



## Where will we see you next year?

The dates have mostly been set for our 2013 Regional Conferences and Water Connections Tour 2013, and we are looking forward to catching up with each and every one of you somewhere down the line.

The Water Connections Tour has become extremely popular and it has become more and more difficult to squeeze everyone into a charter plane, so next year's tour will be a road trip!

Starting in Mount Isa on 29 April, the tour will wind its way through the Outback visiting Cloncurry, Julia Creek, Richmond, Hughenden, Charters Towers and finish up in Townsville.

The Water Connections Tour is one of our most important projects, playing a crucial part in showing key decision-makers in government the issues our members are faced with on a daily basis – particularly in really remote locations. This is even more important with recent changes in government, where newly elected officials may not be aware of the day to day operations of water service providers.

As far as our Regional Conferences are concerned, we are kicking off in Gympie on 21 February and hope that next year will be less exciting in terms of weather but more exciting in terms of the Best of the Best Water Taste Test! The Gympie event will feature the SEQ regional semi-final, so get your water samples ready because this competition has taken on a life of its own!

The 2012 grand final event at the WIOA conference was such a hit that Victoria has since started their own competition and it's rumoured that NSW, Tasmania and the Northern Territory may be joining in on the fun. Remember where it started...

Other regional finals will be held in Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Townsville, Cooktown and Longreach – see the table for more information. The grand final will be held at the LGAQ State Conference in Cairns in October.

21 Feb	Gympie	SEQ Mini-Conference and Taste Test
17/18 April	Toowoomba	SWQ Mini-Conference and Taste Test
29 April	Mount Isa	Day 1 Water Connections Week
30 April	Cloncurry	Day 2 Water Connections Week
30 April	McKinlay	Day 2 Water Connections Week
1 May	Richmond	Day 3 Water Connections Week
1 May	Flinders	Day 3 Water Connections Week
2 May	Charters Towers	Day 4 Water Connections Week
3 May	Townsville	Day 5 Water Connections Week NQ Mini-Conference and Taste Test
May (TBC)	Cooktown	FNQ Mini-Conference and Taste Test (linked to IPWEAQ Branch Conference)
5-6 June	Gold Coast	Water Industry Operators Association WIOA) Conference
27 June	Longreach	WQ Mini-Conference and Taste Test (linked to IPWEAQ Branch Conference)
1 August	Rockhampton	CQ Mini-Conference and Taste Test
25 Aug - 1 Sept		NZ Study Tour (jointly hosted by <b>qldwater</b> and LGAQ)
Oct	Cairns	Taste Test grand final, LGAQ State Conference



## Update from A/CEO

Writing these things in November is tough. There is an expectation of a bit of happy reflection on our programs, a bit of future gazing and well wishes for everybody for a festive season that I really hope isn't as close as the calendar says. However, for a change I'd like to take most of that as read and put forward a few observations and challenges affecting our members.

While a core message from the Newman government is "empowerment" of local government and reducing red tape, it's clear that they are still working out how to efficiently achieve this ambitious agenda. Issues like fluoridation have seen many conflicting ministerial announcements, the restructures to departments have meant establishing relationships with a lot of new people. Despite a mantra of "enhanced collaboration," we are typically faced with very short timeframes to address policy and legislative amendments.

There is no money, and the strategic impact of the funding cuts is still to be fully realised. The departments are finding it difficult to fund support and outreach programs and have lost a lot of irreplaceable expertise. The pace of the change is clearly driven by politics, not economics. However, we are seeing issues which have been meandering along for years now being addressed and can only hope that the promised cost savings counter the lack of investment. Tips for young players – don't call anything "Smart" or use any other adjectives which could be associated with the former government. They tend not to laugh when you try to use antonyms as well.

