



**The Queensland Water Directorate
Capability Statement 2022-2023**

Corporate Structure

For 20 years, the Queensland Water Directorate (**qldwater**) has represented the interests of our members, taking on a central leadership role in supporting the Queensland urban water industry.

qldwater aims to strengthen the industry to maintain and improve the safety, health, wellbeing and sustainability of Queensland's communities.

We pride ourselves on being adaptable and responsive to unexpected and emerging issues affecting the water sector, providing our members with:

- a strong, dependable and united industry voice
- accurate, reliable and timely information
- critical technical and professional resources
- links to essential skills and training programs to

help improve industry capabilities and assist career development

- opportunities for contribution to policy formulation
- support for water management, regional collaboration and efficiency improvements
- information sharing and streamlined water reporting
- research in response to industry needs
- opportunities for knowledge sharing and the establishment of collaborative networks.

qldwater is a dedicated industry body with strong working relationships with national water industry associations as well as Local, State and Commonwealth government agencies.

qldwater is a business unit of the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia, Queensland & Northern Territory (IPWEA-QNT), reporting to the Institute's Board.

Board



QUEENSLAND NORTHERN TERRITORY

IPWEA

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC WORKS
ENGINEERING AUSTRALASIA.



Message from Strategic Priorities Group Chair



The commitment by **qldwater** to ensure Local and other Government Water teams are connected into a peer group for advocacy purposes and networking cannot be under-estimated.

2023 has been a challenging year for **qldwater** with the loss of a number of longstanding staff, but the team under the interim leadership of Linda Roberts have survived and thrived through the successful recruitment of some passionate new team members. The recent appointment of Dr Georgina Davis as the new CEO of the Directorate will provide the stability needed to start the rebuilding phase. Dr Davis has the right advocacy skills, experience and connections to take the lead and be a strong voice for the Queensland urban water industry.

The commitment to regional collaboration continues with the completion of another successful Water Connections Tour. This year **qldwater** staff drove representatives from various State Departments and other organisations across eight Council areas in the Central Queensland region to gain a perspective on the issues and challenges facing regional water service providers. The annual five-day intensive tour of water, sewerage and treatment plant infrastructure in remote and regional Councils provide

an opportunity to share up to date technical and policy information and to explore and understand issues facing small and remote communities.

The collaboration through QWRAP continues to build in maturity and over the past year the Directorate has played a key role in revisiting the vision, mission and strategic direction for the program in partnership with the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water and the Local Government Association of Queensland. With nine regions covering most of Queensland, QWRAP is a great vehicle to drive innovation and change across regional and remote communities.

I write this message with pride to be part of an organisation and its network that has nurtured a place that allows us to develop and become a strong and active water family, and I encourage all Queensland water service providers to be part of this journey through the continued investment in membership.

Narelle D'Amico

Strategic Priorities Group

The Strategic Priorities Group meets quarterly to help set the strategic priorities for **qldwater**.
The current group includes members from the following organisations:

Chair:

Narelle D'Amico (Bundaberg Regional Council)

Deputy Chair:

Trevor Dean (Fraser Coast Regional Council)

Australian Water Association
Banana SC
Bundaberg RC
Burdekin SC
Cairns RC
Cassowary Coast RC
Central Highlands RC
Charters Towers RC
Cherbourg SC
City of Gold Coast
Fraser Coast RC

Gladstone RC
Goondiwindi RC
Gympie RC
Isaac RC
LGAQ
Livingstone SC
Logan CC
Mackay RC
Maranoa RC
Mareeba SC
North Burnett RC

Palm Island ASC
Redland CC
Rockhampton RC
South Burnett RC
Southern Downs RC
Tablelands RC
Toowoomba RC
Townsville CC
Unitywater
Urban Utilities
Whitsunday Regional Council



Our Affiliate Members 22/23

Affiliate memberships continued to grow significantly over the past financial year and include:



Department of Regional Development,
Manufacturing and Water

Key Programs

swim DATA REPORTING



The Statewide Water Information Management (SWIM) program have simplified reporting of water and sewerage data from utilities and Councils as required by numerous State and Commonwealth agencies saving up to 0.5FTE per member.

Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program



The Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program (QWRAP) is an industry-led initiative with 57 members in 9 regions to investigate regional collaboration on water and sewerage services in regional Queensland.

water skills PARTNERSHIP



The Queensland Water Skills Partnership is an award-winning industry collaboration of 50+ Councils to address critical skills needs and workforce development in the urban water sector.

SWEAP environmental leadership



The Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP) provides advice on environmental management and regulation and fosters collaboration on joint submissions on policy issues.

qCRAC influence + research



The **qldwater** Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Contaminants is a partnership among 11 Queensland Service Providers focused on research and policy on contaminants of emerging concern.

Water Training



Home of the Aqua and Brown Card training courses, the water training website is a growing resource of courses developed by the industry, for the industry and the contractors that service it.

Queensland Water Careers



The Queensland Water Careers website is an initiative of the Water Skills Partnership to promote career pathways and opportunities in the urban water and sewerage industry in Queensland.

CHEMICAL CONCOCTIONS



The Chemical Concoctions website is an initiative of qCRAC to inform the community of chemicals of emerging concern that may be hiding in our homes, and to provide advice on what we can do to reduce exposure.

swimlocal DATA MANAGEMENT



swimlocal provides cost-effective integrated data management for water authorities. It currently has 56 subscribers across Australia.

DWQAP



The Drinking Water Quality Advisory Panel provide coordinated industry feedback on the revised Drinking Water Quality Management Plan Guideline

Key Highlights 2022-23

Advocacy and Industry Representation

qldwater has continued to represent the Queensland water industry on key issues and negotiations with state and federal governments throughout 2022-2023.

