

The Sigura Taste Test & Trivia - it's game on!

One positive to come from COVID-19 is that we are now all proficient in using remote meeting software. This year the taste test will break all boundaries, allowing anyone to join in without leaving the confines of your workplace. Our panel and a small number of staff, SPG members and sponsors will be on site at our new premises while the rest will be able to join in via GoToWebinar.

Join on your own or put a laptop in your lunchroom and join as a team. We hope to bring as many members as possible together for a fun and interactive afternoon of tasting and trivia – more details to follow so keep an eye on our weekly eFlashes to stay up to date.

How to be a winner

With a swathe of awards under the belt, water from Mackay Regional Council's Marian Water Treatment Plant is no doubt a top drop.

It was first selected as a winner by attendees at the **qldwater** Annual Forum in 2018 and 2019, then by a panel of judges at the WIOA Water of Origin, by the general community in Dunkeld, Victoria at the National Taste Test event in 2019 and finally by a panel of judges at the Berkeley Springs International Water Taste Test event in the US. They are obviously onto a winner.

We interviewed Stuart Boyd to find the secret to their success and three key things played a part – with a dash of luck:

- 1. You have to have a good source** – the Eungella rainforest makes for a good catchment;
- 2. Having a good treatment plant** – Marian WTP was built around 2012 – a clever design that requires very low dose rates compared to some other plants;
- 3. Having a great team** and people pulling together – Mackay Water has a team of 44 with operators, chemical / process engineers, reporting and support staff. Stu believes their Operators want to make a positive change and have optimised the plants to create the perfect drop;
- 4. A bit of luck on the day!**

Stu also gave a few good reasons to participate in the event: a morale boost to the team and a good news story in an industry that usually only makes the news when things go wrong.

Who's in the run?

We've received 8 entries so far:

- Barcaldine Regional Council – Barcaldine Scheme
- Bundaberg Regional Council – Lovers Walk WTP
- Livingstone Shire Council – Capricorn Coast – Woodbury WTP
- Southern Downs Regional Council – source TBC
- Winton Shire Council
- Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
- Toowoomba Regional Council – Mt Kynoch
- Mackay Regional Council – Marian WTP

Image below: The Mackay Water and Waste team - can they maintain the top spot for another year?



Sigura Taste Test - Meet the Panel

Trevor “Smiley” Dean

Our MC for the day is the Executive Manager Engineering & Technical Services at Fraser Coast Regional Council. Trevor is well known in the industry, having chaired our Technical Reference Group from 2017 – 2019, a current IPWEAQ board member and being an active contributor at most of our events. Trev believes he’s the right man for the job with a proven track record of having absolutely no bias – last year he scored his own water a 3/10 commenting that “the stuff was horrible”.



Narelle “Make it happen” D’Amico

Currently Branch Manager – Water Services at Bundaberg Regional Council, Narelle has previously worked for Water Corporation in WA and Hunter Water Corporation in NSW. Narelle is currently Deputy Chair of the **qldwater** Strategic Priorities Group and has been a great source of new ideas, always willing to support our industry with a passion for business improvement. Yes, Bundaberg are entering a sample but Narelle swears she hasn’t lived there long enough to be able to pick it out in a lineup.



Troy “Cloaca” Pettiford

Troy’s journey from tools to COO at Whitsunday Regional Council has been well documented and he remains the poster child of the taste test facing a media scrum at the Gold Coast event a couple of years ago. Troy is currently Chair of the **qldwater** SPG. “Cloaca” was Troy’s suggestion for a name for the Brown Card training program – keeping with the latin theme started with Aqua Card. Perfectly logical, too good not to use somewhere, unfortunately for Troy the popular vote went to “Brown” and the next thing we had to think of was a nickname for him.



Rulani “Secure Water” van Rensburg

As Business Manager for our new taste test sponsor Sigura, Rulani’s career has been dedicated to safe and secure water services. Starting out as a technical sales rep in South Africa before moving to Australia, Rulani worked her way up the corporate ladder with Lonza, now known as Sigura. Sigura is the Spanish translation for Secure Water and a fitting description as Taste Test sponsor. Rulani has been a longstanding supporter of the Directorate and a great advocate for the water industry.



Rod “Made in Oz” Wellings

Rod’s passionate pleas to support Australian-made products have been heard far and wide at **qldwater** events. Rod will bring his expertise as a sommelier to the table, swapping wine for water in our quest to find Queensland’s best. He will no doubt be able to provide a different view on the appearance, aroma, complexity and character of each sample, and won’t be scared to raise his opinions either.

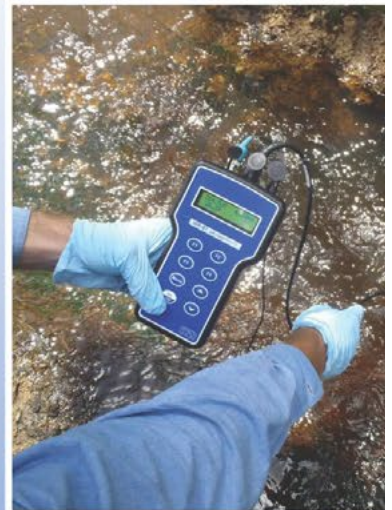


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CEO Report

We are starting to get out a bit to see people in person more which makes a nice change. Despite all the advances in technology and uptake by people I never thought to see playing with video-conferencing, there is a social and networking element that's impossible to replace. There is plenty of new whizz-bangery, but also distractions when you're working from a PC and it's difficult to replace the input you get from a face to face discussion or good old whiteboard scrawl or table thump. We are working on a strategy for the optimal shandy of video and face-to-face depending on the types of interactions.

The software we've been using monitors each user's attention by measuring how much time you spend on the main webinar screen rather than flicking between things. 100% is quite a rarity, and I reckon I'm probably more guilty of multi-tasking than most. It's made me realise that I don't really watch television any more either, 90% listening and the occasional upward glance and largely ignoring the news completely – it will be interesting to see how changing appetites for different media influences what we consume in the longer term.

The move to our new digs at Eagle Farm is now complete and aside from some residual issues with phone landlines, we seem to be well settled-in (as you can tell from Rob kicking back in his new office below). The first things we'll be hosting here are in the second week of September with the Sigura Taste Test and Trivia and our Strategic Priorities Group (SPG) meeting. There seems to be an awful lot of energy for the Taste Test as people look for something light and fun to do.

The Atherton mini-conference is shaping up really well and internet gods willing, all members will be able to participate online if they are unable to make it in person. Thanks again to Tablelands Regional Council for hosting.

