation of a Certification program:

- Record keeping is very important. The Certification Body relies on evidence of qualifications held and in many instances these records are hard to obtain, as a result of staff moving between organisations and a sustained period of organisational change for the industry.
- Industry has strongly supported the idea of mandating minimum qualification standards, but careful staging will be required should this proceed.
- The Framework as drafted includes a "no grandfathering" clause. Many operators in Queensland hold older qualifications and are recognised as having a significant amount of valuable skills and experience. It is critical, for the sake of developing career paths and encouraging new staff into the industry, to maintain a standard for new qualifications, but equally important to be able to ensure that existing staff with older certificates have simple and effective ways of updating their qualifications. We continue to discuss options through both our steering group and with RTOs.
- There is currently limited funding support for "partial" qualifications, which some will require. In essence, there are some mandatory units in the Framework (like NWP279A – Australian Drinking Water Guidelines) which are not widely held as they are relatively new. In addition, the Framework requires staff to hold units of competency for each unit process they undertake at a plant. The Pilots Program has demonstrated that there are numerous instances where a person might have been trained in a specific set of units some time ago, but now works at a plant which includes different unit processes.

That's probably enough for now – there's a lot to all of this. The good news is that despite a few delays, the work is progressing well and we anticipate a number of the Pilot participants to be through the process a little later in the year. It is likely to be recognised in the state's 30 Year Water Sector Strategy - hopefully ensuring that we can keep improving access to training and career paths for this crucial group of employees. Please contact Dave Cameron with any enquiries or feedback.

SWIM Update

SWIM Key to KPIs

As the Queensland Department of Energy and Water Supply prepares to introduce mandatory Key Performance Indicators from the 2014/15 financial year, the State-Wide Information Management (SWIM) system has been modified to cope with the new requirements, and provide users with a more streamlined interface.

Gathering the data is only one part though. *qldwater* started a voluntary reporting framework in 2007 which has so far resulted in two voluntary public benchmarking reports using 2010/11 and 2011/12 data.

While the regulatory driver now can't be ignored, improved KPI reporting has essentially been industry-led. Voluntary participation and growth in data sharing and benchmarking between WSPs sends a clear signal that sound data management is considered by the industry as crucial for improving business performance and sustainability.

It is therefore great to see the continued rise in numbers of WSPs reporting SWIM annual data with 82% of all Queensland water service providers reporting annual stats for the 2012/13 period. Most data have now been submitted, finalised and sent off.

SWIM continues to capture data for the National Performance Report, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Bureau of Meteorology along with DEWS requirements. Having this tool puts our industry in a powerful negotiating position with regulatory agencies, allowing industry to control how data capture is managed and continue to reduce duplication.

SWIMLocal

The new *SWIMLocal* Task Module is complete and undergoing internal and external testing with several new councils trialling the *SWIMLocal* data management system. The Module, developed with the assistance of Banana Shire Council, will introduce functionality to manage tasks for field and other staff, and includes an alert system.

The *SWIMLite* Annual indicators tool that is set to replace the existing SWIM lodgement via Excel templates and web forms will undergo internal testing around Easter and will be ready for 2013/14 reporting for all SWIM users.

The new *SWIMLite* system will have many benefits over the old templates as it will:

- Eliminate many of the errors caused by the auto-correct functionality of Excel
- Allow councils to only report those indicators that they are required to report, thereby reducing the number of indicators required for the next reporting period
- Allow councils to work on their 'annual' data throughout the year
- Improve the quality of the data submitted
- Allow councils to see (and correct) previous year's annual data.

QWRAP Welcomes Fourth Pilot Region

Four regions in Queensland are now reviewing their current practices for managing water and sewerage and investigating whether collaborative approaches can provide benefits for their communities.

The three initial pilot regions that have been participating in QWRAP for over a year have recently been joined by the Whitsunday ROC group of councils comprised of Isaac, Mackay and Whitsunday Regional Councils. This group has strong links at the ROC level and has established a new technical working group which will decide on the best approaches to investigate regional collaboration.

The region differs from the other QWRAP groups in a range of dimensions, particularly through the impacts felt by the resources sector which is a key stakeholder in the area. Strong political support and leadership from all three councils is resulting in a rapid and dynamic development of QWRAP investigations.