We are pleased to have presented at the inaugural meeting of the newly convened Cross Government and Cross Urban Water Sector Group which took place in March 2023. The group was a commitment from the DG of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (RDMW) at the 2022 Water Skills Forum and includes Queensland Health, the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT – now DYJESBT), RDMW and the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (DSDIGLP).

Since 2019, our focus has been on consultation with members to develop an industry roadmap – examining key sector priorities to refine the qldwater work plan, articulate opportunities for further sector collaboration, and develop policy recommendations for government and other major stakeholders.

Based on member feedback at the 2022 Annual Forum, ten focus priorities were identified and listed below in the order of importance:

1. Special needs of small and remote communities
2. Education and training
3. Environmental sustainability
4. Fundamental changes to how we source resources – capability and capacity
5. Fit for purpose regulation
6. Financial sustainability
7. Supply chain pressures
8. Queensland Government industry partnerships
9. Reform options
10. Resilience to disruption



Key Highlights 2022 - 2023

Over the past year:

- We presented to the Regional and Remote group at the LGAQ conference in October 2022. This presentation highlighted the resourcing issues and the added complexity of being regional and remote.
- We represented the urban water sector at a Water Engagement Forum (WEF) workshop to review and refresh the Queensland Bulk Water Opportunity Statement (QWBOS), a framework designed to deal with bulk water trading and bulk water supplies as a resource.
- We welcomed a record number of participants from Queensland Health, RDMW, DESBT, LGAQ and Urban Utilities on the 2023 Water Connections Tour visiting eight councils in the Central Queensland region, giving agency staff the opportunity to directly engage with regional/ remote members around challenges.
- We worked closely with RDMW and LGAQ on a strategic plan and renewed vision and mission statement for the QWRAP program to fully utilise the program as a vehicle for change and innovation in small and remote communities.
- We continue to build relationships with other key agencies including Queensland Treasury Corporation.
- We delivered an engagement workshop on skills and training in February 2023, bringing together State Government, LGAQ, RTOs and key representatives of members to openly discuss challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Other key submissions and representations on behalf of members this financial year include:

- Letter to the National Coordinator for the PFAS NEMP, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water requesting an extension of time to provide feedback on the draft PFAS NEMP 3.0 to properly consult with qldwater members and fully consider the implications on recycling, water and the potential to disrupt circular economy outcomes.
- Submission to the Health and Environment Committee in response to the Environmental Protection and Other Legislation Amendment (EPOLA) Bill 2022, acknowledging that it was a substantial improvement over early drafts but also highlighting some specific sections that we were unable to support.
- Letter to the Legislative Policy Unit, Queensland Health in response to the Health and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, specifically with respect to the proposed amendments to the Water Fluoridation Act 2008. Feedback received from our members indicated that the proposed change is viewed as a positive move for the industry.
- Submission to the parliamentary committee on the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.
- Submission to the call for information on PFAS as part of the IChEMS framework.
- Submission on the 2022 review of the End of Waste Framework, being conducted by SLR Consulting on behalf of the Department of Environment and Science.
- Submission to the Education, Employment and Training Committee's (EETC) Inquiry into the delivery of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in regional, rural and remote (RRR) Queensland (the Inquiry).
- Submission on the Draft PFAS NEMP 3.0, which telegraphs some important changes to the way that biosolids and water could be regulated in the future. The submission was developed in consultation with our members and other urban water industry partners nationally.
- Continued engagement with the Drinking Water Advisory Panel to provide coordinated industry feedback on the revised Drinking Water Quality Management Plan Guideline, with related activities including potential revisions to guidelines for PFAS limits in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

- Leading member advocacy for proposed changes to legislation governing processes to review Environmental Authorities.
- SWEAP review of draft toxicant guideline values for PFOS in fresh water.
- SWEAP analysis of recycled water policy and regulatory framework in Queensland including and issues and options.
- Participation and investment in the development of Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) National Lower Explosive Limit (LEL) Guidelines for Sewerage Networks.
- In partnership with WSAA, liaising with Workplace Health and Safety QLD to provide advice on the proposed exposure levels for chemicals included in the Workplace Exposure Standards, including hydrogen sulphide and chlorine, following a Preliminary Impact Assessment by Safe Work Australia.
- Securing a record number of responses to data requests for the 2022 Workforce Composition Snapshot Report.
- Engaging with WSAA and WSSG around mutual aid guidelines and flood response, particularly around chemical supply chain impacts.
- Continued advocacy on High Pressure Water Jetting exemptions.
- Meetings with the QTC to review pricing models and establishing links with the Local Government Financial Professionals.
- Representation on the Asset Management Institute Stakeholder Interest Group.
- Agreement from the Department of Energy and Public Works to meet with multiple industry reps and step through MP1.4 of the Queensland Development Code (building over infrastructure) to consider the case for change where it is currently not working with Building Certifiers.
- Continue to work with WSAA on an industry response to federal Telecommunications legislation.
- Reviewing the principles and framework for Sunwater pricing through the Urban Water Pricing Working Group.
- Providing SWIM data on existing charges, asset / renewal information, proposed/published price paths, revenue and costs to help Sunwater calculate customer pricing impacts of any bulk water price changes, as per their ministerial direction.



Major Programs: SWIM & swimlocal

Data Management and Reporting



The Statewide Water Information Management (SWIM) program is a local database/online water reporting portal that collates data submitted by service providers to streamline mandatory reporting requirements to a range of State and Federal agencies. Having a centralised reporting system strengthens industry negotiations to achieve standardised definitions and reduces the incidence of poorly considered one-off data requests. It also increases the reliability of benchmarking and comparative data – a critical tool to improve industry performance and provide customer confidence.

The twelfth annual **qldwater** Water and Sewerage Benchmarking Report was published in the period, with a range of training initiatives provided to members. The report is published as a package that includes two sets of slides in PowerPoint with charts for all water reporting entities separated into medium, large and extra-large service providers (>1,000 connections), and small and indigenous service providers. The package includes a document providing explanatory notes and additional insights that should be read in conjunction with the charts. The slide deck and explanatory report contains a suite of indicators and benchmarking data for all 72 of Queensland's council owned urban water/sewerage utilities.

