**Queensland Water Skills e-Flash #59**

**Information for Water Industry Managers, Human Resources Personnel and Employees in the Queensland Water Industry**

**(Issue #59 – 27 October 2017)**

1. **Expression of Interest – Annual Intake – Operator Certification (Including Dual/Multiple Streams)**
2. **IWC Master of Integrated Water Management Scholarships – Last Chance to Apply**

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**1. Expression of Interest – Annual Intake – Operator Certification (Including Dual/Multiple Streams)**

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 **Summary**

[Operator certification](http://wioa.org.au/certification/) describes an independent validation process for treatment operators of drinking water, wastewater and recycled water systems.  Certified operators are skilled and committed water industry operations practitioners. Their status as a Certified Water Treatment Operator demonstrates their commitment to excellence by participating in a process to assess and update their knowledge.

***qldwater*** is committed to encouraging the uptake of operator certification as one of many programs designed to support its role as the central advisory and advocacy body within Queensland’s urban water industry.  Our ultimate goal is that our members continue to provide safe, secure and sustainable urban water services to Queensland communities.

In our advocacy role through the Water Skills Partnership, we have put extensive effort into making certification nationally-recognised, and have delivered a range of pilot programs to test various certification frameworks.  We have explored regulatory options around drinking water to help address a perceived risk (especially in regional/ remote areas), both in terms of operator competency and in developing career paths to recognise and retain these crucial staff.  We are committed to continuous improvement of the frameworks and gaining regulatory recognition, where appropriate.

To date, uptake has been relatively slow.  There are currently 6 certified drinking water operators in the state (with some more partially completed), with around 14 wastewater operators expected to complete by the end of 2017.  Our members report strong interest, but challenges in being adequately resourced, exacerbated by being a relatively small but geographically dispersed industry.  This annual intake program is designed to improve planning for Queensland’s water and sewerage service providers.  By being an organised purchaser, it is our hope that the Registered Training Organisation market can better respond to provider needs, and we can attract suitable funding offsets to mitigate the significant direct and indirect costs of initial training and ongoing professional development.

**Certification process in brief**

-        Assessment of plant processes against units of competency already held (and currency) from the National Water Training Package

-        Comparison between units of competency already held (if any) and units required for Certification

-        Evidence gathering and provision of statements of attainment/qualifications

-        Gap training or recognition of prior learning for gap units required

-        Certification paperwork including employer sign-off and operator agreement to Code of Conduct, payment of fee

-        Ongoing Professional Development commitment (Certification valid for 5 years)

-        Certification issued by Water Industry Operators Association.

**Annual intake process (draft)**

1.      Issue of this expression of interest (October 2017)

2.      **Nomination/ pledges for staff to participate from interested providers (30 November 2017) along with preferred RTO arrangements and initial completion of the WIOA competency matrix\***

3.      ***qldwater*** to make initial contact with RTOs advising potential opportunity and locations (with an attempt to develop regional training cohorts) and seek indicative costs (December 2017)

*4.* ***qldwater*** to prepare a “second chance” funding application to the Department of Education and Training to seek financial support for gap training (January 2017)

5.      ***qldwater*** to contact providers with final proposal, WIOA review of matrix, enrolments and training to commence (February-March 2017)

6.      Target for completion of gap training (December 2018, however participants with fewer gaps may be in a position to complete earlier.  Presentations of certificates will be organised periodically but at least at each WIOA Queensland conference in early June).

\* ***qldwater*** will conduct an EOI/ tender process with RTOs if desired.  Past selection processes have varied depending on procurement requirements including availability through standing offer arrangements.  The formal WIOA review of the competency matrix will only occur once the provider has agreed to proceed with the process – the initial information is designed to provide indicative information to the RTOs and DET.

**Costs and other information**

-        Pricing will depend on the chosen RTO and delivery mechanism.  For past pilot activities, participants have had an average 7 gap units, the fee for service price per unit has been around $500 - $550 with a 50% DET offset (so around $2000 per participant).  Regional delivery may attract additional costs.

-        $550 per participant inc GST (WIOA certification fee for 5 years) for certification as a water, wastewater or recycled water operator.  **Certification covering more than one stream will attract an additional $220 charge – this is a recent development with guidelines for those interested available soon.**

-        **It is assumed that operators applying will hold an existing Cert III qualification.** Other funding offsets (e.g. User Choice) are potentially available if not.

There is no guarantee of DET financial offsets for this initiative.  The department has been fully briefed and has done everything in its power to support past programs, but approval can not be assumed.

**From here**

If you are interested in this potential opportunity, please provide an estimated number of operators to us as soon as possible.  We will forward copies of the relevant matrices for completion by 30 November and will also need details of your preferred RTO process (expression of interest/ market evaluation vs direct selection).  Information on available training providers is available [here](http://www.qldwater.com.au/Skills_Vocational_Education).  Feel free to contact Dave Cameron dcameron@qldwater.com.au  with any questions.

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**2.  IWC Master of Integrated Water Management Scholarships – Last Chance to Apply**

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There are now less than 2 weeks until the International Water Centre scholarships for domestic candidates (Australian and New Zealand citizens) close for the 2018 intake of the [Master of Integrated Water Management (MIWM).](http://internationalwatercentre.cmail20.com/t/d-l-uthrkrd-zhjpqhd-r/)

Applications have been extended to **22 November 2017** and any interested water professionals can apply for a scholarship [here](http://internationalwatercentre.cmail20.com/t/d-l-uthrkrd-zhjpqhd-y/).

The MIWM program is a great opportunity to develop advanced knowledge and skills in Integrated Water Management through problem-based learning projects, workshops and field trips to Cairns, North Stradbroke Island, Perth, Thailand and South East Queensland. [Learn more](http://internationalwatercentre.cmail20.com/t/d-l-uthrkrd-zhjpqhd-d/).

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