

Valued Stakeholder – Attention: Chief Executive Officer  
Raising National Water Standards

7 September, 2011

Dear Valued Stakeholder,

**Stakeholder consultation for the “National Certification Framework for Operators of Potable Water Treatment Plants” Project.**

The Australian Government’s *National water skills strategy*, launched in 2009, contains an initiative to develop the skills and training standards for operators of potable water treatment facilities. This initiative aims to address the problem that no nationally agreed minimum skills and training standards currently exist for operators of potable water treatment facilities, which raises a potentially serious public health risk situation for the community.

The National Water Commission (NWC) recently allocated funding under its Raising National Water Standards program to deliver this initiative. The NWC’s project aims to develop a ‘National Certification Framework for operators of potable water treatment plants’.

Currently, with the exception of Victoria, operators of potable water treatment plants in Australia are not required to meet any minimum standards of qualification, competency level, licence or certification, which is inconsistent with best practice across the industrialised world in the water sector. In recognition of the importance of water treatment operators’ competence in the production of safe drinking water and, to mitigate public health risk, the NWC has commissioned the development of a National Certification Framework for potable water treatment plant operators.

It is however, acknowledged that many water enterprises have implemented their own competency development programs aimed at introducing minimum enterprise competency standards and, that in some instances, these enterprise models may be aligned to the national water training package (NWP07).



Government Skills Australia (GSA) as the National Industry Skills Council (ISC) for government and community safety, which includes the water sector, has been engaged by the NWC to undertake development of a certification framework in consultation with Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA), Australian Water Association (AWA) and Water Industry Operators Association (WIOA) as well as industry stakeholders and regulators.

Consultation with industry and regulators will be essential to ensure the framework meets industry requirements and expectations, as well as, ensuring appropriate regulatory standards. The process for consultation is:

1. Conduct desktop research of national and international models, using the Victorian Best Practice Guidelines as a reference point;
2. Undertake 1<sup>st</sup> round consultations with relevant regulators and industry stakeholders, including water enterprises, peak water industry bodies and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs);
3. Develop the "draft" Certification Framework, taking into consideration, feedback and input from 1<sup>st</sup> round consultations;
4. Undertake 2<sup>nd</sup> round consultation with relevant regulators and industry stakeholders, including water enterprises and RTOs;
5. Prepare final version of the Framework and draft report detailing options for implementation.

The first round of consultation will occur during September and October 2011, with the draft Certification Framework and preliminary Report due for completion on December, 2011. The second round of consultation will occur during January and February, 2012, with the final Certification Framework and Report due for completion March, 2012.

The impact of certification for potable water treatment operators will be industry wide and involve all jurisdictions. As such, GSA would like to invite you to nominate personnel from your organisation to constructively contribute to discussions that will inform the development of the certification framework and assist in identifying potential implementation pathways.

A consultation schedule detailing Phase I consultation workshops, as well as, a nomination form, will be forwarded within two weeks. When received we request that you nominate personnel able to represent your organisations interests. As the Workshops will be conducted in each state and territory and a range of regional locations, costs to your organisation will be kept to a minimum.

It should be noted that the scope of this project is limited to development of the Certification Framework and does not include implementation. The project will however consider possible options for implementation of the framework.

Thanking you in anticipation of your support and contribution to this initiative.

Should you have any queries concerning this project, please contact:

- Kevin Peachey – Manager National Certification Project
  - Email - [kevin@eupa.com.au](mailto:kevin@eupa.com.au)
  - Phone – 0422 114 944

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wayne Morling', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Wayne Morling  
Acting Chief Executive Officer