SWIM also supports a significant advocacy program, continually seeking to refine and reduce the reporting burden on members. It is receiving growing support from key regulators and industry experts. This year Seqwater have signed up to use SWIM for the first time.

Through the National Performance Report (NPR) review conducted in 2021, it was clear that SWIM represented the most robust and user-friendly system for NPR data collection and collation in the country. The 2021/22 NPR report and dataset was published on 28 February on the Bureau's Water Information website. **qldwater** continues to work with RDMW on the NPR Indicator Review Recommendations, particularly around reporting requirements for Service Providers with <10,000 connections who will be expected to start reporting.

We have also commenced a trial of the SWIM Annual Reporting Tool in South Australia with the SA regulator and 8 SA Councils. All 8 Councils have been setup in SWIM with their associated scheme metadata and indicators. The trial will run through to the end of March, testing the ability for the Councils to supply NPR data and to see if the SWIM system is the best method for collecting the data. Aside from helping us offset costs and reduce charges to members, more interstate buy-in helps us positively influence national approaches including the NPR.

swimlocal



With 61 Service Providers (SP) currently using the full licensed version of swimlocal (and still growing), the program continues to evolve in line with customer needs. Queensland Health appears likely to sign up to the swimlocal data management tool for their legionella and WQ data management.

All **qldwater** members have access to a free version of the swimlocal software (to enter their regulatory required annual water and sewerage data and some metadata). The full licensed version of swimlocal includes significantly more functionality to help manage data at a local level:

- An **Indicators** module which allows SPs to manage Indicator data more frequently
- **Task** module which allows SPs to manage their 'regular' maintenance tasks
- **Alerting** via SMS/email, QA/QC processes, mobile data entry and other enhancements

A new web-based **reporting** module (with graphing and dashboards) released last year has been well received, leading to a few new subscriptions along with the upgrade for existing subscribers. 22 SPs have now purchased the Web Reports and Dashboard Tool.

We also released a major upgrade of the swimlocal software with lots of new functionality including a direct link to the DES WaTERS database, site ordering, validation rules and indicator ordering at the category level, new calculation functions such as IF, NOT, OR, BUT statements and calculations across sites, as well as many other improvements.

Major Programs: Water Skills Partnership

Capacity Building



Since winning the Queensland Training Premier's Industry Collaboration 2021 Award, the Queensland Water Skills Partnership continues to deliver beneficial programs of work and sound advice to support broader Federal, State and industry investment strategies.

The Partnership's priorities are determined by its subscribers with two formal meetings per year, as well as regular engagement via email, online forums and input from the broader industry gathered at the annual Water Skills Forum.

The purpose of the Water Skills Partnership is to ensure that all water industry staff have the relevant skills and experience to deliver safe, secure and sustainable urban water and sewerage services to Queensland communities. It achieves this purpose by:

- securing funding for accredited water industry training,
- capturing workforce data and producing reports and workforce planning documentation,
- coordinating industry wide skills/workforce development projects,
- piloting training initiatives,
- information sharing and collaboration opportunities and
- representation for Queensland on numerous national industry skills committees.

The Partnership is the key industry vehicle for progressing the skills agenda for the urban water industry in Queensland – both in developing a focus for implementing strategy and ensuring the State and Federal governments invest appropriately in this essential industry.

aldwater hosted the sixth annual Queensland Water Industry Skills Forum on 8 June 2023 with the theme Hi-Vis: Raising the Profile of the Urban Water Industry. The 2023 event explored opportunities for the sector to not only increase its visibility to the wider community and stakeholders, but also to increase visibility within – whether from an Employee Value Proposition perspective or a skills and training planning viewpoint. It also included a session on mental health and wellbeing across the workforce.



Major Programs: Water Skills Partnership

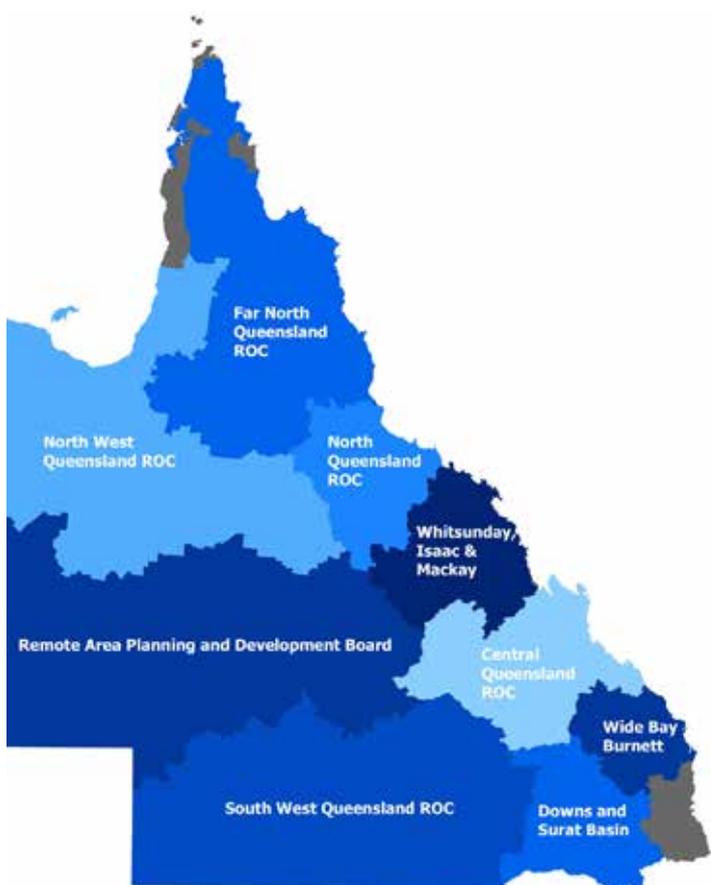
There are currently 51 subscribers to the Water Skills Partnership who worked together during 2022-23 to deliver the following initiatives:

