



Q-WRAP

Queensland - Water Regional Alliance Program

Project Update 1

**Progress since commencement of program in
September 2011.**

January 2012

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Background

The Queensland Water Regional Alliance program (Q-WRAP) was developed as an industry (Council) led initiative to investigate a range of matters including possible institutional models for urban water service provision outside of SEQ. The program has been partially funded by DERM and seeks co-investment from Councils along with LGAQ and *qldwater*.

The Program seeks expressions of interest from three regional groups of Councils (the pilot groups) to undertake analyses and review of the institutional arrangements for water service provision in their region. Each pilot group will be required to review at council level a minimum of three different institutional models for managing their water business.

This Project Update provides a summary of progress on the work from commencement in September 2011 to December 2011.

Overview

The program is achieving strong outcomes despite a late start and slow progress in the initial creation of pilot regions. All milestones have been achieved successfully with the following exceptions.

1. “Expressions of interest sent to identified regional groups” – August 2011.
2. “Scoping report on institutional models finalised” – December 2011.

These deliverables are discussed below but in brief: the first was delayed by hesitation by Councils in two regions to endorse a significant program close to local government elections. Nevertheless, two regions have now endorsed the program and the third is progressing towards agreement. The scoping report was delayed because of the late start of the project and the additional activities required to initiate the pilot regions, but is near completion and will be finalised in February.

Communication with DERM has been strong during the first months. Significant turnover in staff within DERM during the period did not hinder communication but consistent reporting will be increase with ongoing meetings of the two new steering groups. These groups were formed as part of the program to complement the successful communication process of the Urban Water Service Partnership under the joint MoA among DERM, LGAQ and *qldwater*.

Summary of Activities to Date

The first months of the project focussed on forming appropriate pilot regions. The aim of the activities in this phase was to build on the existing agreement to participate from the RAPAD group of councils and have two further regions self-select to be involved with the potential for ongoing collaboration. Although Q-WRAP is a two-year investigative program, long-term impact requires attention to the formation of pilot regions to maximise likelihood of sustainable change.

The delayed start of the program brought the pilot-formation process closer to the local government elections in March 2012 and thus complicated the process of seeking agreement by councils. While demand to participate is as strong as anticipated at the inception of the project, many councillors have expressed reservations in endorsing a project that will bind a future council to a program with unknown but potentially significant ramifications. This has required a different approach for each of the pilot regions as described below.

Key activities to date are summarised in Appendix 1 and described below for each of the three pilot regions. As well as the specific work in each of the regions general activities have included development and implementation of a broad Communications Plan, and development of supporting documents (e.g. Information Sheets, Bid Pool Arrangements Information) as well as creation of web pages for the program.

RAPAD Pilot Region

The RAPAD (Remote Area Planning and Development) Board consists of mayors from each of Winton, Longreach, Boulia, Barcaldine, Blackall-Tambo, Diamantina, and Barcoo

councils. In the past the group has focussed on collaboration on roads issues with good success.

In 2010 the councils of the group expressed interest in expanding their focus to include water and wastewater services and this resulted in their inclusion in the Q-WRAP project from the outset. The participation of the RAPAD secretariat headed by Executive Manager, David Arnold has been invaluable in progressing the Q-WRAP program.

Since September, work with the RAPAD group has included formation of a Technical and Strategic group for the region. The former is the Outback Regional Water Technical Group (ORWTG) chaired by John Roworth (Longreach) with Greg Clark (Barcoo) as deputy and consists of engineers representing each council. This group of representatives have met twice and developed a work plan, an updated Terms of Reference and commenced collation of council data and information. DERM had a representative attend the preliminary meeting of this group along with LGAQ and *qldwater*.

The second group is the Outback Regional Water Group and consists of Councillors from each of the councils involved. This group is chaired by Ed Warren (Winton Mayor) with Jan Ross (Blackall-Tambo Mayor) as deputy. Other representatives are mayors or councillors from each of the RAPAD councils. The membership of this group overlaps the successful Outback Regional Roads Strategic Group.

A constitution has been developed to govern the activities of both groups and DERM, LGAQ, IPWEAQ and *qldwater* have been invited to nominate attendees to participate on each. The next meeting of the groups will be in March 2012 with technical work being undertaken out of session to progress the Technical Group's work plan.

FNQ Pilot Region

This region consists of Cairns, Tablelands, and Cassowary Coast. Cook Shire council has expressed interest in participation but is not initially a member of the group. It is intended that Yarrabah will also be invited to participate.

This group was formed in consultation with representatives from the individual councils, FNQROC and the Cairns, Townsville and Mackay alliance of councils. While there was widespread interest in participating in Q-WRAP in some way, the FNQ pilot region self-selected as the most appropriate pilot region for the immediate two-year program. Other councils in northern Queensland have expressed interest in maintaining links with the Q-WRAP program both through the general communications program and with the potential for broader industry workshops to discuss regional collaboration and institutional models.

The group of three FNQ councils have endorsed involvement in the project through the FNQROC and a Terms of Reference is being developed. Agreement through the ROC was the preferred mechanism for creating initial agreement which will be followed up by

endorsement of individual councils following the March elections. Further technical meetings and formation of a regional steering group are planned for early 2012.

