**Queensland Water Directorate (*qldwater*)** ***e-*flash**

**Information for Water Industry Managers and Practitioners in the Queensland Water Industry**

**(Issue #224 – 19 March 2014)**

**1.   Update on the Water Supply Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2014**

**2.  *qldwater* SEQ Conference & Taste Test – Bundaberg 27 & 28 March 2014**

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**1.   Update on the Water Supply Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2014**

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The State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Parliamentary Committee held its most recent hearing on Monday 17 March and is preparing to provide recommendations to parliament on the Bill.  ***qldwater*** and LGAQ made both submissions and public appearances on behalf of members.

The sitting date for final debate for the Bill is yet to be scheduled.  However, transcripts of the public hearings have been published, and while speculative, some brief commentary against the “stated objectives” of the Bill is possible, with our full submission is available on our website: <http://www.qldwater.com.au/ReviewDocuments>.

The interest in the Bill has been disproportional to the volume… while the SEQ “utility” model makes up more than half the document, the installation of water meters has completely dominated both public submissions and the hearings.

* The new SEQ “utility” model seems likely to pass without fundamental change.  Some concerns have been raised around proposed timelines and the capacity for distributor/ retailers to implement the required changes.
* The changes to remove many management plans and essentially replace them with a Key Performance Indicator Framework also seems likely to be accepted.  ***qldwater*** has strongly advocated for regulatory simplification for many years and while the solution is not perfect, it represents a substantial improvement on the status quo and industry has been heavily consulted in the process.

This is perhaps the most significant change for the majority of members.  Practically, notices about the KPI framework have either been issued by DEWS or are in the process of being issued, data collection starts from 1 July 2014 with the first reports due in October 2015.  DEWS is conducting workshops in several regional locations in April, and ***qldwater*** will attend those we can.  SWIM and SWIMLocal are being modified to deal with the new indicators and we have a new interface which greatly simplifies the data collection and lodgement process.

* Changes to recycled water legislation which will see the registration of **all** RW schemes and the limiting of Recycled Water Management Plans to higher risk schemes also seems likely to pass.  Similarly, the proposed arrangements to remove the requirement for SEQ businesses to publish draft charges, increase the number of councillors allowed on distributor/ retailer boards, amend the appeal provisions for dam safety and repeal the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Act 1909 seem likely to pass without objection.
* The proposed amendments to Plumbing and Draining legislation to allow “authorised persons” to install water meters is highly contentious.  In essence the Bill seeks to open the market, giving water service providers the power to decide who is appropriately skilled to install meters.  This can include licensed plumbers, or other skilled staff.  At the request of members, ***qldwater*** and LGAQ have been strongly advocating for these changes and have put a very large effort into supporting this (and the regulatory streamlining) parts of the Bill.

Plumbing unions are united against the changes.  There have been media campaigns, letters to MPs, videos showing sewage into stormwater connections, demonstrations associated with world plumbing day and a lot of other submissions.  It is disappointing to see the significant amount of misinformation being generated, and as an observer, the parliamentary committee has seemed confused by a lot of conflicting statements, thus making an outcome difficult to predict.

As a general comment, the current State Government does seem to take notice when it gets large numbers of submissions and there is a strong sense that local government and local government owned entities are listened to.  This Bill is critical to our industry but in this instance the committee process was not particularly well supported and we should perhaps have promoted it more strongly.

We garner opinion from members and it is our job to make representations on your behalf.  Where you feel an issue is important, I can only strongly encourage you to consider putting pen to paper, and we are always around to help out.  Contact Dave Cameron dcameron@qldwater.com.au or 07 3632 6854.

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**2.  *qldwater* SEQ Conference & Taste Test – Bundaberg 27 & 28 March 2014**

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**Early birdrate closes today!**  The ***qldwater*** SEQ Conference and Orica Australia Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test regional final is coming up next week in Bundaberg.  The conference is a two day event being held on Thursday 27 & Friday 28 March.

There is an excellent line-up of speakers presenting on topics of interest in the region and this event promises to be a great learning experience and networking opportunity.  The technical tour of Bundaberg’s Treatment Plants will be one of the highlights on Friday afternoon, so register now take advantage of the early bird rate!

Come along and enjoy the day – and don’t forget to bring a water sample and enter the Best of the Best Water Taste Test!    The SEQ regional taste test final is open to members from Logan City Council, Redland City Council, Gold Coast City Council, Bundaberg Regional Council, Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, Gympie Regional Council, North Burnett Regional Council, Queensland Urban Utilities (Brisbane, Somerset, Scenic Rim, Lockyer Valley, Ipswich Council areas), South Burnett Regional Council, Unitywater (Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast Regional Council areas) and Wide Bay Water Corporation (Fraser Coast Regional Council).   The SEQ finalists will compete in the Queensland final in October, with the Queensland winner going head to head against NSW in the State of Origin Water Taste Test.

Particular thanks again to our major sponsors Orica Australia, hosts – Bundaberg Regional Council and event sponsors Thiess, Local Buy, SPEL Environmental and Dial Before You Dig.

* The event program and registration form is available [**here**](http://www.qldwater.com.au/2014_Water_Taste_Test_and_Conference_SEQ)
* Information and entry form for the taste test are available [**here**](http://www.qldwater.com.au/Water_Taste_Test)

Please contact Heather Gold for more information on this and other regional events  (hgold@qldwater.com.au).

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