- Continued role as an Industry Skills Advisor (ISA) for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training as part of a contract to provide skills advice through to 30 June 2023.
- In its role as an ISA, completing a Price List Review to inform DESBT on the levels of subsidy, funding mechanisms and issues around qualifications or units of competency based on industry feedback and experience. **qldwater** called for maintaining the highest Priority 1 level for Cert II and Cert III, greater flexibility on subsidies and a review of location loadings as a possible barrier to participation.
- Continued advocacy with DESBT for an increase to Higher Level Skills subsidies, particularly the Certificate IV which receives ongoing strong demand, as well as the lack of "Skills Assured Suppliers" – the RTOs which can deliver training to access the User Choice traineeships.
- Working with RTOs on an application for the next round of DESBT Micro Credential funding based on feedback from SPG and Skills Partners with four topic areas selected including fluoride, SCADA, making use of water quality data and the operators role in effectively implementing a DWQMP.
- Building a topic-based resource library of 22 Fundamentals Webinars covering common water and wastewater treatment and network operations and maintenance.
- Developing a Skills Toolbox as a one stop shop for valuable resources around skills and training.
- Significant increase in workforce data received for the 2022 Workforce Composition Snapshot Report with 33 responses received. This much larger response level requires data to be normalised to ensure we obtain the most accurate picture of changes in the sector since the last report released two years ago.
- Continued to progress the Queensland Operator Competency Project with RDMW.
- Continued to work with our national partners to find an appropriate home for Water Operations in the Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs), formerly known as Industry Clusters as part of the federal VET system reforms. Water has been clustered with Build Skills Australia, and we will continue to advocate for increased visibility for the sector.
- In partnership with the NSW Water Directorate, preparing a business case to migrate the online training platform at watertraining.com.au to Moodle Workplace which allows better functionality around reporting and administration. The business case was accepted and migration to the new platform took place in April 2023. The site currently hosts the Aqua Card (QLD & NSW), Brown Card (QLD, NSW and SA), an introduction to the water industry and a SCADA micro credential course with a Green Card currently under development with an estimated release date of July 2023.
- Continued growth in our online training platform at www.watertraining.com.au with 334 Aqua Card completions this financial year (1605 in total to date). Aqua Card is an online training course for people working on or near water infrastructure. The wastewater equivalent, aptly named the Brown Card, was completed by 258 staff and contractors this financial year (754 total completions to date).
- Updating and moving the Introduction to the Water Industry course to the watertraining platform with 66 completions to date.
- Working closely with the Water Industry Worker (WIW) Coordinator to develop a number of regional training hubs linked to QWRAP activities.
- Working with the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) on an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) Project to promote careers in the sector.
- Participating in workshops as part of the Water Research Australia Operator Benchmarking project.
- Continued updates of the dedicated careers website at www.qldwatercareers.com.au to promote careers in the water sector. The website includes information about career pathways, qualification requirements and testimonials from recent trainees about their roles and training experiences through recorded interviews.
- Continued role on the Water Industry Reference Committee responsible for oversight of the National Water Training Package.
- Continued role as secretariat for the Water Industry Operator Certification Taskforce (formerly Water Industry Skills Taskforce).
- Ongoing partnerships with key agencies and organisations, and increased collaboration with DSDILGP and Queensland Health to support indigenous council skilling activities.

Major Programs: QWRAP

QWRAP is an industry-led initiative to investigate regional collaboration on water and sewerage (W&S) services in regional Queensland. QWRAP is a collaboration between the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), the Queensland Water Directorate (**qldwater**) and the Queensland Government. During 2022/23 there were nine participating regions engaging 56 councils:

- Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC)
- Remote Area Planning and Development Water & Sewerage Alliance (RAPADWSA)
- Wide Bay Burnett Urban Water Alliance (WBBUWA)
- Downs Urban Water Technical Group (DUWTG)
- Whitsundays, Isaac and Mackay Water Alliance (WIMWA)
- North Queensland (NQ)
- Southwest Queensland Water and Sewerage Alliance (SWQWSA)
- North-West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NWQROC)
- Central Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (CQROC)



QWRAP has been funded by the Department of Regional Development Manufacturing and Water (RDMW, formerly Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) since 2011 with significant leverage of cash and in-kind contributions from other partners. QWRAP works to drive regional partnerships and initiatives to enhance service providers ability to deliver sustainable services. The aim is to ensure safe, secure and sustainable water and sewerage services for the more than 300 water schemes outside of South East Queensland, which include 25 councils that own and manage some of the smallest water schemes in Australia.

The regions participate either as a Water Alliance (RAPADWSA, WIMWA, WBBUWA, SWQWSA), technical group (FNQROC and DUWTG) or with funded trial projects (NQROC and NWQROC).

In December 2021, it was announced that QWRAP was to be permanently funded by the Queensland Government with funding increased to \$2 Million per annum as a permanent allocation, emphasising the benefits collaborative water and sewerage management has brought to regional Queensland and the potential of the program.

Since its inception, QWRAP has provided a formal opportunity for councils to consider and test collaboration and alternative regional arrangement for managing essential W&S services. Regions involved in the program have matured in the degree of collaboration over the course of QWRAP and further development is encouraged through competitive funding for projects that build future collaboration. QWRAP has evolved over time and now includes joint projects across multiple alliances, information sharing, and common planning and strategic activities within regions.

In most recent years this program has contributed in excess of \$350,000 to our annual budget, supporting the employment of several staff.

Following the announcement of ongoing funding, a Partner Steering Committee (PSC) was created to endorse the principles of a new three-year QWRAP deed between the three parties and a new communication approach, which will include a standalone portal/website hosted by **qldwater**.