We've had more than 50 core member organisations participating in the Essentials Webinar live events and likely many more we can't currently identify downloading recordings. The back page has a few other statistics from the 2019/20 financial year for interest. We produced this flyer at the suggestion of our SPG Chair in an attempt to try to make some of our reporting for our Board more interesting.

We avoid member satisfaction surveys, largely because being an industry association means we deal with lots of people in each member organisation with differing levels of engagement, and let's face it, who needs more surveys. The door is always open for constructive criticism to me directly or to any of our SPG members.

The results in the top chart of mostly 4's (Very Good) and 5's (Excellent)- based on responses from SPG- are very pleasing. In our game with so many stakeholders to satisfy and diverse interests to represent we consider the Project Delivery "almost" Good result an assurance that the responses were realistic, and a reminder that we do still have things to work on.

It will take a little while to determine our membership result for this financial year. While COVID has impacted all, we are really lucky not to be reliant on physical events for sustaining our business and fortunate to be relatively nimble and always trying new things. We rely on member satisfaction to maintain our core income.

Our focus over the coming months will be to try to get ready for advocacy to new Ministers and Directors General in key agencies. This is not pre-empting an election result, just acknowledging that the current government has been there a couple of terms now and playing with the deck chairs doesn't seem out of the question.



Our long-touted “Roadmap” was delayed once towards the end of 2019, then again by COVID, and now been significantly pruned to be a more condensed list of key issues and recommended actions for **qldwater**, its members and stakeholders, and government.

There is also the matter of a Productivity Commission review, likely to lead into a review of the National Water Initiative. We always put a lot of effort into PC activities – a link to the webinar conducted on the topic is available at <https://youtu.be/zyhyeWr2sGY>.

While it’s difficult to point to significant impacts on urban water and sewerage policy and regulation since the last report, having independent bodies generally saying the right things about what needs to be done to address critical issues in our sector creates a useful point of reference for advocacy.

So will a revised NWI make any difference? The current Intergovernmental agreement dates back to 2004 and the last 16 years has seen a significant amount of change, with particularly positive improvements in the management of broader water systems.

We would argue that things have been too quiet on the urban water front for a fair while now, and a renewed focus, with mechanisms including performance monitoring to get governments back on track, are essential.

We were starting the decade with a profile of ageing infrastructure (check out some of the cool Fraser Coast pictures in this newsletter), constrained funding and increased evidence of extreme events. All of these pressures are exacerbated by COVID-19 – it is the responsibility of all tiers of government to collaborate to address these fundamental challenges. The Water Services Association of Australia has long-called for a re-establishment of a National Water Commission with an enhance focus on urban water, and **qldwater** echoes this call.

Our submissions will be available to members through eFlashes as they are produced.

Until next time,

Dave



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qldwater Awards Announced

Queensland Young Operator of the Year 2020 - Benjamin Haddock

qldwater is pleased to announce the Queensland Young Operator of the Year for 2020 is **Benjamin Haddock** from Southern Downs Regional Council.

Ben commenced working as an Assistant Operator at the Stanthorpe Wastewater Treatment Plant three years ago and late last year was successful in applying for a role as an Assistant Operator at the Water Treatment Plant. Due to extended drought conditions and the need to make some major operational changes at the plant, Ben was thrown in the deep end and needed to learn and apply new knowledge extremely quickly in his new role.

To maintain water supply, Council began carting water from Connolly Dam to Stanthorpe's raw water storage tanks. Water quality from the dam was poor and difficult to treat, with high levels of Manganese, as well as algae, taste and odour problems. Ben was actively involved in the operational investigation into new treatment processes to successfully treat the dam water and his determination and dedication motivated the rest of the operational team to perform over and above expectations.

An Operator position recently became available at the Stanthorpe Wastewater Treatment Plant and although Ben was enjoying his time in water operations he was keen to get back into wastewater treatment and was successful in gaining a promotion to Operator. Ben takes his new responsibilities seriously and has started studying a Certificate IV in Water Industry Operations. He is meeting his increased responsibilities in a professional manner and is highly regarded by his work colleagues.

Ben will receive a trophy and funding to participate in one of WIOA's Operator Tours to New Zealand – COVID depending of course. Thank you to all of the impressive nominees and congratulations Ben!



Queensland Operator of the Year (Civil/All-Rounder) - Brett Donald

qldwater congratulates **Brett Donald** of Mackay Regional Council who has been selected as this year's Operator of the Year (Civil/All-Rounder).

Brett is a qualified Plumber and has worked for Council for the past seven years. Last year he enrolled in the Regional Water Industry Worker Competency Training Program along with workers from surrounding councils and has just completed his Certificate III in Water Industry Operations. As part of the program, Mackay hosted a number of training blocks and Brett stepped up to provide support to the visiting councils by running site safety inductions and tours.

Brett has a no-nonsense attitude to his work and pays particular attention to getting the job done in a timely and professional manner. He is regularly required to lead jobs in the field and has a high safety record with no recorded issues and a good rapport with team members and contractors on his sites. His pre-start musters and toolbox talks are extremely thorough so that everyone on site knows what the job is and all risks and controls have been identified. Brett prides himself on ensuring his job site is organised, customers are kept informed of progress and ensures the job is done right the first time.

Brett regularly steps up to fill any gap in the weekly On Call roster and supports his team when needed. His work ethic and safety attitude are a great example for others to follow.

Well done Brett and thank you to all the nominees for the great services they provide to their communities. Brett's prize includes a trophy and \$1500 towards professional development initiatives.

Kudos as well to **Mark Vairy** from Mackay Regional Council for winning the AWA Queensland Operator of the Year Award for 2020. Mackay is starting to clean up with quite a few big deals in the last 12 months – you've got to be in it....





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Staff Movements

Diana Kislitsyna resigned just before the COVID crisis and with most events being cancelled or postponed, we managed to keep going for a few months without anyone in the support role. We are now delighted to welcome Naomi Carragher to our team. Naomi (pictured right) has a good understanding of the water industry with her father-in-law an old hat at Gold Coast Water. She also has great IT and a long list of other skills we desperately needed, so please make her feel welcome so she will stick around for a long time!

Over the past couple of months, we also took on an Intern from QUT. Sunni Dearden needed to complete 100 hours of work experience to complete her double degree in Science and Communications. Sunni successfully developed a new web portal for the Reef Councils program, wrote an article about the program and even designed her own hand-drawn icons to use on the website. It was a pleasure to share some real-world experience with her and we hope that the introduction to the water industry may even provide inspiration to find work in the field.