We look forward to some certainty around the SEQ structures. **qldwater** and LGAQ have long-argued that the chosen energy-based model was cumbersome and inappropriate. The current government position for the rest of Queensland, according to the Director-General of the Department of Energy and Water Supply (DEWS), is to support the Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program investigations into voluntary alliances and related models. DEWS is also championing a 30 year water strategy taking the interests of all agencies with an interest in water into account. The discussion paper is expected to be released in early December and the challenge can not be understated, with the department needing to synthesise the interests of government, industry and the community in a severely limited funding environment. **qldwater** will work with LGAQ to coordinate industry input into the planning process.

Much has been said about regulatory reform and "green tape" reduction progress through Environment and Heritage Protection has continued its pre-election momentum.

DEWS has drafted a number of refinements to existing mandatory planning which we understand to be going forward for Cabinet consideration in February. Fingers crossed it will lead somewhere – while we are dealing with a new government, much of this has been on the table for years too.

Queensland Health did a good job of putting some common sense around fluoridation implementation but on 29 November, the ball game changed again. It is an emotionally-charged issue and it has taken the new government a long time to clarify its position.

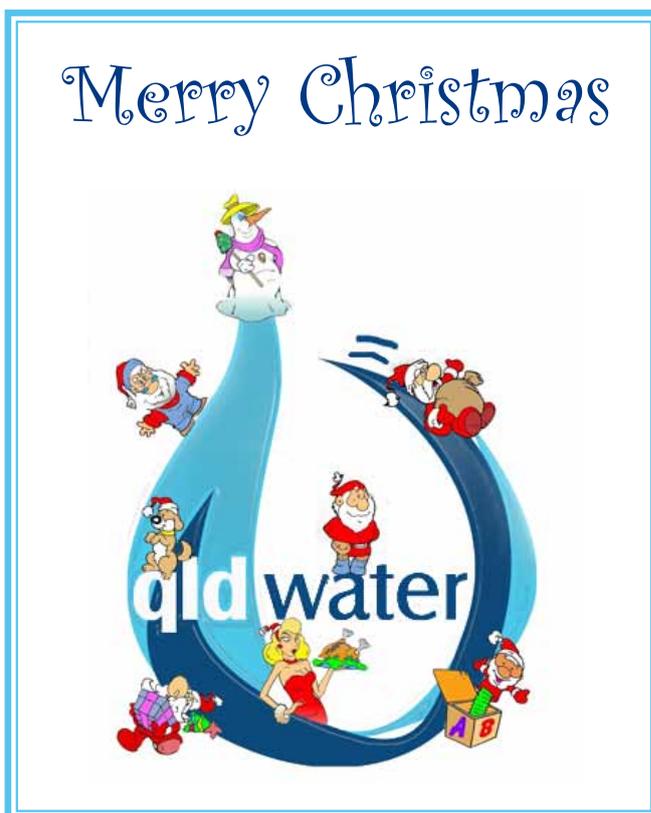
Now that it may be resolved, we focus our attention on the need for better access to training, and monies to support ongoing operating costs where fluoridation is continuing.

**qldwater's** first public benchmarking report was released in October (based on 2010/11 data) and by the time you are reading this we hope to be close to the release of a 2011/12 report. The trial report stimulated a bit of minor discussion on release but significantly, not much else happened. We see this as a crucial program – demonstrating transparency both shows regulators that the industry is serious about continuous improvement and provides a stronger basis for collaboration. The challenges are many, including being able to have confidence in the data and the courage to display it when things may not look rosy. But it's definitely getting there and the members participating in the trial must be commended for their leadership.