A draft QWRAP Sustainability Framework documentation is currently undergoing final review by the PSC and the first QWRAP Chairs and Coordinators forum will be held at the **qldwater** office on Friday 21 July 2023 to update the regions on the revised QWRAP program, including a workshop.

Major Programs: QWRAP

QWRAP Regional Updates and 2022-2023 Highlights

Remote Area Planning And Development Water and Sewerage Alliance (RAPADWSA)

The first QWRAP Water Alliance to form, the RAPAD Water and Sewerage Alliance in western Queensland has a small population spread over an area 1.6 times the size of Victoria. Recent projects include:

- RAPADWSA Strategic Workshop
- Prepare Strategic Plan and Strategies Workshop
- Sewer Relining Joint Procurement Project
- Reservoir Cleaning Joint Procurement Project
- Water Mains Aircouring Joint Procurement Project

Whitsunday Isaac Mackay Water Alliance (WIMWA)

The Whitsunday Isaac Mackay Water Alliance has arguably the most ambitious raft of projects including:

- Collaborative CQU Research Project – assessing the presence of contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) associated with WWTP discharges,
- Extension of the WIW Learning and Development (L&D) Coordinator to facilitate the WIW Training Program and extend the framework to deliver regional training,
- Alignment of waste management approaches through a Regional Waste Management Collaboration working group,
- Investigating opportunities to align SCADA systems and a regional control room,
- Uniform regulatory responses,
- Aligned annualised salary packages for operations staff,
- Review of modelling software,
- Asset Criticality Framework,
- Evaluation of emerging technologies like AI,
- Regional smart metering trial evaluation,
- Workforce Planning and resource sharing arrangements,
- Ambient contaminant monitoring in partnership with CQU,
- Nitrogen Field Biosensor research in partnership with CQU.

Wide Bay Burnett Urban Water Alliance (WBBUWA)

The WBBUWA is located immediately north of SEQ and has been operating since 2019. Participating WBBUWA Councils include: Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, Gympie, Fraser, South Burnett, Bundaberg and North Burnett Regional Councils. Recent projects include:

- Joint water quality testing for treatment optimisation,
- WBBUWA Industry Skills Enhancement (WISE) program to establish relationships with universities and develop an ongoing program with students,
- Asset Criticality review,
- SCADA alignment and integration,
- Scoping full cost recovery pathways, Investigating water security across the smaller schemes in the region, Extension of the Regional Water Industry Worker program.

Major Programs: QWRAP

Downs Urban Water Technical Group (DUWTG)

November 2021 marked a shift in the landscape of the Downs and Surat Basin Water Group (DASB) with two of its Councils (Balonne and Maranoa) joining the new SWQ Water Alliance for collaboration opportunities. The remaining four Councils – Goondiwindi, Southern Downs, Toowoomba and Western Downs have agreed to continue to collaborate as the Downs Urban Water Technical Group (DUWTG) in a technical capacity, with Maranoa keeping an eye on opportunities with both groups.

The DUWTG group has had some significant successes at a technical level, most notably:

- A project to develop regional SCADA standards,
- Completing a water supply security template trial,
- Completing a Cyber Security audit and risk assessment,
- Alignment of DWQMP Audits,
- Promoting regional collaboration for workers by holding a Regional Operator Forum and Field Day.

South West Queensland Water and Sewerage Alliance (SWQWSA)

The SWQ Regional Organisation of Councils have agreed to form the SWQ Water and Sewerage Alliance to cooperate on urban water issues. The group is comprised of Balonne, Bulloo, Maranoa, Murweh, Paroo and Quilpie councils, providing water services to 27 communities. A regional water and sewerage technical group has been established to prioritise issues for future collaboration.

Recent projects include:

- An institutional review of alternative regional models,
- Alignment of DWQMP audit and review of anniversary dates,
- Regional capacity and capability improvements through the establishment of a regional graduate water and sewerage engineer program,
- Developing a regional Water and Sewerage Infrastructure Strategy,
- Mutual knowledge and experience sharing between City of Gold Coast, Bulloo Shire Council and Quilpie Shire Council to provide technical advice, mentoring and staff exchanges.

Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC)

There are 11 Councils in the Far North Queensland region who continue to work on technical W&S projects. Through QWRAP, the FNQROC Board continues to be informed of opportunities and issues. FNQROC maintain an ongoing relationship with QWRAP to retain access to funding with all projects assessed based on their specific contribution to overall innovative and collaborative W&S projects.

A focus for FNQROC this year includes an in-depth project to undertake a review of strategic areas across the members. This included a survey, workshop conducted and facilitated by QTC to understand areas of concern.

North Queensland ROC (NQROC)

As a new region, the North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NQROC) kicked off with a number of projects including:

- Research partnership among five councils and James Cook University on treatment options for biosolids in North Queensland,
- Skills development for reticulation employees through the regional Water Industry Worker program,
- Regional training cohorts for water and wastewater treatment operators to enable standardised approaches and content across all councils,
- Smoke testing training.

Major Programs: QWRAP

Central Queensland ROC (CQROC)

The Central Queensland ROC (CQROC) Technical Group is the latest addition to the QWRAP program with representatives from Central Highlands, Woorabinda, Rockhampton, Livingstone, Banana and Gladstone councils. The CQROC invited presentations and information on QWRAP participation in June 2021 and have applied for Regional Coordinator funding in 2022. The region services a population of 226,000.

North West Queensland ROC (NWQROC)

The NWQROC completed an audit and analysis of SCADA systems of four participating councils, the first collaborative project on water and sewerage management among the North West Councils.

In addition to the activities being driven independently in each region, the Chairs and Coordinators from each group meet regularly to compare experiences and learnings and provide feedback and updates to the DRDMW who fund the program through LGAQ.