PROGRAM UPDATES

SWIM Update

The SWIM Web Data Entry Portal and **swimlocal** software have undergone major upgrades this year to improve functionality, security and reliability. And they look prettier!

This is just in time for the mandatory annual water and sewerage reporting period, with legislation requiring all Councils to report to the DNRME, ABS, BoM and NPR by 1 October each year, or risk receiving a fine.

With all **qldwater** members using SWIM this year to report their annual water and sewerage data, we are pleased to have the support of Louise Reeves to help with any SWIM related enquiries. Both David and Louise are ready to assist, so reach out if you have questions or need help.

The legislation also allows this data to be made freely available and publicly reported via benchmarking/ comparative reports, and Louise has been playing around with PowerBI as an online reporting tool to compare SWIM data across the region. See how your Council is going at www.qldwater.com.au/benchmarking.

swimlocal

45 Service Providers are currently using the full licenced version of **swimlocal** with Noosa Council the latest to sign up – see story below.

Work towards automating lab data uploads into **swimlocal** and STP data exporting from **swimlocal** to the WaTERS database are continuing and progressing. Those Councils using the fully licenced version of **swimlocal** and getting their samples analysed by Cairns Regional Council Lab can now get their result in a format that can be automatically uploaded into **swimlocal**.

qldwater is currently looking into improving the reporting aspects of the **swimlocal** system (such as dashboards) and spending some time helping Councils automate data transfers between the various tools to improve reporting efficiency for things like Annual Water and Sewerage and DNRME 4-monthly Water Security reporting.

How swimlocal became the cornerstone of integrated water quality monitoring in Noosa

Calls for feedback to the State's review of water quality objectives under the Environment Policy (Water) had staff at Noosa Council grappling with a conundrum – how to make sense of twenty plus years of water quality data collected by Council and local community groups, and stored in project files and Excel spreadsheets on individual computers.

Noosa Council, like other Council's in SEQ, commission Healthy Land and Water (HLW) to monitor their waterways and produce an annual Report Card on the health of each major river catchment. HLW are the custodians of the Report Card data, and this important information contributed to the review.

However, Council also undertakes investigative and project-based water quality monitoring, and local groups monitor water quality through the community-based Waterwatch programs. Again important data to contribute, but not so easy to access and provide to the State's review.

According to Environment Officer Jan Maddin, it was a little overwhelming.

"So we had a situational analysis performed on all the data collected, and the relevant data cleaned and submitted," she said.

"Next was how best to store this data and future data, easily and make sense of it. The community groups had some horror stories about previous databases they had used, so we were pleased to hear about **swimlocal**."

The **swimlocal** data management tool is now being used to manage the data from Noosa's freshwater and estuarine water quality monitoring programs.

"This is great because data can be entered directly into tablets out in the field or into the software back in the office/home by volunteers. Lab data will be uploaded directly into the system without having to retype the results from PDF files."

In addition, the HLW Report Card data for sites relevant to the region can also be uploaded into the system and all this data can be searched, summarised, extracted and reported on with a few clicks of the keyboard.

swimlocal is simple to use and data is managed within one database, so there is one point of truth.



Data is stored safely and backed up remotely so it can't be lost.

For Jan and her team the system has been a great help.

"It is the cornerstone of our newly formed integrated water quality monitoring network" she says, "which links monitoring to management at the local scale in Noosa."

This is the first time the **swimlocal** system is being used across a range of NRM groups with data being entered by volunteers, opening up further possibilities for the system to evolve.

The linkage was made by **qldwater's** Communications Manager, Desiré Gralton who was invited to attend the first meeting of the Noosa integrated monitoring network to talk about **qldwater**. Desiré is a passionate environmental advocate and member of the Noosa Integrated Catchment Association – now a key user of **swimlocal**.

qldwater's SWIM Manager, Dr David Scheltinga is always thrilled to see a new happy customer but particularly keen to see the advantages of the system being exploited by a council's environmental monitoring arm.

"I've spent a lot of time in past lives sampling in waterways and my time in the field would have been a whole lot easier with tools like **swimlocal** to manage data... I guess that experience has been in the back of my mind as I've been steering development of the tools for the last 10 years."

"It's great to see Noosa Council on board – hopefully we'll get a few more councils with similar responsibilities and NRM groups taking on this efficient and cost-effective solution."



NICA has carried out water quality tests in the Noosa River for almost 15 years, routinely measuring such parameters as acidity, salinity, turbidity, and oxygen dissolved in the water. The data helps to define the ongoing quality of the water and assist in developing management programs to maintain and improve the quality of the river.

The swimlocal system will enable more sophisticated on-line recording and consequent analysis of the measurements obtained, allowing NICA's work to be extended to more detailed studies of the whole river system including its tributary creeks where most pollution reaching the river originates, such as river bank erosion, agricultural chemicals, etc.

Skills Update

Water Industry Worker Program Recognised in the Queensland Training Awards

The Water Industry Worker Program has been selected as a State Finalist in the 2020 Queensland Training Awards, Premiers Industry Collaboration Award category!

The nomination was submitted in recognition of the collaborative efforts of councils in North Queensland to establish a pilot of the program following successful delivery in South East Queensland since 2010.

The program has been shortlisted to the top 3 nominations in its category with an interview still to be conducted to determine the winner.

Congratulations to all those involved in the pilot program, particularly Nicole Davis and Kellie Lister and a number of industry experts who established the program in SEQ and shared their experiences to kickstart the pilot. Thanks also to Simmonds and Bristow which has been delivering the training as part of the pilot.

Thirty workers have participated in the North Queensland pilot, with a second intake currently being finalised. Following the successful delivery of the pilot and regular intakes in South East Queensland, the program is expanding to other regions, with 24 workers from five councils in the Wide Bay Burnett region about to commence training in September.

Best of luck in the finals!

Water Industry Foundation Skills Micro-Credentials Pilot Program

qldwater has secured funding from the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to support a pilot of Water Industry Foundation Skills Micro-Credentials.

The micro-credentials will cover off basic knowledge required by Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators and Water Industry Workers and provide an entry pathway to those not yet employed in an operational role. They will provide a basic overview of the processes and safety requirements of water industry roles, with further study of a Certificate II or Certificate III in Water Industry Operations required for anyone subsequently pursuing a water industry career.

There will be a number of options offered as part of the pilot by different RTOs and with a range of learning methods available.