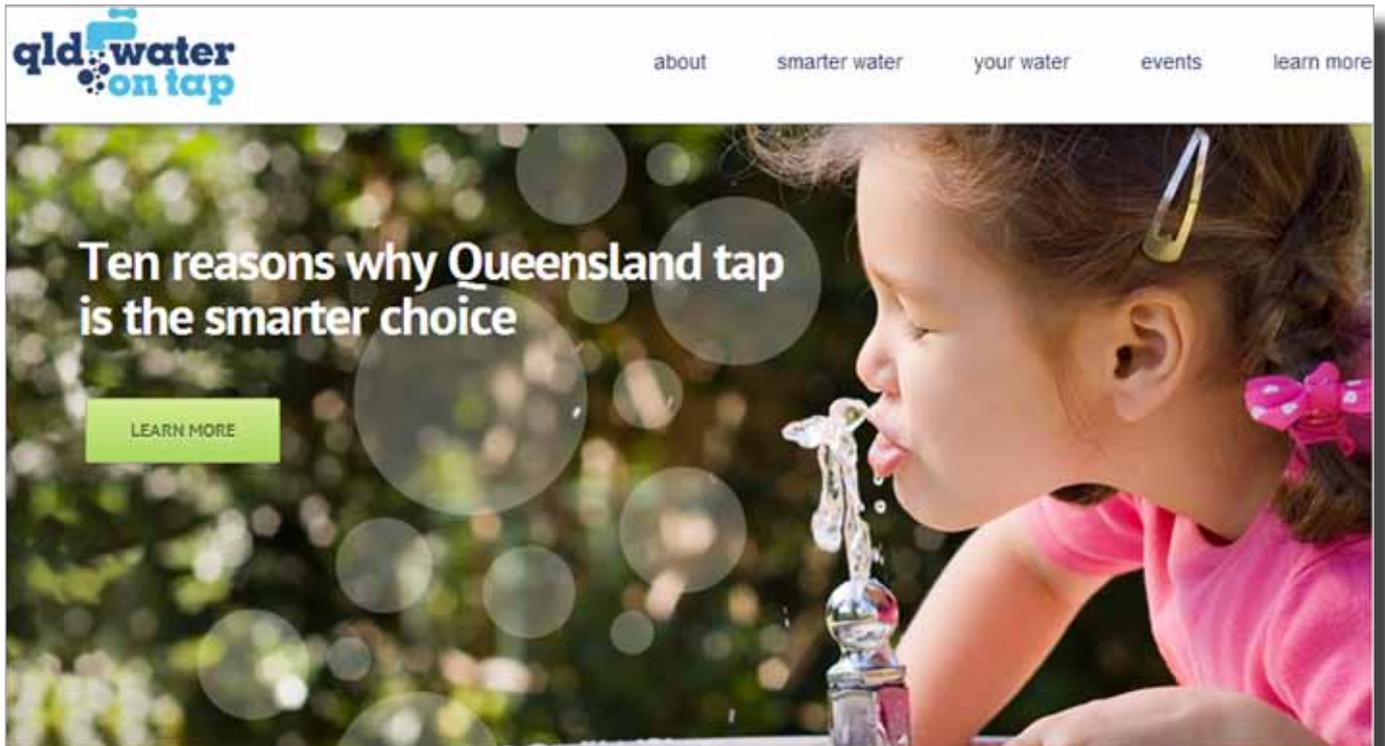
On a positive note, we look forward to seeing you at our 2013 events which are detailed on the web site and elsewhere in this newsletter. The whole idea of promoting our industry through programs like the Taste Test, the Water Connections Tour and Queensland Water On Tap is really taking off and attracting new collaborators and national attention. Our 2012/13 membership has grown to 67 of a possible 69 organisations despite the uncertainty generated by a year which included both state and local government elections, reflecting both the hard work of our group of excellent staff and network of committed industry representatives.

Our office closes COB 21 December and reopens on 2 January. Have a great and safe break.

Dave Cameron



## Campaign ready to launch



Over the course of the year we introduced the **qldwater on tap** campaign to our members and we're happy to announce that we can now offer our members access to a free marketing campaign to promote water and sewerage in their communities.

**qldwater on tap** is an offspring of the Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test and designed to engage communities and raise awareness of the urban water industry.

