**Queensland Water Skills e-Flash #63**

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

**(Issue #63 – 7 February 2018)**

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**6. Operator of the year awards open**

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**1. Welcome Carlie**

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Carlie Sargent joins us as our new project coordinator-skills commencing on 26 Feb and she’s up for a busy week with the water skills partnership forum and a number of other technical reference group activities.

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**2. Water Skills Partnership Forum**

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The final program is now available [here](https://ipweaq.eventsair.com/QuickEventWebsitePortal/water-skills-forum/event-info-site/Agenda).  The only substantive chance to the draft is the removal of the fatigue management item due to difficulty in finding speakers however there will be time to discuss the topic at the end of the day if participants are keen to share.  It has been replaced with a digital disruption discussion, around a funding application we intend to make on behalf of the industry in March (see item 5).

This first forum is the result of strong industry interest in sharing knowledge and experiences around meeting the challenges of recruiting, retaining and upskilling staff.

The registration options are:

* free for up to 3 representatives from each [partnership member](http://www.qldwater.com.au/Skills-and-Training) and invited guests;
* $50 + GST for all other ***qldwater*** members including affiliate members;
* $100 + GST for all other attendees.

No registrations will be possible on the day and all attendees must register before the event. **Registrations close on Wednesday 14 February.**

Representatives from the Water Industry Operators Association of Australia will participate in the program which includes presentations to operators who have met the requirements to be certified under the National Certification Framework for Operators within Drinking Water Treatment Systems, and Wastewater and Recycled Water Treatment Systems.

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**3. Water IRC skills forecast key findings discussion paper**

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The [Water Key Findings Discussion Paper](http://www.australianindustrystandards.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Water-Key-Findings-Paper2018V4Web.pdf) outlining the challenges, opportunities and skills issues facing your industry, is available for feedback.

The purpose of the discussion paper is to provide industry stakeholders with a summary of the key findings from recent industry intelligence gathering activities overseen by the Water Industry Reference Committee (IRC). The contents are drawn from industry consultations, a survey, and other research activities.

The key findings will be used by the IRC in the development of the Water IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work for the National Water Training Package.

Australian Industry Standards has been tasked by the IRC to collect feedback from interested stakeholders to validate and confirm the findings, which will inform the advice the IRC will provide to the Australian Industry and Skills Committee on 30 April 2018. It is acknowledged that the information provided about issues in this paper is deliberately brief.

Stakeholders are invited to submit their comments on the findings outlined in this paper by close of business on 20 February 2018.  Responses can be emailed to enquiries@australianindustrystandards.org.au.

Dave Cameron and Carlie Sargent will attend the next IRC meeting on 15 February.

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**4. Operator certification funding support**

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[Skills eflash #59](http://www.qldwater.com.au/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=234792) from 27 October 2017 issued an Expression of Interest for an annual intake for operator certification.  We received a strong response and **the new Department of Employment, Small Business and Training indicated yesterday that it would be prepared to provide financial support** for the gap training process – where drinking water/ wastewater/ recycled water treatment operators typically hold a Cert III qualification but require additional units of competency in order to meet the requirements to become a [Certified Operator](http://wioa.org.au/certification/).  This is a voluntary process (but supported by various regulators) – designed to give employers the confidence that their staff have the necessary skills to run the plants for which they are responsible, but also to recognise people in these key job roles, providing a commitment to ongoing professional development and improved career paths.

The number of available places is still to be determined and we are currently in contact with those who expressed an interest who will be given priority.  It is clear that this will be the last opportunity the department will support in this way, and we are looking at options to help utilities deal with the gap training funding dilemma for this important program on an ongoing basis.  Note that there are still generous User Choice subsidies for full water operations qualifications.

If you missed the earlier call and are keen to be considered for any places which might arise, please contact Dave Cameron (dcameron@qldwater.com.au, 0407 761 991) by Friday 9 February.

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**5. Training in Emerging and Innovative Industries Fund Opportunity**

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The Queensland Government through the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training has released a restricted call to apply for support funding for projects which aim to help industries address digital disruption.  The program is open to VET Industry Advisory Organisations (***qldwater*** is one), Unions, Industry Peak Bodies and TAFE Queensland representing an organisation or a group of businesses.

This potential opportunity was discussed at the Water Skills Partnership meeting in December 2017 and ***qldwater*** has developed a short discussion paper.  Applications close at the end of March, and there will be some time devoted to the topic at the forum on 28 February.  Participating organisations are expected to contribute financially to the project.

The favoured option is to pilot a training program which:

* Targets field staff (identified with literacy and computer literacy challenges)
* Focuses on improving capacity with
	+ Field tools (tablets, phones etc. and computers) and associated software
	+ SCADA/ control centre operations
	+ GIS/ asset management
	+ Builds an understanding of why staff are required to use these systems and promotes a culture of quality and improved trouble-shooting.

We are seeking an appropriate training partner.  The intended focus of the pilot, if successful in being funded, will not be on technical training – instead enabling mentor/ mentee relationships to build capacity in troubleshooting and digital literacy.

If you are keen in participating or just finding out more, contact Dave Cameron for a copy of the discussion draft.

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**6. Operator of the year awards open**

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Nominations are open for the annual ***qldwater*** sponsored water industry operators’ awards which recognise the achievements of operational staff employed in the Queensland water industry.   The award winners will be announced at the WIOA Annual Queensland Water Industry Operations Conference Awards Night to be held at the Logan Sports Centre in Brisbane on 7 June 2018.  The awards aim to encourage outstanding operational performance of Queensland water industry employees and will be presented to operators who showed excellent performance, initiative and all round attention to detail.  All employers are encouraged to nominate their operators for these awards.    Applications close on **4 May.**

The two categories available for nomination are for:

* 1. Queensland Young Operator of the Year
	2. Operator of the Year Civil/All Rounder

The **Queensland Young Operator of the Year** winner will receive an all-expenses paid trip to join the WIOA delegation on a tour of water and wastewater facilities in New Zealand as well as attending the Water Industry Operations Group New Zealand conference in May 2018 and an individual trophy.

The **Operator of the Year (Civil / All Rounder)** winner will receive up to $1500 towards professional development opportunities such as attendance at other WIOA conferences, ***qldwater*** training or for funding expenses for exchange opportunities at neighbouring councils and an individual trophy.

It’s easy to nominate - please visit <http://www.qldwater.com.au/qldwaterAwards> for more information, application form and to see previous winners.   More information on the Queensland Water Industry Operations Conference and Exhibition is available here:  <http://wioaconferences.org.au/qld/>.

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