Details for delivery are currently being finalized and we will share those with Water Skills Partners and **qldwater** members soon and invite expressions of interest. If you have any queries in the meantime please contact Carlie Sargent (csargent@qldwater.com.au).

More Fundamentals Webinars Coming Soon!

qldwater recently hosted its first 'Fundamentals' webinar, with a demonstration of media filter backwashing provided by Terry Fagg from Western Downs Regional Council. The webinar was very well received with members telling us they found it 'very informative' and it sparked a lot of discussion and consideration of processes at their own treatment plants.

Employees of **qldwater** members and Water Skills Partners can view a recording of the webinar on the **qldwater** website.

Preparation is underway for future webinars, which will include a mix of network and treatment topics and we will be in contact with more details soon. Anyone keen to present a webinar is encouraged to contact Carlie Sargent on 07 3632 6853 or csargent@qldwater.com.au.

Aqua Card

There has been a surge in industry contractors completing the Aqua Card training course. This week Downer Group – Pipetech QLD enrolled 20 staff members, providing their staff with a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities when working on or near water infrastructure.

Brown Card

qldwater's 'Brown Card' – an online training course for people working on or near wastewater infrastructure is in the final stages of development and is almost ready for final user testing before it is released on www.watertraining.com.au.



QWRAP Update

QWRAP has reached the end of another year with the Annual Report to be released shortly. The program is a collaboration among the LGAQ, *qldwater*, the Queensland Government (through the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) and over 30 participating councils. It has been funded by the Department since 2011 with significant leverage of cash and in-kind contributions from all other partners. The Program has evolved over time to include information sharing and joint projects among different regions.

QWRAP works to build regional collaboration for urban water and sewerage (W&S) services in Queensland because this approach has been proven repeatedly to be a sustainable way to support regional communities by addressing key service priorities and building workforce capability.

Multiple national reviews, most recently by the Productivity Commission, have urged regionalisation of Queensland utilities to strengthen economies of scale, improve strategic planning and investment and encourage competition by comparison. Acknowledging the necessity of a staged approach, the QWRAP 'Maturity Model' outlines typical steps in the development of regional models and directs funding to projects that demonstrate increasing maturity.

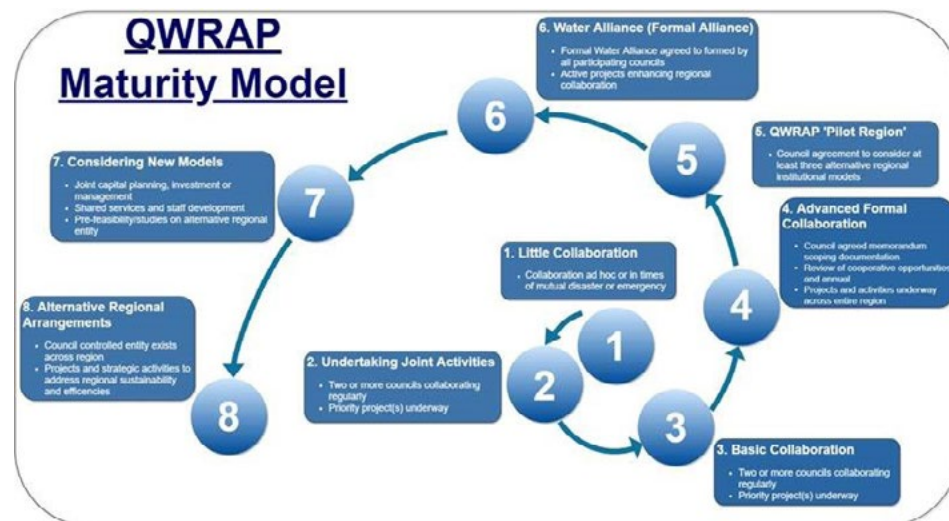
Other Queensland regions have also commenced initial discussion about possible regional collaboration on W&S and are at various stages of developing joint projects.

Some of the projects finalised in the last year demonstrate how high-maturity collaboration can build sustainable services within and beyond a regional area. The first is a multi-region program developing skills for Water Industry Workers. This project has been successful in the past two years in building career paths for field and network staff responsible for maintaining levels of service for customers. The program provides a skilling platform that is important for attracting new staff and building essential skills in roles traditionally overlooked by many employers. The success of the program resulted in funding for an additional year and extending the work into another region to encompass ten coastal councils from Gympie to Cairns.

Another project has fostered cooperation on transitioning management of four sewage treatment plants from external contracts back to council management, thereby increasing employment in the participating councils and creating more sustainable management arrangements within the region. This high-value project was possible only through seed QWRAP

funding which helped justify the collaboration and resulted in substantial savings for the councils involved. The high cost of the work combined with the projected ongoing savings and other community benefits make this a good example of the high collaboration maturity.

Another indicator of maturity is the willingness of the sector to engage in formal research and innovation and this interest has increased with the collaboration maturity of established regions.



Five regions including over 200 communities are working through QWRAP on common projects and three have created formal Water Alliances.

This year, the North Queensland ROC including Hinchinbrook, Charters Towers, Palm Island, Townsville and Burdekin were invited to form the sixth QWRAP region. The region's technical group has been meeting for over two years to share information and resources with some bilateral projects undertaken already.

This year a new project was funded as a collaboration between regional councils and a local university to undertake a multi-year research project to assist in monitoring and managing levels of nutrients discharged to the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). Nitrogen has been identified by the Office of the GBR as the main water quality contaminant contributing to reef degradation and is also a key indicator of quality for sewage treatment.

QWRAP (continued)

The research to develop 'digital litmus paper' for detecting nitrogen in GBR waters downstream of sewage treatment plants has the potential to deliver water quality improvements locally but also extending beyond the participating councils.

For more information please visit the recently update QWRAP website which includes Case Studies, Research

Reports, Annual Updates and other documents describing how QWRAP is fostering regionalisation across the State.

QWRAP is funded until June 2022 by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy with contributions from LGAQ, *qldwater* and over 30 participating councils.



Emerging Contaminants Consortium

Since the last *qldwater* newsletter, the Queensland Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Contaminants has been extremely busy forming connections and seeking partners through which to influence state and national policy, research and communications to lead future discussions about priority contaminants affecting Queensland water and sewerage service providers. The eight founding members of the Consortium have put in a lot of work attending meetings with researchers and bid coordinators, in the process forging linkages with several research teams.

The Consortium is choosing to support three funding bids for research centres through two Federal grant programs.