Primarily, the campaign aims to:

- Help the community understand that there is an urban water industry
- Promote the services that the industry provides and its valuable, skilled staff to the community (and ultimately decision makers)
- Raise awareness of the health benefits of drinking tap water over alternatives through stringent quality controls
- Reinforce the economic benefits of tap water
- Start to promote other benefits of drinking tap water including major environmental benefits

An informed and engaged community will produce direct results and over time, help the industry attract resources to ensure its sustainability.

**qldwater on tap** will take place in cities and towns across Queensland next year, directly involving thousands of people and reaching thousands more through news stories.

This is a highly effective awareness-raising tool, and a great way to promote your organisation.

The **qldwater on tap** campaign is the first time we have ventured into a community campaign and while our core business still remains technical support, advocacy and skills, we could see the need for our members to be able to communicate with their communities to raise awareness of issues and to promote open and transparent dialogue.

The **qldwater on tap** campaign can be as big or as little as you want it to be, and the key messages can be altered to suit your particular needs. It can be easily integrated with existing community events and through economies of scale we can ensure the best price for marketing collateral by pooling resources.

**qldwater on tap** also includes a social media platform. Don't know your tweets from your twits? Never "liked" anything on facebook? It has been a steep learning curve for us as well but experts agree it's the way of the future, so we're giving it a fair go!

Some of our members are already doing a great job engaging their communities online, and **qldwater on tap** will provide you with another vehicle to do so.

For more information about **qldwater on tap** and how you can participate, please contact Desiré Gralton at [dgralton@qldwater.com.au](mailto:dgralton@qldwater.com.au) or 0427 596 478.

**Remember to 'Like' us on Facebook :)**

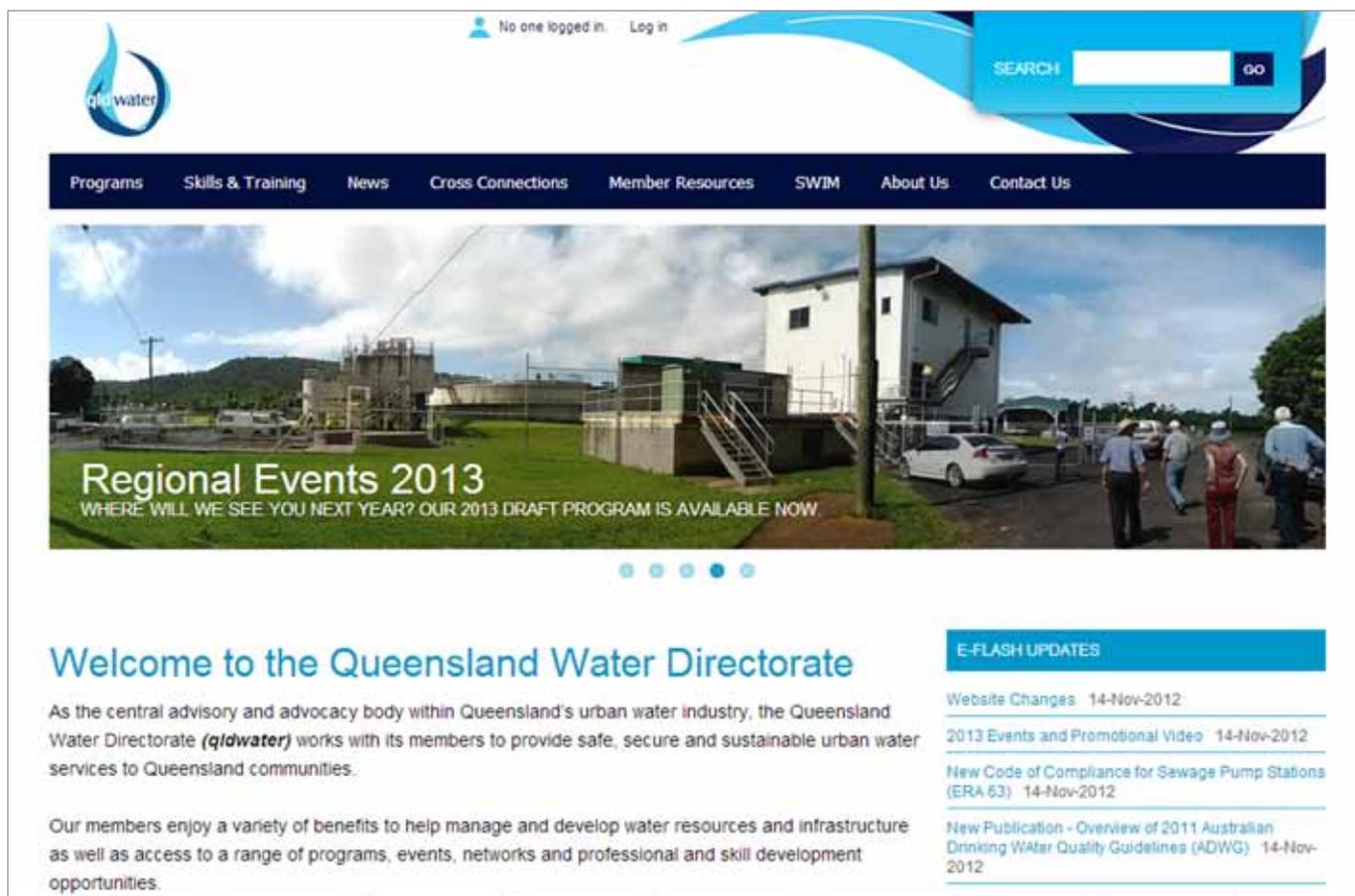
## We've got the look!