Major Programs: Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP)

Evolving from the Environmentally Relevant Activity 63 (ERA 63) Expert Panel in 2012, SWEAP is an expert group of representatives from water service providers across Queensland that meets regularly to provide advice on environmental management and regulation and to foster collaboration on joint submissions to the Queensland Government on policy issues.



The group aims to be a driving force to move the industry from reactive environmental management towards a focus on stronger industry leadership with the following objectives and priorities:

- Foster partnership and industry leadership towards a whole-of-catchment management approach (rather than focus on individual point sources).
- Seek Smart Regulation, flexibility and self-responsibility (rather than a 1990s-style compliance framework and laboured communication between Regulators and utilities).
- Challenge perverse outcomes from regulation and policy (e.g. any unbalanced response to contaminants).
- Predict and proactively respond to pressures on cost to serve.
- Foster innovation.

In response to concerns about contamination from legacy and emerging chemicals, a Standing Group was formed to deal with issues around contaminants of emerging concern. The group's function is to rapidly collate and share information from across the sector and beyond to help inform the whole sector.

SWEAP 2022-2023 Highlights

- Provided feedback on proposed changes to PFAS NEMP 3.0 and continue to keep an eye on other potential concerns from increasing regulation,
- Staying abreast of proposed changes to the EP Act by the Department of Environment and Science. At face value the intent is improvement, but some concerns remain that opening up Environmental Authorities poses a significant risk for many members,
- Engaging a contractor to deliver a report on the analysis of recycled water policy and regulatory framework in Queensland,
- Various new End of Waste Code proposals including biochar and WTP sludge,
- Organising a visit to the Logan Biochar facility (pictured below),
- Developing a "Green Card" to provide an overview of the legislation and guidelines that are relevant to the Queensland urban water industry, which is currently under review by SWEAP members.



Major Programs: Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Contaminants of Emerging Concern (qCRAC)

Individually, most Councils do not have the resources to maintain membership in national research organisations or to influence the direction of research. At the behest of the SWEAP group, a cooperative consortium coordinated through **qldwater** was established in 2019 to provide opportunities to direct research in technology and policy at state and national levels on this important topic. The **qldwater** Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Emerging Contaminants (qCRAC) was established with the initial aims to:



- Jointly address political drivers and Regulator and public reaction to media concerns on COEC.
- Avoid duplication, information collection.
- Influence research and advocacy at state, national and international scales.
- Create new resources for members.

The Consortium has grown from eight founding members to 11 now including Urban Utilities, with Johanna Johnson from Logan City Council appointed as Chair. The group have worked together with **qldwater** to deliver the following:

- Dedicated website for qCRAC members for resource and information sharing, including a curated selection of 140+ locally-relevant research papers linked from the site, covering topics on emerging contaminants from PFAS to microplastics to endocrine disruptors.
- An ARC Linkage application with UQ QAEHS “Identifying Sources of Emerging Contaminants in Australian Wastewater,
- An ARC Linkage Application with UQ Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology on Magnetic Polymers PFAS Removal,
- A UQ Early Career Researcher grant application for “EC hazard identification in sewage” for completion in 2024,
- A document of collected advice for managing a PFAS contaminated site study as required by the Environmental Regulator under an Environmental Evaluation notice.
- A collaborative partnership in the Transforming Biosolids ARC Training Centre, which conducts research into sustainable technologies for biosolids. Working with researchers at UQ (QAEHS) to establish research to investigate the upstream contributions of emerging contaminants (EC) from domestic and industrial catchments to wastewater.
- Launched a public information website/ campaign materials to educate the community about contaminants of emerging concern in their homes at www.chemicalconcoctions.org which is currently under review by SWEAP members.
- A peer reviewed research paper “Emerging contaminants in biosolids: Presence, fate and analytical techniques”, written by researchers and industry partners working with qCRAC, was published in Emerging Contaminants.
- A National Workshop on Contaminants of Emerging Concern and Response to PFAS NEMP 3.0 with 100 participants from across Australia. The workshop was in response to the next iteration of the PFAS NEMP which is likely to have a significant impact on the sector.

The Consortium is actively pursuing research collaboration opportunities at a state and national level, through its growing links with Australian research centres undertaking research into COEC relevant to the urban water industry.

Fundamentals Webinars

With financial support from the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW), **qldwater** (through the Water Skills Partnership) started a series of Fundamentals Webinars to provide practical demonstrations of the most common water and wastewater treatment and network operations tasks, presented by industry experts. All presentations and recordings are available on the **qldwater** website.

Topics this year have included:

- The Fundamentals of Trickle Filters (Terry Fagg)
- The Fundamentals of Inflow and Infiltration (Dominique Keirens)
- The Fundamentals of Lagoon Management (Kathryn Turner)

Gympie Regional Conference

The Gympie Regional Conference took place on Thursday, 14 July at The Pavilion Conference and Reception Centre featuring a range of interesting technical presentations including lessons learnt from ARC Flash training at Unitywater, the handback of the Rubyanna WWTP to Bundaberg Regional Council, water security and coastal sewer strategies in the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg regions as well as updates from the DRDMW and DES.

It also featured a bus tour around Gympie to see some of the pump stations that were inundated during the 2022 floods and visits to the Gympie Water Treatment Plant (pictured below) and the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The event also included an engagement session with six international students from Southern Cross Uni and QUT attending the event as part of a QWRAP project to engage with university students.



Events 2022/23

Annual Forum

The **qldwater** Annual Forum was held on 7 - 8 September 2022 with an additional "Research and Innovation Showcase" themed workshop held on 6 September. The forum was hosted by the City of Gold Coast with most events based at HOTA - Home of the Arts and a day tour around the Gold Coast with lunch and the Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test and vendor pitches at the Kurrawa Surf Club.