The NESP Sustainable Communities and Waste Hub grant program provides funding from the second half of 2020 through to June 2027, with partner contributions to be matched by government funding. The mandated Hub objectives are to focus on:

- Innovative methods for reuse of materials, including proof of concept demonstration;
- Options for improved construction and demolition waste management;
- Baseline and ongoing recycling measures in the Australian economy;
- Socio-economic analysis to assist with waste reduction and increased use of recycled materials;
- Improved material sorting and re-processing; and
- Options for the management and quantification of waste stockpiles.

The Consortium's objectives fit within the hub through resource reuse, in particular biosolids and recycled water for which contaminants are a concern, especially PFAS, but increasingly microplastics and pharmaceuticals and personal care products.

There were five separate bids for the Sustainable Communities and Waste Hub program that **qldwater** is aware of, only one of which can be successful. The two Queensland-based hub proposals supported with in-kind contributions by the Consortium are:

- Griffith University, led by Professor Chengrong Chen
- The University of Queensland, led by Professor Zhiguo Yuan

Both of these research teams have the capability and local knowledge to provide a conduit for the Consortium to influence research to support our industry. A decision on whether either will be successful is expected within the next month.

In addition, the Consortium has chosen to support the Clean Australia CRC bid. CRC funding is for a period of 10 years to commence in July 2021. The Clean Australia CRC is one of five CRC bids relevant to our sector including: ONE Basin; Water in Northern Australia; Water Security and Thriving Coasts.

The Clean Australia CRC bid is being organised by the team that manages the highly successful CRC for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment. Over its 10 years of operation, CRC CARE has demonstrated a strong focus on developing and influencing policy, particularly in regard to PFAS management. The research programs for the proposed new centre have a strong focus on contaminants and risk management:

- Developing alternatives to traditional HBT outcomes for risk assessment;
- Ecotoxicological assessment of emerging contaminants;
- Preventing pollution by avoiding landfill for low risk resources; and
- Developing technologies for remediation and management of contaminants.

The Consortium chose to support the Clean Australia CRC bid through a modest cash contribution, and a substantial in-kind contribution. The in-kind contribution takes account of the very large volume of existing and future PFAS analysis data collected by participating councils for STP influent, effluent and biosolids that could be made available to the research team.

The CRC bid coordinator Patik Ambani had the following to say about the final Clean Australia CRC bid submission.

“With outstanding efforts of the end-users (industry and government) and research partners, the bid committee has pulled together a competitive bid that encompasses some truly innovative and potentially game-changing research initiatives. A bid for a CRC that, while building on CRC CARE’s legacy, is different in several fundamental ways has managed to raise \$44.2M cash, 300+FTE of staff time and \$85.4M of in-kind (staff and non-staff).”

This is an impressive level of support from bid partners and is an indicator of what must be a strong bid. We expect to hear the outcome of the first round of assessments in late October/early November. The Consortium’s involvement from the outset as a project partner along with Urban Utilities and Seqwater gives it the best possible chance to influence the direction of the CRC’s research to maximise the benefit to the Queensland water industry. The linkages formed through this process within Queensland and with utilities outside of the state may lead to a larger coalition for the sector down the track, and with that the possibility to influence in the contaminant sphere at a national level.

If you are interested in joining the Queensland Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Contaminants, please contact Rob or Louise. The Consortium website and more information can be [accessed here](#), which includes links to member-only content including current research links and information.

Current Consortium member councils are: Cairns, Gold Coast, Logan, Mareeba, Redland, Tablelands, Toowoomba and Townsville. Member councils have open access to the website: to request access please [contact Louise](#).

Reef Councils Project

Queensland is blessed with the Great Barrier Reef (GBR), which remains one of the final frontiers and richest regions of coral and marine biodiversity in the world. Considered both a natural wonder and tourism powerhouse, the Great Barrier Reef entices worldwide visitations creating significant economic benefit to coastal communities. However, the health of this World Heritage Site is under threat.

The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report (2019) has reclassified the Reef's health rating from poor to very poor. This can be largely attributed to the impacts of climate change and worsening water quality from land based run off. In response to the deterioration, new Reef Regulations have been enacted to align with both the Reef 2025 plan and Reef 2050 plan. The implications of these new regulations have prompted tighter management of activities of primary producers, point source industries and councils.

The ambitious targets listed within the Queensland Government's Reef 2025 plan aim to reduce nitrogen run off by 80% and reduce total suspended sediment run-off by 50%. These regulations further limit the ability of any new, expanded or intensified 'Environmentally Relevant Activities' and this include building or upgrading a wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). A key element of this "no-net-decline" approach is that public sewerage services must be managed so that they do not contribute nutrients to the reef beyond to those currently allowed in their Environmental Authorities (EA).

Reef councils play an important role and invest significantly in maintaining and improving management of activities in the catchment affecting the GBR and have upgraded many treatment processes in the past. Consequently, council-owned WWTPs now contribute less than 5% of the total land-sourced nutrients flowing to the GBR although they can still have important impacts on local waterways if not well-managed.

To assist with the transition to the new regulations the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), on behalf of Reef councils and their communities sought funding for the Reef Councils' Rescue Plan in 2019. The Reef Councils' Rescue Plan is a collection of practical initiatives that empowers Reef councils to accelerate their efforts to improve water quality flowing to the Reef.

One of these major initiatives 'Cleaner Wastewater' was successful in obtaining funding through the Office of the Great Barrier Reef (OGBR) to support the improvement of water quality flowing to the reef.

The 'Cleaner Wastewater' initiative aims to assist councils in making the best decisions regarding wastewater improvements by balancing ecological outcomes with local social, and financial costs and benefits. The first phase of the initiative funded multiple outputs aimed at assisting councils in decision making for WWTP improvement best suited for the reef requirements whilst serving their communities best interests. These outputs include information on prioritising WWTP upgrades, options for different types of WWTPs, a process for life cycle comparison of different options and an investment strategy outlining sites that would provide not only environmental benefits but also useful demonstration sites for other catchments.

Although the project can't create a silver bullet to help councils protect the GBR, the outputs are designed to assist in its protection. Often councils face challenges when deciding on upgrading their WWTPs, each LGA is unique with various levels of size and complexity and there is simply no one size fits all solution. The options matrix provides a high-level catalogue of treatment approaches demonstrating the breadth of potential solutions. The Life Cycle Analysis process demonstrates how different infrastructure options can be compared through better understanding of long-term social, environmental and economic costs to make the best decision for the community.