Over the past month **qldwater** has done a major cleanup of our website and fixing annoying little problems. We apologise for any frustrations that you've had to suffer trying to log in to members only pages but we believe the issue has now been resolved.

Our website stores a wealth of information – in particular our Member Resources pages contain everything you can possibly think of about water in Queensland.

We've tried to make these pages easier to navigate, but the search button is still a simple way to gather information about a certain topic.

We hope you like the new look – if you come across any error messages or experience any problems, please tell us and we'll get it sorted. If you do like it, please tell everyone else!



## Benefits of Benchmarking

It's true that you can't manage what you haven't measured, and **qldwater** believes that the benchmarking of our water and sewerage data is the single most important thing that could be done for the Queensland urban water industry as it:

- allows competition by comparison
- is nationally and internationally accepted as the best tool for improving the water and sewerage industry
- allows more transparency for our communities

Queensland's first water and sewerage benchmarking report, released in October, was the result of collaboration between several Queensland WSPs and **qldwater** over the last 12 months to determine the appropriate indicators to include and display.

In total 16 WSPs decided to participate in the public release of their

data in the report, including Gladstone RC, Maranoa RC, Townsville CC, Croydon SC, Barcaldine RC, Cairns RC, Rockhampton RC, Bundaberg RC, Burdekin SC, Balonne SC, Goondiwindi RC, Longreach RC, Mackay RC, North Burnett RC, South Burnett RC and Southern Downs RC. Gympie RC has recently joined in as well.

Since its release, we have received several emails congratulating us on getting it done and making it publically available. We have also had some interest from people keen to help develop new indicators and better ways of analysing the data for 2011-12. Our aim is to continually improve benchmarking over time.

If you have any comments on the benchmarking report or would like to participate in the 2011/12 report then please contact David Scheltinga at [dscheltinga@qldwater.com.au](mailto:dscheltinga@qldwater.com.au).

# SWIM Update

Our Statewide Water Information Management System continues to secure high levels of participation in water and sewerage data reporting, and thankfully this year we had little change from the data requested in 2010-11. In fact no new indicators were included and around 20 were removed.