Late in 2013, the RAPAD region agreed to form the RAPAD Water Regional Alliance to further develop collaborative opportunities identified through their participation in QWRAP. Work to establish the Alliance is being undertaken concurrently with high-priority cooperative projects and has been assisted through the groups successful bid for IFMSS funding from the Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience. The participating councils of the RAPAD region have well-established mechanisms for cooperation on roads and other council areas and are demonstrating a high degree of leadership in progressing a sustainable model for regional water collaboration. This approach has already been successful in attracting additional water related regional funding to the councils.

The FNQROC region has completed its QWRAP investigations and agreed to continue to develop collaborative approaches across all councils, which have recently increased in number through two of the State's four 'de-amalgamations'. The ROC is now seeking further opportunities to develop water and sewerage management at a regional scale. The WBBROC region is continuing investigations into alternative collaborative models and this work has received a boost from recently awarded IFMSS funding. This has allowed immediate development of four collaborative opportunities concurrently with the region's investigations of alternative institutional models through QWRAP. If agreed by the group, the areas being studied will provide useful case studies on collaboration both within and outside of the region.

QWRAP is an LGAO program with seed funding provided by the Department of Energy and Water supply which ceases in December 2014. The program has been highly successful in developing investigations and discussion on regional collaboration for water services across the state and seen the agreement of one of the pilot regions (RAPAD) to trial a regional alliance model.

Events Calendar

April

- 4 TRG Meeting at *qldwater* office, Albion
Water Skills Partnership Industry Leaders' Group Meeting
- 8 Briefing on changes to National Water Training Package – Adelaide
- 9 AWA Monthly Technical Meeting: Sharks, poor visibility and a broken underwater main: How Queensland Urban Utilities rose to the challenge. Ship Inn, South Brisbane.
Contact Sharon Ible at sible@awa.asn.au
- 30 Workshop on Drinking Water Operator Certification Framework, OzWater - Brisbane

May

- 12-16 *qldwater* Water Connections Week
- 16 *qldwater* SWQ Regional Conference, Warwick
- 20 Joint Industry Advisory Committee Workshop and Water Industry Advisory Committee Meeting - Melbourne (Government Skills Australia)
- 29 AWA Queensland Young Water Professionals Mentoring Program Launch, Brisbane. Contact Sharon Ible at sible@awa.asn.au

June

- 4-5 39th Annual Water Industry Operations Conference and Exhibition at Logan. See www.wioa.org.au/2014conferences/qld.htm for more information.
- 12 *qldwater* CQ Regional Conference, Gladstone
- 20 TRG Meeting, *qldwater* office, Albion

July

- 29 *qldwater* NQ Regional Conference, Mackay
- 30-31 AWA NQ Regional Conference, Mackay

What's New: Product Showcase

As a new initiative to spice up our quarterly newsletters, we will be sharing information about interesting products and hopefully showcase some member innovations as well. If *qldwater* members have any products or innovations that are implemented and are worth sharing with the broader industry, please contact Desiré Gralton at dgralton@qldwater.com.au.

Bag filter and UV technology trial in Cairns demonstrates promising early results

The need to find an economical and effective means to manage *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia* in a small rural run of river intakes led Cairns Regional Council to trial a new system of bag filters that is showing early signs of promise.

According to Council's Manager Infrastructure (Water and Waste) Jon Turner, the general objective of this project was to provide multiple barrier treatment in several small river intakes using multi stage filtration followed by UV and chlorine disinfection.

"Pre-filters using automatic self cleaning water filters are used to protect the bag filters which provide removal of *Crypto* and *Giardia* down to 1 micron," Jon explained.

"Further protection is provided with turbidity meters automatically turning the treatment off during high rainfall events, when the first flush of the catchment causes high turbidity spikes."

As these very high turbidity spikes normally last only a matter of hours, raw water extraction can be shut down during this time with the scheme then relying on storage.

At this stage the intakes are routinely inspected every two to three days with bag filters currently replaced at each inspection. The removed bag is cleaned, dried and inspected for damage for further use.

With an initial outlay of \$100k to \$150k (excluding buildings), \$20 per filter bag and \$500 - \$600 for housings, the project is reasonably cost effective.

Since installation, CRC has detected no *Crypto* and *Giardia* in reticulation and the technology is shaping up as a cost-effective, fit for purpose solution. However, CRC acknowledges that the sampling period is short and longer term monitoring and optimisation is required to be confident before broadly promoting the results. CRC plans to prepare papers and deliver presentations at industry events once this has happened.

Prior to UV & Filter installation



After UV & Filter installation



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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."