An investment strategy summarising these processes is the last major output and is in its final draft. The investment strategy is designed to provide some potential pathways for investment into WWTP technologies available to councils and other agencies interested in improving the GBR. The current investigation, which forms an initial stage of the LGAQ Reef Rescue Package, will wrap up at the end of October with a central online location providing access to all resources created during the work.

Ageing Assets in Maryborough

Thanks to Trevor Dean from Fraser Coast Regional Council who sent in these great images taken while doing asset replacements. While water main breaks are not uncommon, this main is over 80 years old and Council records indicate that there is still something in the order of 17kms of mains that are 80 years or more in the Maryborough network.



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Water Supply & Continuity

Information provided by DNRME

Accurate key performance indicator (KPI) data supports water supply planning, and can be used to benchmark your scheme performance over time and against other service providers.

Water is essential for life. It is important to identify, and mitigate, risk of a potential supply shortfall for a community. There are a series of KPIs (QG2.12-2.14) asking about the availability of supply which help provide a better understanding of the nature of a scheme's water supplies and the potential risk to supply continuity. In responding to these KPIs consider:

- the volume of water that is available/accessible from all sources
- historical behaviour of the water supply
- assumptions on inflow/streamflow/recharge based on Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) climate projections
- available contingency supply (i.e. one that will be accessible when required, no major works required)
- anticipated water use, accounting for any demand management.

Importance of alternate supplies

Knowing possible alternate supplies is important for preparedness to drought and major infrastructure failures.

A **contingency water supply** is a planned response to augment the towns' 'usual' water supply, either temporarily or permanently (for example, during drought or during infrastructure breakdown).

Available contingency supply is one that will be accessible when required (i.e. the steps required to access the supply are known and able to be undertaken in the necessary timeframes).

An **emergency supply** is a planned response to provide sufficient supply to meet highly restricted demand that is temporary (for example, long distance / high volume carting water, low quality water sources with high treatment costs, temporary desalination plant). An emergency supply typically requires significant expenditure of resources.

Demand management - water restrictions

Did you know that the KPI relating to water restrictions has been made easier? The KPI QG2.10 requires no calculations, it simply seeks information about the level and duration of water restrictions put in place for a scheme throughout the year, including Permanent Water Conservation Measures.

Contact the Regional Urban Water Supply Planning team if you have any questions about the water security KPIs at DNRMEWMSRUWSP@dnrme.qld.gov.au.

Did you know?...

The improved water security KPIs provide an understanding of the level of supply planning undertaken for your scheme, including asset management, drought response, and demand forecasting (KPI QG2.11).

Remember to provide comments if you report 'no' to any of the sub-questions, explaining why this is justified, or when it is intended to complete the planning. Check out the KPI guide for assistance on how to answer these new KPIs.



Essentials Webinar Series

The **qldwater** Essentials Webinar series continue on a monthly basis, with speakers tackling topics of interest to those working in water and sewerage industry.

Since our previous newsletter, we've covered a range of interesting topics – video recordings and presentations are available on our website at <https://qldwater.com.au/essentials-webinar-series>.

Essentials Webinar #6

Water Supply Regulation Update including COVID-19 response by Hamish Butler (Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy)

Hamish commenced as Director – Water Supply Regulation in March 2020, just as the COVID-19 emergency was beginning. In his presentation Hamish outlined the approach that the regulator was taking to resolve issues encountered by service providers and manage the risk to public health.

Townsville – a water sensitive city in the making by Chris Manning (Townsville City Council)

Townsville's climate is characterised by high rainfall over four months of the year and very high evaporation, resulting in very high water usage of up to 500 Lpppd of which 70-85% is used outdoors. The city is one of six that is collaborating through the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities. Chris shared the insights and learnings from the journey so far and what the next steps are for Townsville.

Essentials Webinar #7

Program update and exploring opportunities for collaboration by Dean Barnett (Intelligent Water Networks)

Dean is program director for the Intelligent Water Networks (IWN), a collaboration of 16 of the 19 Victorian water utilities, the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and VicWater.

The network leverages on the strengths of its members (both big and small) to conduct technology trials, participate in leadership development programs, collaborate and undertake joint procurement. Dean outlined the program activities and shared some highlights, which include Zero Emissions Water, now a separate entity that came out of an earlier IWN program on large scale renewables.

How to prepare future leaders for the transition from tools to team by Troy Pettiford (Whitsunday Regional Council and qldwater TRG Chair)

Troy's transition from plumber to Chief Operating Officer involved changes in outlook from a task oriented on-the-tools operator, to managing a small team, to his current role which requires a strategic focus in order to operate effectively as a director, board member and chairperson of the **qldwater** TRG. Troy described the key skills that he had developed over the years and encouraged participation in mentoring programs to develop the next generation of leaders.

National response to COVID-19 by Adam Lovell (Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA))

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, WSAA had been one of three organisations to provide industry liaison reporting to the Department of Home Affairs through the National Coordination Mechanism – Water established to address COVID-19 impacts. At the same time a WSAA COVID-19 Taskforce had been working to identify opportunities for economic stimulus funding and developed six initiatives to promote to the federal government should funding be forthcoming.

Essentials Webinar #8

Old school asset condition assessment by Shaun Johnston (Burdekin Shire Council)

Relining the entire sewerage network of BSC had resulted in reduced infiltration and identified the impact that illegal connections to sewer had on wet weather flow. Smoke and acoustic testing provided a means to simply identify illegal stormwater connections to sewers, broken and incorrectly connected domestic pipes and illegally modified manhole covers. Shaun provided an overview of these two relatively old school methods that have been applied at BSC and provided efficient and cost-effective solutions for smaller networks.

Regulatory approach to COVID-19, other initiatives by Chris Mooney (Department of Environment and Science)

In response to the COVID-19 crisis DES had developed some tools to support EA holders, which included a series of fact sheets on COVID-19 relating to biosolids and waste and resource recovery, and a specific notification form which provided a template to notify the department of any non-compliance issues as a result of COVID-19 directives. Some important changes as a result of COVID-19 emergency legislation included a six-month delay to the date that the Reef Protection Regulations would come into effect to 1 June 2021, and new legislation that changed the Environmental Protection Act to permit the department to issue a temporary EA for an environmentally relevant activity if compliance was compromised by COVID-19. The temporary EAs expire on 31 December 2020, with holders provided with an additional six months to return to compliance.