Next year may be a different story as the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) has already altered some of their indicators to align more with the National Performance Report (NPR). In addition, the National Water Commission is reviewing all their NPR indicators and products with a workshop to be held around March 2013.

It is also likely that all the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) water and sewerage supply survey indicators will be included 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).

We would like to thank all that have reported this year and for your continued efforts to improve data quality. Reporting is essential to providing transparent, high quality water and sewerage services and creating benchmarking opportunities to ensure a sustainable industry.

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## SWIMLocal goes Live

SWIMLocal – the development of a data management software system designed to operate within each Water Service Provider, synchronise with the central SWIM system and, most importantly, see the Quality Assurance (QA) procedures built into SWIM moved closer to the point of capture – has been completed thanks to BoM funding. The system allows WSPs to have ultimate flexibility in their water and sewerage data management while integrating with other local systems.

The participation from our members has been crucial in the software's development, with Cairns, Cloncurry, Toowoomba and South Burnett Councils partnering with us to directly guide the development of the SWIMLocal tools. In fact, SWIMLocal is substantially modelled (at least in look and feel and partly in concept) on a system developed by Gympie Regional Council to help manage its own internal reporting needs as well as input to SWIM.

Approximately 30 Queensland WSPs and one NSW WSP have shown interest in the software with six WSPs now signed up and actively using the SWIMLocal system (the software went 'live' in November).

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 [dscheltinga@qldwater.com.au](mailto:dscheltinga@qldwater.com.au). The SWIMLocal system of pricing is based on a cost recovery model and pricing will hopefully decrease with increased uptake.

Several new modules and additions are already being planned, such as:

- A tasks module to record all tasks needed to be completed at a particular site
- A SMS/email alert system for exceedances
- An iPad/android platform for data entry directly from these and other mobile devices. Currently the software essentially works with any computer running Windows.

More information about SWIMLocal and access to the online training videos are now available on our website at [www.qldwater.com.au/SWIMLocal](http://www.qldwater.com.au/SWIMLocal).

*Below: The SWIM team hard at work getting SWIMLocal up and running. From left: Chris Hutchinson, Sally Walding and David Scheltinga.*



## Learn the fundamentals of water sampling

**qldwater's** first half day Water Quality Sampling Training workshop in Emerald received positive feedback from the 12 staff from Central Highlands and Banana Councils attending.

The training addresses the fundamentals of water sampling procedure including Australian Drinking Water Guidelines fundamentals, common techniques and methods for sample collection, transport, quality assurance and data management.

The course covers examination of some of the common water parameters sampled, including: bacteria, blue green algae, pesticides, fluoride, heavy metals, water physical and chemical parameters (e.g. pH, turbidity, EC, DO, nutrients). The course also includes content on sampling and quality assurance/control processes needed to produce reliable and accurate data, including:

- Equipment calibration
- Record keeping
- Site selection
- Common methods and standards
- How to take, store and transport a sample
- How to prevent sample contamination
- Blanks and 'known' sample testing

To ensure the course is interactive, examples used typically focus on environmental sampling and include a practical session near a waterway where possible. The course takes around four hours.

Cost for future courses are \$220 per attendee (incl. GST) with discounts available for members of the Queensland Water Skills Partnership or registrations of five or more attendees from the one organisation. We typically need around a minimum of 10 participants but can handle up to 30 and look for a "host" with a suitable venue to keep costs down.

We are aiming to link these water quality training workshops with upcoming *SWIMLocal* training in order to reduce costs and make the most of time spent offsite for participants who may need to travel to attend.

If interested in the training please contact Michelle Hill at [mhill@qldwater.com.au](mailto:mhill@qldwater.com.au) or on 07 3632 6853.



# NWDF Application Lodged

**qldwater** has submitted an application for funding through the National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF).

An initial expression of interest for participation in this funding application was sent out to all members in late September and nine water employers were included in the final application stage.

