**Queensland Water Skills e-Flash #51**

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

**(Issue #51 –  5 October 2016)**

1. **South-East Queensland STP Operator Certification Pilot Commences**
2. **Certification Framework for Recycled Water Operators**

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**1. South-East Queensland STP Operator Certification Pilot Commences**

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Queensland Urban Utilities, City of Gold Coast, Logan City Council and Redland City Council have commenced a collaborative trial of the Sewage Treatment Plant Operator Certification Framework developed by ***qldwater*** and its member utilities in 2015.

**What is Operator Certification?**

Certification adds an important layer of Quality Assurance to skills development.  It is fundamentally linked to the National Water Training Package.  Put very simply:

* An employer identifies processes at a treatment plant or plants against which the operator is to be assessed.
* In most cases, the operator/ employer provides evidence of formal competencies held that demonstrate that the operator has the skills to operate the plant processes.   There are a small number of exceptions.
* An independent certifying body (the Water Industry Operators’ Association of Australia) validates the evidence provided against a matrix, and identifies gaps.
* This process forms the basis of a training plan.
* Gap training is delivered.
* Certification is awarded.
* The operator undertakes required professional development to achieve re-certification over a 5 year period.

The Framework has been substantially modelled on the national Drinking Water equivalent – *Certification Framework for Operators of Drinking Water Systems 2016*.

The full STP Operator Certification Framework is available on the ***qldwater*** website [**here.**](http://www.qldwater.com.au/_literature_194129/STP_Operator_Certification_Framework_Final_V2)

**What does the Pilot hope to achieve?**

Broad certification objectives include:

* Improving consistency in skills development.
* Improving (over time) the RTO supply market, career paths and mobility
* Clarify demand for funding support (e.g. Queensland Government traineeship offsets).
* Develop broad mentoring and support networks.
* Demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement to the environmental regulator.
* Be part of a process of making new careers in sewerage operations more attractive.

The pilot is designed to:

* Test the Framework so that any necessary modifications identified during implementation can be made.
* Test the training supply market and organise demand.  It can be very difficult for a single utility, even in SEQ, to negotiate pricing and achieve desired training delivery methods.
* Provide a demonstration activity to inform broader adoption.

**How will operators be selected?**

Each participating organisation will choose operators for the pilot based on their own criteria, which could include maintaining operations (managing some time away from work), and maximising the chance that the pilot will be a success. There are currently 13 participants in the pilot.

**Who is delivering it?**

* The project is overseen by the SEQ Joint Operations Committee (JOC) along with a technical steering committee with members from each utility.
* ***qldwater*** will facilitate the project.
* The Water Industry Operators Association (WIOA) will act as the certifying body.
* An RTO will be appointed.  The steering committee has agreed to select only one RTO for the purposes of the Pilot to provide opportunities for joint training activities.

A ceremony for the first operators to be Certified under the Framework is planned for the WIOA Queensland Conference in June 2017.

It is unlikely that all operators will complete in this timeframe, so there will be additional certification ceremonies.  There will be a continuous evaluation process – if the Pilot proceeds well it is expected there will be opportunities for further cohorts to commence in 2017.

For further information, contact Michelle Hill (mhill@qldwater.com.au) or Dave Cameron (dcameron@qldwater.com.au).

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**2. Certification Framework for Recycled Water Operators**

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The Australian Water Recycling Centre of Excellence has engaged ***qldwater*** to coordinate development of a Certification Framework for Recycled Water Operators, including managing industry consultation.

This complements ***qldwater***’s existing work refining the Certification Framework for Operators of Drinking Water Systems on behalf of the national Water Industry Skills Taskforce, and the Queensland Sewage Treatment Plant Operator Certification Framework. It provides another opportunity to collaborate with the Water Industry Operators Association (George Wall) and David Sheehan (Coliban Water) who will undertake much of the development work.

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