Day 1 of the Forum focused on innovation in the water sector, starting off with a couple of keynote speakers to set the scene. The first provided an overview of the impacts of climate change on water resources, with a flood map indicating that the area where we were meeting would be under water by the end of this century - a stark reminder of things to come. Charles Dyer did a great job in real world grounding of small and remote community technology needs by introducing us to "Outback Man" and his contrasting views to technology. Over the course of the day, we learned about microbial risk assessment, moving bed bioreactors, autonomous monitoring instruments, water and wastewater pipe relining options and leak detection.

Day 2 included site tours to the Tugun Desalination Plant and the Merrimac Recycled Water Facility in the morning, followed by the TracWater Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test (more info below), as well as four action-packed vendor pitches from Royce Water Technology, Taggle, Suez and Concept Environmental Services.

Day 2 ended on a high note with an amazing outdoor dinner overlooking the HOTA building. Great food and company made for an enjoyable evening, and the water elders provided some perspectives on water and sewerage services based on their extensive experience working in the industry. We also took the opportunity to recognise Shaun Johnston for his extraordinary support of the Water Directorate.

The final day of the Forum included interesting presentations and panel sessions to help **qldwater** refine its Industry Roadmap. Topics included planning in uncertain times, reshaping the sector's approach to regulation, risk and investment and developing industry priorities with the Queensland Government.

Water Taste Tests 2022/23

Hosted in conjunction with the qldwater Annual Forum, the 2022 Best of the Best Queensland Water Taste Test saw Mackay Regional Council taking the title for the fourth time, a testament to the passionate team and of course their excellent water source, the Pioneer River.

The water taste test continues to shine a spotlight on the hard work and efforts by water service providers in delivering a food grade quality product to our taps 24/7, 365 days of the year.

Water Connections Tour

The **qldwater** team enjoyed driving delegates from the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, Queensland Health, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, Department of Environment and Science and Local Government Association of Queensland across eight Council areas in the Central Queensland region to gain a perspective on the issues and challenges facing regional water service providers.

The annual five-day intensive tour of water and sewerage treatment plant infrastructure in remote and regional Councils provide an opportunity to share up to date technical and policy information and to explore and understand issues facing small and remote communities.

The tour itinerary included visits to treatment plants, meetings with key staff and elected representatives and local hospitality in the South Burnett, North Burnett, Cherbourg, Fraser Coast, Woorabinda, Gladstone and Bundaberg Council areas.



Ongoing Programs and Activities

qldwater Website - a wealth of industry relevant resources

The qldwater Resource Library contains more than 2,500 items in a member only secure zone and according to the following categories:

- Whole of Business – resources that cover the whole business e.g. management, human resources, skills and training,
- Water Source – resources relating to water sources including dams, rivers, bores etc,
- Water Treatment – resources relating to water treatment plants,
- Water Network - resources relating to the broader water network including pipes, pumps, reservoirs etc,
- Customers - resources relating to customer service / standards,
- Sewage Treatment - resources relating to sewage treatment plants,
- Sewerage Network - resources relating to the broader sewerage network including pipes and pump stations,
- Recycle / Reuse - resources relating to the recycle and reuse of water, wastewater, biosolids etc.

Noteworthy updates on the website this financial year include:

- A range of fatigue management and risk assessment sample documents shared by members,
- A report on Water Quality Testing for Treatment Optimisation,

- A chlorate position statement,
- A procedure for condition assessment of AC pipes,
- A range of presentations from events,
- Growing the qCRAC Knowledge Portal, including the soft launch of a new public facing website at www.chemicalconcoctions.org to educate people about contaminants in our homes,
- Maintaining the qldwatercareers.com.au website to promote careers in water, including recordings of interviews with trainees and water industry workers and a presentation to School Principals,
- Fundamentals Webinar Series (including presentations to download and recordings embedded on the site)

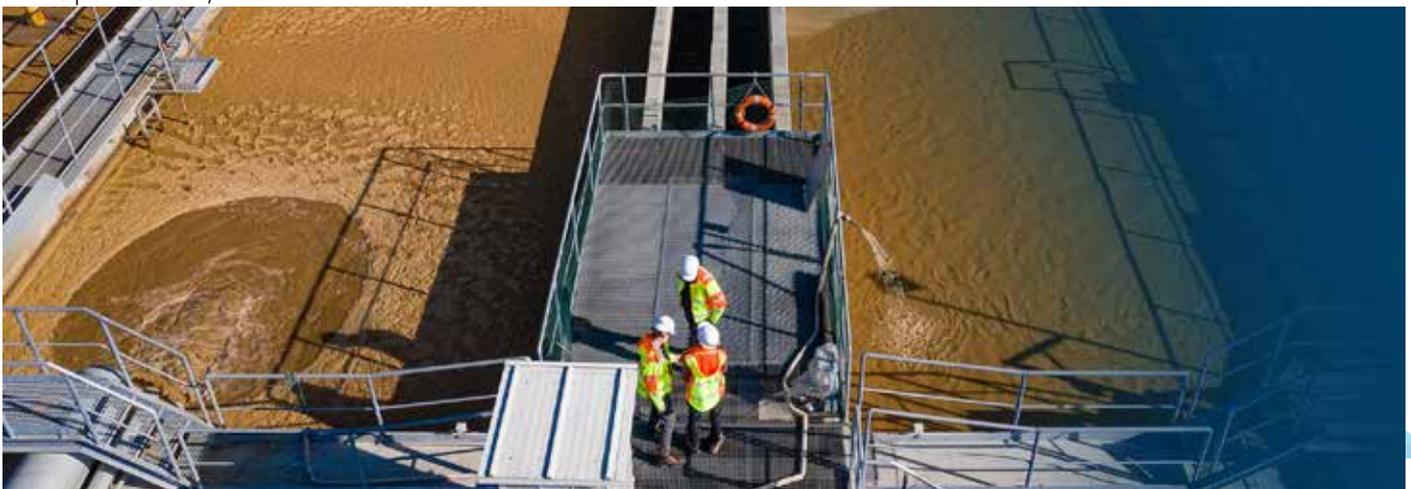
Communications

Each year **qldwater** sends approximately 50 e-flashes and 12 skills e-flashes to inform the industry on relevant matters such as legislation changes, events and other industry news.