Qualifications included in the final application focused on higher level skills for supervisors and future leaders in the industry such as Certificate IV & Diploma Water Operations, Certificate IV/ Diploma Project Management and Vocational Graduate Certificate in Asset Management.

The funding amount provided 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.

**qldwater** plans to submit a further NWDF application mid 2013 should the initial application be successful. We will send out another call for expressions of interest at that time.

## Regional Alliances to strengthen communities

The Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program (Q-WRAP) was developed as an industry (Council) led initiative to investigate regional collaboration, including possible institutional change.

Driven by the changes that have occurred elsewhere in Australia and in SEQ, the program is examining urban water services in regional Queensland and whether they can be improved through alternative collaborative models. The two-year program is funded partially by DEWS, LGAQ and **qldwater** and is a good example of the LG industry demonstrating leadership and reviewing best practice relevant to Queensland's unique communities.

Three pilot regions have volunteered to be part of the program and while there is certainly no appetite for further institutional reform, there is a clear acknowledgement by all participating councils that change is likely in the future of the urban water industry, particularly given the inclusion of regional reform in the DEWS 30-year water strategy. There is also a strong interest in mechanisms to increase efficiency and improve services for local communities.

Each region self-selected to participate following broad-based consultation across

the state. Together, the three pilot regions comprise 38% of the state by area and 31% of the population outside SEQ.

The first pilot region was established by the Remote Area Planning and Development Board and includes six councils in the central western area of the state. This region covers an area 1.6 times as large as Victoria and includes over 26 water and sewerage schemes across numerous communities. The group has completed the first stage of their project reviewing strengths, risks and gaps of their urban water services and have commenced the second stage review of different governance models and their potential impact on the region's communities.

The Far North Queensland (FNQRoC) pilot region covers 14% of Queensland and includes more than 64 water and sewerage schemes. The group has completed an initial high-level analysis of risks and gaps and have commenced a tender process for a review of their institutional arrangements and the impact of possible alternative models on local communities.

The third group to join the program consists of the members of the Wide Bay-Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils, namely

### Water Quality and Distribution Management workshops a success

Two Water Quality and Distribution System Management workshops were held in Longreach and Townsville in November, provided by the Water Industry Association of Australia (WIOA).

These workshops, with presenters Peter Mosse and George Wall, are always highly regarded and participants at both workshops provided positive feedback on the value of the training.