Essentials Webinar #9

The national “ColoSSoS Project” by Dan Deere (Water Futures Pty Ltd)

Sewage surveillance for viral pathogens can offer a means to understand the prevalence of a virus in the community and had been used for many years to demonstrate Australia’s polio-free status. Sewage surveillance for of SARS-CoV-2 entails representative sampling of wastewater to detect genetic material, consisting of fragments of the viral RNA. The national “ColoSSoS Project” – Collaboration on Sewage Surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 – will track and monitor the presence of the virus in Australia, beginning with a project that is underway in Melbourne. Dan provided a rundown of the scope of the project and its activities in the current “pandemic phase” of operations and beyond.

Microalgal and anaerobic water treatment at Helidon Regional STP with a focus on efficient nutrient recovery and greenhouse gas reduction by Philip Keymar (Urban Utilities)

Wastewater lagoons offer a low cost, low maintenance treatment option for small communities, with more than 600 ponds currently in Australia. UU is conducting a trial at three sites to assess a high rate algal pond (HRAP) to improve water quality and emissions outcomes. One site incorporates an upflow anaerobic sludge blanket (UASB) reactor with new HRAP ponds to be installed within the footprint of a disused wetland site to demonstrate the technology. Philip outlined the project background and plans for the Helidon site.

Essentials webinar #10

High-tech tools for high risk condition assessments by Prabhu Krishnasamy (Unitywater)

Unitywater’s infrastructure includes 135 critical mains that cross waterways. One of these is the 850-metre high pressure water main located beneath the road bridge that services residents of Bribie Island. Two technologies were used to undertake condition assessment of the main: an internal assessment using Sahara Technology and external assessment by ARUP, which provided a panoramic visualisation of the main condition. Prabhu shared some of outcomes of the technology along with lessons learned in undertaking this sort of condition assessment.

Smart linings CRC learnings by Daniel Muir (Urban Utilities)

Urban Utilities is a partner in the WSAA led CRC-P for Smart Linings for Pipe and Infrastructure, which is conducting field trials and feeding the test results into two new Codes of Practice and four new Product Standards. The activities of the CRC-P include trials of several CIPP technologies. UU has been involved in trials of the Ventia Aqua Pipe relining technology which has been used to reline sections of 100 mm and 150 mm AC water main at locations where conventional renewal (replacement along the same alignment) was not feasible. Daniel provided details of the technology and some of the pitfalls and advantages discovered as part of the trial.

Essentials webinars #11

Managing PFAS in biosolids at the City of Gold Coast by Kelly Hopewell (City of Gold Coast)

PFAS emerged as an issue for water and sewerage providers quite suddenly in 2016 with the issuing of the draft end of waste code by the Department of Environment and Science, which included a limit for biosolids of 0.39 Total Organic Fluorine. Since then two versions of the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP) document have been released. Kelly is developing a framework for the management of PFAS for the City of Gold Coast. In her presentation she provided a summary of PFAS including its chemistry, health effects and the current guidelines, with examples from the scientific literature and CoGC sampling to put the guidelines into context.

Essentials webinars #12

Productivity Commission Inquiry into National Water Reform by Dr Jane Doolan (Commissioner) and Drew Collins (Associate Commissioner), (Productivity Commission)

The Productivity Commission commenced its scheduled triennial inquiry into national water reform and assessment of progress against the National Water Initiative. Past assessments of the NWI have shown that the objectives of the review have largely been met, but the Commission was seeking feedback from the sector on what could be improved in a renewed NWI, including how the NWI might improve outcomes for the Queensland urban water sector. The Commission was seeking initial submissions by 21 August 2020, with a draft inquiry report expected to be issued for public comment in late November 2020. The Productivity Commissioner, Dr Jane Doolan presented on the background and aims of this review as they related to Queensland.

qldwater submission to the PC Inquiry by Dave Cameron and Rob Fearon (qldwater)

qldwater was preparing a submission for the PC Inquiry into National Water reform and the NWI on behalf of its members, dividing issues into five separate areas each of which were couched in terms of a provocative statement and proposed points for inclusion in the submission. In the webinar, feedback via live polling was sought from participants on each of the topics, which were used to guide the development of the **qldwater** submission to the inquiry.

CCTV and Asset Data Management at Gladstone Regional Council by Neels Kloppers (Gladstone Regional Council)

Gladstone Regional Council had been operating a CCTV inspection program for the past 7 years, with a dedicated van operating 7 days a week 10 hours a day conducting CCTV surveillance of cleaning, overflows as well as routine inspections. This created a very large amount of data that must be managed in order to provide input to the renewal programs. Neels discussed the use of the ReticManager software and how the implementation had resulted in improved investment decision making and consequent cost savings for the council.

Webinar #13

The Sunwater Cultural Journey by Jenna Baas (Sunwater)

Sunwater has seen a great deal of change over the past 18 months, making changes to its operating model and customer strategy that have had substantial benefits. New autonomy for asset managers combined with a matrix model for reporting to break down team silos are a few measures that have seen staff engagement levels jump, even in the midst of COVID-affected operations. Jenna described the journey that the company has navigated since joining Sunwater in March 2019.

Protect Sewer: Investigate sewer corrosion using multidisciplinary techniques by Dr Yarong Song (Advanced Water Management Centre, University of Queensland)

The Advanced Water Management Centre at UQ has a research team that conducts research specifically focused on sewer corrosion. The centre has facilities that are used to investigate concrete corrosion under controlled conditions (temperature, humidity, concentration of H₂S and exposure time) that can take up to 128 concrete test coupons at a time. The team examines chemical, microbiological and mineralogical influences on corrosion to understand the mechanisms and how they can be controlled. Yarong provided an overview of sewer corrosion issues that are being investigated by the AWMC.

Our program management software – Monday.com. Capital delivery success... by Sean Askew (Bundaberg Regional Council)

Asset management in any organisation is difficult, as it requires coordination of multiple teams and data sources that are strongly siloed. At BRC this has resulted in under-spending of planned maintenance budgets and poor coordination of maintenance activities on council assets that can result in duplication of effort (e.g. excavations). To confront this problem, BRC implemented the software solution Monday.com as a cheap and flexible means to manage and share project information within and across the teams. Sean walked us through the implementation of this tool and described how it has been able to improve project delivery outcomes for the council.



Steve Hrudey Presentation

qldwater sponsored the keynote presentation at the WIOA Virtual Water Conference on 22 July.

Dr. Steve Hrudey, Emeritus Professor from the University of Alberta discussed drinking water risk management: converting hindsight into foresight.

The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines were substantially upgraded in 2004 to adopt a risk management framework that was mirrored by the WHO Drinking Water Guidelines adoption of Water Safety Plans.