Two newsletters per year, in June and December, keep members up to date with past and upcoming events, program updates and case studies / features. Paid advertising continue to grow.

Email notifications and forum posts are used to update members on SWIM indicators and reporting requirements.

The Zoho forums have experienced significant growth, becoming a particularly useful mechanism for establishing new interest groups, storing records of discussion and useful documents.



qldwater Staff Members



Dr Georgina Davis
Chief Executive Officer

Dr Georgina Davis joined **qldwater** in May 2023. Georgina has a strong history in advocacy and leading peak bodies including as CEO for the Waste and Recycling Industry Queensland (WRIQ) and previously the Queensland Farmers' Federation. She brings to the table a great understanding of water planning, pricing, legislation, and the impacts of emerging contaminants which are also prevalent in the waste management and recycling sector.

Previously with Energy Skills Queensland, Georgina completed workforce plans and workforce development strategies, understanding the challenge to attract and retain good staff, and the safety and wellbeing impacts on those left to carry the burden for an understaffed workforce.



Dr David Scheltinga
Manager, SWIM

David commenced with **qldwater** in 2011 and is responsible for managing the SWIM and swimlocal programs. David works remotely from Hervey Bay but travels across Queensland to provide SWIM and swimlocal training and assist member Councils with reporting and benchmarking queries.

David is passionate about data integrity and use, streamlined reporting and benchmarking, and is always advocating for better integration with reporting requirements from other organisations and government departments.



Linda Roberts
Director Innovation Partnerships

Linda joined **qldwater** in July 2022 as Director, Innovation Partnerships with a focus on the Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program and advocacy work. During 2022/23 Linda stepped into the Interim CEO role for approximately 8 months while recruitment of the new CEO occurred.

Linda has 25 years Local Government experience in town planning, water infrastructure planning and strategic asset management and has held management positions with Mackay and Isaac Regional Councils. She was part of the team initiating the Whitsunday Isaac Mackay Water Alliance (WIMWA) and held the Chair's role in 2016.



Dr Louise Reeves
Major Program Lead

Louise joined **qldwater** in 2019 and since then she has developed a keen interest in the complex challenges faced by the urban water industry. Her recent focus is in managing the Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP) and the **qldwater** Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Emerging Contaminants (qCRAC), both groups grappling with the issue of emerging contaminants in water, wastewater and biosolids.

Louise has a BSc (Hons) in Geology and a PhD in Isotope Geochemistry. Her early interest in science has transformed into a passion for science education, truth in science reporting, and research.

qldwater Staff Members



Desiré Gralton
Manager, Communications

Desiré commenced with **qldwater** in 2011 and manages **qldwater**'s communications such as corporate publications, online training courses, newsletters, promotional materials, and website updates.

The **qldwater** suite of communications platforms now include the **qldwater** website, watertraining.com.au, qldwatercareers.com.au, chemicalconcoctions.org, qldwaterontap.com.au and social media networks Twitter and LinkedIn. She also assists with events and other projects including QWRAP and Skills & Training.



Jess Dean
Account Manager Partnerships

Jess started with **qldwater** in May 2022, taking on the Coordinator role for the Wide Bay Burnett Urban Water Alliance (WBBUWA) and assisting with the QWRAP program more broadly.

Jess also helps **qldwater** to make sense of big data through integrated maps and other new innovations. Jess has a keen interest in integrated catchment management and water quality, having worked as Waterwatch Coordinator and Catchment Officer for the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee for over six years.



Neil Holmes
Water Skills Partnership Manager

Neil manages the Water Skills Partnership program and looks after all things skills and training related. He has more than 20 years' experience in advocacy, advisory and consulting experience in the commercial water industry sector.

Neil moved to Australia from the UK in 2019, establishing a water cost audit consultancy to help businesses streamline processes to reduce water bills. Prior to moving to Australia, he was Operations Director for Water Watch UK where he managed all aspects of water investigations and audits including analysis of documentation, billing, legislation, policies and Water Acts.



Jane Standfast
Project Support Assistant

Jane commenced with **qldwater** in March 2023 to look after events, sponsorships and member engagement. She hit the ground running, starting with coordination of the the Water Connections Tour, a week long tour taking key government decision makers to visit regional and remote water and sewerage service proviersproviders.

Jane has a degree in Business and extensive experience in events, marketing and corporate relations having worked as Marketing Manager for The Lakes College and Customer Activation Manager with Coca-Cola Amatil.

Committees and Reference Groups

Together, **qldwater** staff:

- convene 8 significant long term industry reference groups including our strategic priorities group, water skills partnership and sewerage and water environmental advisory panel
- represents industry on 4 major government-convened committees and 5 major association-led committees
- participates and assists in 9 regional alliance groups
- and represents members in another 20+ current but ad hoc committees nationally.

Financial Overview

As a not for profit organisation, **qldwater** typically receives ~\$650,000 per annum from membership subscriptions. The annual budget, including these subscriptions, grant funding and revenue from programs is in the order of \$1.3 million. This provides an operating budget for key projects and employs approximately 8 full time equivalent staff along with occasional technical contractors. As a mature collaborative industry hub, **qldwater** continues to deliver a significant and growing return on investment to members.

Our membership target includes 100% of local government and local government-owned water service providers in Queensland which was achieved in 2015/16, and again for the last 3 financial years. Achieving this target puts us in the best possible position to meet our advocacy objectives with various levels of government and achieve strategic priorities.

Contact Details

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“The Queensland Water Directorate (**qldwater**) is the central advisory and advocacy body within Queensland’s urban water industry and represents members from Local Government and other water service providers across Queensland.”