CQ east – Pilot Region

This region consists of Bundaberg, Banana, North Burnett, Gladstone and Wide Bay Water and was formed through self-selection by a community of interest in water and waste-water services. In-principle endorsement has been obtained from three of the five councils but formal sign-off has been complicated not only because of elections but because the group spans two ROC areas. Further meetings are being held in January 2012 to resolve these issues and a preliminary Terms of Reference has been drafted for the group to seek endorsement.

Progress Against Milestones

The following table summarises the Q-WRAP’s contractual milestones and deliverables until July 2012. Two overdue milestones are highlighted in red. Hyperlinks are provided to enable direct access to the program website and listed documents.

Table 1. Q-WRAP Project Milestones to July 2012.

Milestone	Expected Date	Description	Status
Grants contract signed.	Date of agreement		complete - Sept 11
Program Steering Committee named.	Aug-11		complete
Expression of Interests sent to identified regional groups.	Aug-11	Gain commitment and investment of Pilot participant’s regions.	underway
Project Manager appointed.	Dec-11		complete - Sept 11
Program Communications Plan and Program finalised.	Dec-11	The communication plan and program will include planned visits, workshops and conferences, Q&A Fact Sheets and a web page (hosted by LGAQ/ qldwater) addressing the scope and purposes of the Review Program and options for regional collaboration.	complete - Sept 11
LGAQ / qldwater web portal established for Program.	Dec-11		complete - Oct 11

Scoping report on institutional models finalised.	Dec-11	The scoping paper will articulate the parameters of the Review Program and provide a detailed description of the various institutional models that exist for the delivery of urban water services sourced from Australian and International experiences. The paper will also provide a base level assessment and evaluation of other external and internal factors (regulatory frameworks, financial management, skills base, etc) which impact on various institutional arrangements.	underway
Scoping report distributed to regional groups.	Jul-12	The scoping document will be distributed to Pilot groups to consider a range of possible institutional models that could apply to their areas depending on local issues and key risks to both drinking water and wastewater services (excluding urban drainage).	
Governance arrangements for regional areas concluded and TOR completed.	Jul-12	Develop and endorse a Terms of Reference for each Pilot Group.	underway
Technical/ business based audit of regional group water businesses.	Jul-12	Undertake a technical / business-based audit of Pilot group water businesses.	



Appendix 1- List of key activities to date.

The following table list the major activities to date and the immediate upcoming actions. The table is divided in to general activities and those focussed on specific pilot regions.

General		
January	Brief on progress to date	complete
December	Research Paper	outstanding
December	Press Release RAPAD QWRAP project, plus qldwater Newsletter	Complete
October	Comms articles - Council Leader, IPWEAQ Buletin, e Flash	complete
September	Comms Plan	complete
August	TOR for pilot groups	Complete
August	Governance group TOR	outstanding
August	Industry-wide comms	ongoing
August	Web portal	Complete
August	Bid pool. Description of process	Complete
August	Finalise contract with DERM	Complete
CQ - East		
February	F2F meetings of Tech group of interested councils	
February	Sign-off of CQ east pilot group councils	
February	F2F meetings of Strategic group of interested councils	
January	Telecon with technical reps from Bundaberg, Banana, Gladstone, N. Burnett and WBW	
December	Create draft TOR for discussion at telecon	Complete
December	Plan first technical meeting for East CQ	Complete
December	Meet with Bundy 8th December	Complete
November	Discuss with individual councils	underway
August	Set up F2F meeting with CQLGA	Complete
August	Follow-up short-brief for CQLGA	Complete
August	Meeting with CQLGA	complete
August	Set up CQLGA meeting	complete
RAPAD		
January	Develop RAPAD comparative report	Underway
December	Develop Draft project plan for technical group	Underway
December	Develop questionnaire re councils data for Stage 1 of TOR	complete
December	Sign-off with RAPAD councils	Complete
December	Convene Initial Technical group meeting	complete
December	Attend inaugural RAPAD Strategic group meeting	complete

November	Announce Longreach regional mini-conference	complete
November	Link DERM DWQMP training with RAPAD meetings	Complete
October	Update RAPAD TOR	Complete
October	Summarise Outcomes and Actions from preliminary tech meeting and circulate along with presentation	Complete
October	Link DERM information session with Tech meeting (Longreach)	Complete
September	Convene Preliminary Technical group meeting (Longreach)	Complete
August	Organise IPWEAQ rep	complete
August	Develop regional mini-conference - Longreach	Complete

FNQ

February	Technical Meeting with participating councils to create TOR	
January	Assist with TOR for FNQ ROC	Underway
December	Sign-off with FNQ Roc councils	Complete
December	Meet with FNQ ROC Board 12 Dec (Cairns)	Complete
November	Meeting with Cairns, Cassowary, Cook & Tablelands (Cairns)	Complete
November	Meet FNQ ROC tech committee (Cairns)	Complete
October	Follow-up with Cairns	Complete
October	Meeting with CTM alliance (Mackay)	complete
September	Form regional collective and organise F2F visit	Complete
September	Develop Cairns water mini-conference	Complete
August	Follow up with CTM alliance reps following phone call	complete
August	Participate in CTM phone hook up	complete
August	Organise phone hook-up with CTM alliance	complete
August	Contact FNQRoc to determine interest in participation	complete