**Queensland Water Skills e-Flash #64**

**Information for Water Industry Managers, Human Resources Personnel and Employees in the Queensland Water Industry** - **(Issue #64 – 19 March 2018)**

1. Changes to the National Water Package from the Water IRC
2. Inaugural Queensland Water Industry Skills Forum
3. Certified Operators Presentation
4. Aqua Card

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***qldwater*** attended the Water Industry Reference Committee meeting convened by Australian Industry Standards (AIS) in Melbourne in mid-February and there are a couple of topics of likely interest.

1. Diploma

The Technical Advisory Committee convened to review the qualification and AIS have done a good job of consultation and the current draft Diploma would appear to meet the needs expressed by Queensland industry stakeholders (who have been the largest users of the qualification nationally).  We are particularly grateful to Julia Krawitz (until recently at City of Gold Coast) and Brad Milfull (Logan City Council) for their efforts and input into the TAC.

Unfortunately, a decision was made to extend the work to incorporate a hydrography/ hydrology stream into the qualification and the content is now in the process of being developed. While we do not have any issue with the inclusion, the resulting delay is very disappointing, given that the qualification has been essentially useless since the start of 2016.

The revised estimated availability date is September 2018 and AIS has agreed to work with ***qldwater*** to help Registered Training Organisations intending to deliver the qualification to be ready to go when it is finally approved.

1. Skill Sets

The Department of Employment, Small Business and Training has supported the Queensland Water Industry in its efforts to increase the uptake of Operator Certification Programs through another round of 2nd chance funding to support “gap” training.  One of the conditions of the funding is that it will be the last time it is available.

The Department is however keen to find a longer term solution to this issue and has encouraged ***qldwater*** to explore the possibility of getting more “Skill Sets” created in the National Water Package.  A Skill Set is simply a group of units of competency, rather than a full qualification.  In theory, this can open access to other existing funding support mechanisms for Queensland and other jurisdictions.

We presented the proposal at the IRC and it has been fully supported by members (which include a range of industry and state representatives) and AIS.  Skill Sets are currently being drafted along with supporting information for a business case.  It is likely that there will be around 8, grouping common water or wastewater/ recycled water processes, and the two existing Skill Sets designed to support Certification will be updated.

More information will be provided as it is available.

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***qldwater*** was pleased to host the first Queensland Water Industry Skills Forum on Wednesday 28 February 2018. It was a productive day with 54 participants from 19 organisations including 40 representatives from Water Skills Partnership Members. The forum included presentations from industry experts about critical workforce and skills issues and opportunities for participants to discuss possible solutions.

Recruitment and retention of staff along with an ageing workforce were identified as the most critical issues for the industry. Participants discussed options for secondment, worker exchanges and traineeships to fill skills gaps and the Water Skills Partnership Group will consider how best to progress those. The next Workforce Composition Snapshot report (due end 2018) will aim to include additional employee indicators in an effort to better understand the challenges.

Certification is still a high priority and work is continuing on development of a Networks Certification Framework and frameworks for dams and catchments will be considered at a later stage. Participants identified that it can be difficult to demonstrate the value of ongoing training for operators and are keen to hear more about how best to measure and communicate return on training investment.

Following the success of this first event, the forum will be held annually. To find out more about the Water Skills Partnership please contact [Carlie Sargent](mailto:csargent@qldwater.com.au).

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Seven Operators from Redland City Council, City of Gold Coast and Whitsunday Regional Council were acknowledged at the recent Skills Forum following completion of the requirements to become Certified Operators under the national Drinking Water or Wastewater/ Recycled Water Treatment Frameworks.  Operators received their certificates from the Water Industry Operators Association of Australia (WIOA) Managing Director, George Wall.

Photos from the event are available [here](https://qldwater.smugmug.com/Certified-Operators-Presentation-2018/). Congratulations to Steven Halliday, Kane Lees, Darren McGrath (Redland City Council), Arama Rapana (City of Gold Coast), Robert Dougan, Benjamin Nurflus, Wayne Phillips, John Holmes (Whitsunday Regional Council).

Typically participants seeking Certification will hold a Certificate III in Water Operations. Certification maps the existing units of competency held by individual operators to the processes required at the treatment plants for which they are responsible. So Certification creates an opportunity to pick up necessary process units above the 11 in a standard qualification, as well as a chance to “modernise” the qualification to include other new units which may have been introduced to the training package since training was first undertaken. It is designed to provide internal and community recognition and build career paths for operators, formalise an ongoing professional development program, as well as give employers assurance that they are taking a proactive approach to skilling people in these job roles which are critical in protecting public and environmental health.

The Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training provided funding to support this initiative for the necessary “gap training” (which was delivered by SkillsTech). A further round of funding has been made available for operators to complete certification by 31 December 2018, and we are currently working through the nomination and enrolment process. This will be the last opportunity for this type of funding offset, however we are also working through the national Water Industry Reference Committee and Australian Industry Standards to look at building appropriate “Skill Sets” into the National Water Package to provide a longer term solution.

***qldwater*** would like to acknowledge the efforts of all who have participated to date including operators, supervisors and committed employers. The program is growing rapidly with 12 operators now having been certified under the national Wastewater/ Recycled Water Framework (all Queenslanders) and 39 under the Drinking Water Framework. ***qldwater*** is also proud of our long-standing partnership with WIOA, and thrilled to see that these initiatives are now getting such strong traction nationally. We anticipate the first dual-certified operators (drinking water and wastewater treatment) by the end of 2018.

Contact [Carlie Sargent](mailto:csargent@qldwater.com.au?subject=Operator%20Certification%20Gap%20Training) to find out more.

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Development of the Aqua Card is continuing and the pilot program should be completed by mid-2018.  It will be an online course targeted at water service employees and contractors, to deliver fundamental water quality awareness skills.

While there are a few other initiatives around with similar goals, all of the “owners” of these programs are passionate about the topic and have been fully supportive of a broader industry approach and very helpful in providing advice.  Some larger utilities are considering making completion of the course a mandatory requirement for contractors.

We need your help! A number of reviewers have generously provided their time in providing input to the basic course content, but we need more images to make the online material appealing.  Our current wish list includes:

* + People on site with appropriate safety gear, attending e.g. toolbox talks
  + Disinfection dosing
  + Contamination risks in the field – real world examples.  Challenging work sites with mud, debris, tools, sewer mains in proximity to water mains or e.g. purple pipes in the same trench as DW pipes
  + Tools, good condition (colour coded?), poor condition, being disinfected before work
  + Storage sheds with spares (e.g. pipes stored appropriately), parts, also chemicals stored, fuel etc
  + Large equipment like backhoes, also being cleaned?
  + An active pipe repair
  + Relevant signage on site – chemicals, hazards etc

We are happy to provide acknowledgement for any images which can be provided – where people are included (and identifiable) we also need consent of those in photos.

If you are able to assist, please contact [Desiré Gralton](mailto:dgralton@qldwater.com.au?subject=Aqua%20Card%20Images) for more information.

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