This new risk management framework was founded on 6 guiding principles that were developed from a 2001 joint meeting of an NHMRC working group and the WHO expert microbiology group in Adelaide strongly influenced by the disastrous 2000 Walkerton, Canada outbreak that sickened over 2000 and killed 7 drinking water consumers.

Fast forward to August 2016

and New Zealand had its own Walkerton-style disaster at Havelock North that sickened 5,500 and killed 4. Evidence prepared for Water New Zealand to the NZ Government Inquiry based on a review of drinking water outbreaks since Walkerton highlighted the role of complacency.

This presentation re-emphasised the ADWG risk management principles through authentic experience with international outbreaks and Australian close calls, focusing on the critical role of operators and the need for training. The presentation demonstrated the continuing relevance of 10 commandments for ensuring safe drinking water. **qldwater** members can view a recording of the presentation on our website at <https://qldwater.com.au/wioa-virtual-conference>



Upcoming Events

Sigura Taste Test

10 September

As mentioned on Page 1, the Sigura Taste Test and Trivia will be a hybrid in-person and online event. Great prizes are up for grabs. For those dialling in, please [Register Here](#).

SPG Meeting

11 September

Strategic Priority Group meeting at Eagle Farm / MS Teams

FNQ Mini Conference

8 October

One of our only in-person events to survive COVID, the FNQ Regional Mini-Conference will take place in Atherton. Hosted by Tablelands Regional Council, the event will include interesting presentations from across the region. This will be a hybrid event, with a limited number of people attending in person while others can dial in for some or all of the presentations. Keep an eye out for our weekly eFlashes to stay up to date.

AWA QWater/NQWater Conference

18-19 November

AWA Event held at Twin Waters, Sunshine Coast

SPG Meeting

4 December

Strategic Priority Group meeting at Eagle Farm / MS Teams

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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.”



QUEENSLAND WATER DIRECTORATE REPORT CARD 2020

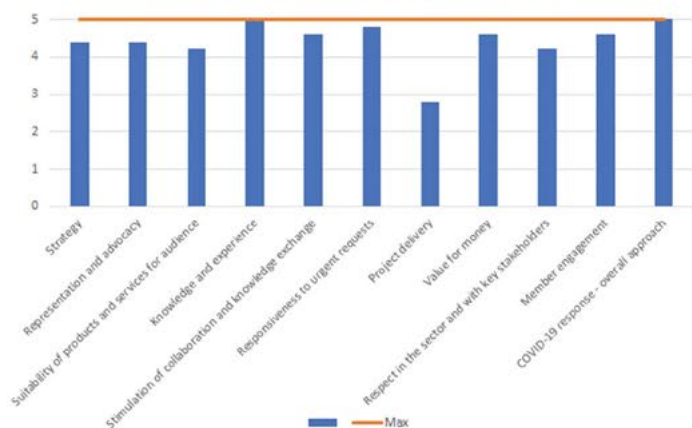
Membership Achieved

- 2 of 2 Torres Strait Island Council Service Providers
- 15 of 15 Indigenous Councils
- 52 of 52 Non-Indigenous Councils
- 2 of 2 council-owned statutory authorities in SEQ (Unitywater, QUU)
- 1 of 2 state government-owned Statutory Authorities (Gladstone Area Water Board)

11

Affiliate
Members

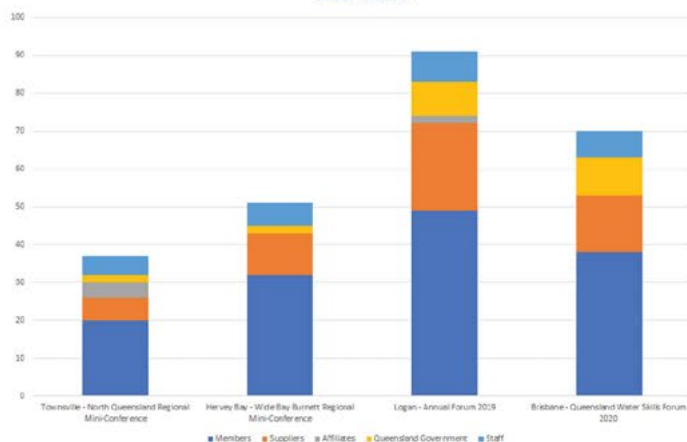
Performance Criteria



*as voted by the Strategic Priority Group (SPG).

Event Attendance

Our events attract a wide range of stakeholders including members, suppliers, affiliates, Government representatives and staff.



Presentations from each event scored on average 4.3, 4.4, 4.6 and 4.1 respectively from participant ratings.

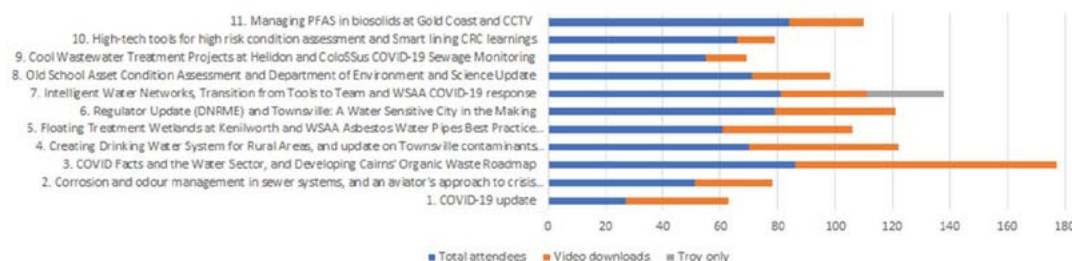
Member Feedback

"Respect in Sector is fantastic - and yes you are supposed to positively disrupt government to make them act and not be sheep - so yes, they won't like you cause you try to keep them honest."

"QWD puts a lot of time and effort above and beyond to serving its members and representing them; something I have become more aware of over the last two years - def value for money and needed."

"Our Council pays less than \$30,000/annum for membership, Swim Local, and Skills Partnership. This is considered to be exceptional value when considering what qldwater offers our organisation and the industry as a whole. The staff have ensured the brand is well respected within the water industry. The recognition of qldwater's place in representing the interests of the urban water industry statewide has resulting in their ability to connect with regulators and policy makers within the various state bodies that impact operations of the State's Water Service Providers."

Essentials Webinars



When COVID-19 put a halt to in person events, **qldwater** acted swiftly and introduced a new webinar series to help our members, regulators and industry to network and exchange information. Apart from attending on the day, presentations were loaded to youtube and embedded on the **qldwater** website, with many views recorded afterwards.