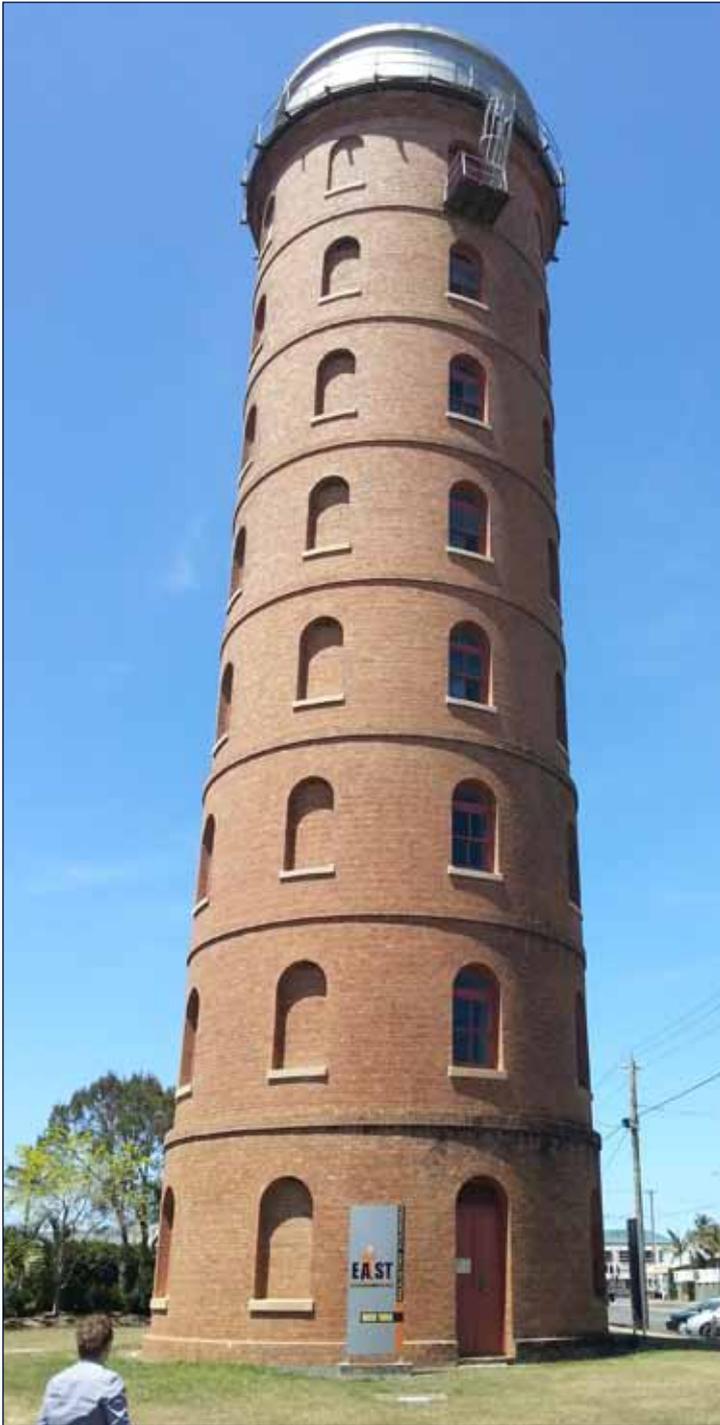
We are currently negotiating possible 2013 dates and locations with WIOA.

North Burnett, Bundaberg, Gympie, South Burnett and Fraser Coast Regional Councils. Despite being less than 3% of the state's area, this region is home to nearly 20% of the state's regional population and is serviced by over 60 water and sewerage schemes. This region has recently joined the project which is still being scoped for endorsement by each council.

Funding for the QWRAP expires in 2013 and each region is progressing the work in their area to maximise the benefits and ongoing outcomes of the program.



## A blast from the past!



*qldwater's* Dr Rob Fearon recently visited the Bundaberg Waterworks – Bundaberg's first reticulated water supply scheme – which was constructed in 1901-02.

The Waterworks marked a significant stage in the development of Bundaberg's infrastructure when the boom in the sugar industry cemented its name as a major regional city.

At the time the town relied on an in-ground circular brick tank with a 15,000 gallon capacity to service the community's water needs. With no pump or elevated tank, the community had to rely on hand filled water carts to quench its thirst.

The lack of an adequate reticulated water supply was a major infrastructure issue of this time, so the commissioning of Bundaberg's first reticulated water supply – known at the time as the Bundaberg Waterworks – marked a significant stage in the development of the town.

The Bundaberg Waterworks provided an adequate, reliable and safe water supply for many years to come at a cost the community could afford.

### Interesting Facts:

Height: 106 ft

Diameter: 29 ft

Tank: 40,000 gallon mild steel tank

Boilers: two 25HP Cornish type boilers,  
each 20ft long by 5ft 6 inches in diameter

Pumps: two horizontal direct-acting duplex type pumps,  
each with maximum capacity of 10,000 gallons/hr

### Share your history with us...

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).



*qldwater* – Unit 4, 43-49 Sandgate Road, Albion Q 4010  
PO Box 2100, Fortitude Valley BC QLD 4006

T: 07 3632 6850  
F: 07 3632 6899  
E: [enquiry@qldwater.com.au](mailto:enquiry@qldwater.com.au)  
W: [www.qldwater.com.au](http://www.qldwater.com.au)

"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."