



qldwater Roadmap

Draft for Consultation

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1 Executive Summary

As the central advisory and advocacy body within Queensland's urban water industry, the Queensland Water Directorate (**qldwater**) is a collaborative hub, working with its members to provide safe, secure and sustainable urban water services to Queensland communities.

It achieves this goal through a variety of programs, most notably:

- The Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program – an LGAQ initiative (supported by the Queensland Government) aimed at helping Queensland councils work together at a regional scale to achieve efficiencies for their customers;
- The Statewide Water Information Management (SWIM) Program – advocacy and continuous improvement supported by a sophisticated regulatory and business reporting and benchmarking tool;
- The Queensland Water Skills Partnership – a collaboration among utilities to identify skills needs and solutions and encourage appropriate investment;
- Other industry advocacy services – focused on sustainable investment and planning, and fit for purpose regulation;
- Industry communication, innovation and marketing initiatives – creating a distinct profile for urban water and sewerage and celebrating its achievements with often limited resources, to make the industry an attractive place to work and exploit its competitive advantages and collaborative culture.

qldwater is a business unit of the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia Qld. In 2019/20, our members include all Queensland councils, other local and state government-owned water and sewerage service providers, and affiliates.

This document has been developed with the guidance of **qldwater's** Technical Reference Group (TRG), a committee comprising over 20 representatives from our membership base across Queensland.



2 Background

Queensland urban water and sewerage services have operated for many years in the absence of a sector-wide strategy, leaving planning to a number of government organisations, with arguably limited coordination. There have been some historical attempts, most recently the short-lived “WaterQ – a 30-year strategy for Queensland’s water sector” document, released in 2014. A change in state government in early 2015 didn’t directly see an end to WaterQ – the strategy wasn’t formally revoked – however water became part of a significantly larger portfolio within government, work which had commenced on priorities outlined in the document ceased and eventually it became clear that there was no intention to continue with water services as a priority.

In 2018, the TRG decided to develop the program for the qldwater annual forum in September with a view to informing future industry strategy. Sessions were structured around a model of 10 “Key Priorities” for the sector, initially developed by qldwater as a means of supporting the industry’s R&D efforts. The original work was based on an environmental scan of a range of futuring strategies contextualised for Queensland; an attempt to provide a framework to steer future research investment, rather than a reactive approach based on available technologies.

The 10 Key Priorities (as at September 2019) were:

1. Data transforming the water sector
2. Strategic sector-wide investment
3. Regional innovation
4. Harmonising water regulation
5. Resource recovery and renewables
6. Catchment resilience in a changing environment
7. Understanding and exceeding customer expectations
8. Building jobs in a changing industry
9. Next Gen water
10. Small, remote and nimble!

Final Key Priorities are proposed, with the following amendments:

- XXXX

The 2018 **qldwater** annual forum program included a number of panel sessions and speakers designed to provoke debate around significant industry challenges, particularly strategic investment, and it was successful in achieving that aim.

Following the forum, the TRG agreed to work on the development of an industry plan, or roadmap, consulting qldwater’s membership and other stakeholders. Consultation took place during 2019, including at the September 2019 annual forum, which included a series of structured workshops aimed at addressing gaps.



The result is this document, a collection of ideas from representatives of the Queensland sector, intended to be revised/ republished periodically as work develops.

The concept underpinning the roadmap is simple.

- By improving transparency around **qldwater's** work plan, we can give members a greater opportunity to be involved in specific activities, as well as manage expectations around what can be achieved with a limited budget.
- By tabling opportunities, particularly collaborative opportunities, we can stimulate a dialogue among members around potential future work which might require co-investment, allowing time to build into budgets rather than hoping resources might be available.
- By including policy recommendations, we can draw key decision makers' attention to problems with regulation or policy, but also things to consider which might make opportunities or our work plan more likely to be realised.

The roadmap development plan for 2019 included:

- Consultation at each major qldwater event:
 - Water Skills forum
 - Biloela regional conference
 - Emerging contaminants workshop
 - Water Connections week tour
 - Asset management workshop
 - Townsville regional conference
 - Fraser Coast regional conference
- Specific review of certain priorities at TRG meetings in March, June and September; and
- A workshop refinement process for the 2019 annual forum.

Consultation has taken a range of forms designed to gather a range of views to support the roadmap narrative. It is difficult to think of a single issue impacting our sector with one solution which will be appropriate for all of Queensland's service providers, such is our diversity. The tools used included:

- General discussion
- Short surveys
- Live polling at events
- Vox pops, or interviews with individuals to capture experiences and opinions.

The approach has received support from a number of other affiliated industry associations, and key regulatory agencies have been kept informed throughout the consultation process. It does not represent a comprehensive audit of the sector, merely those issues and potential solutions at the forefront of our members' thinking during consultation. Best endeavours have been made to consider gaps, but it is impossible to consult everybody.

Another frequently raised issue, during consultation, has been around defining a timeframe for implementation of Roadmap actions. **qldwater** has elected to ignore conventional practice in this instance, with the intention being to periodically review the document and recognise that it is a definition of some problems to be addressed, a preferred industry outcome sought, and some potential steps towards that outcome. There is no new funding to support any initiatives beyond



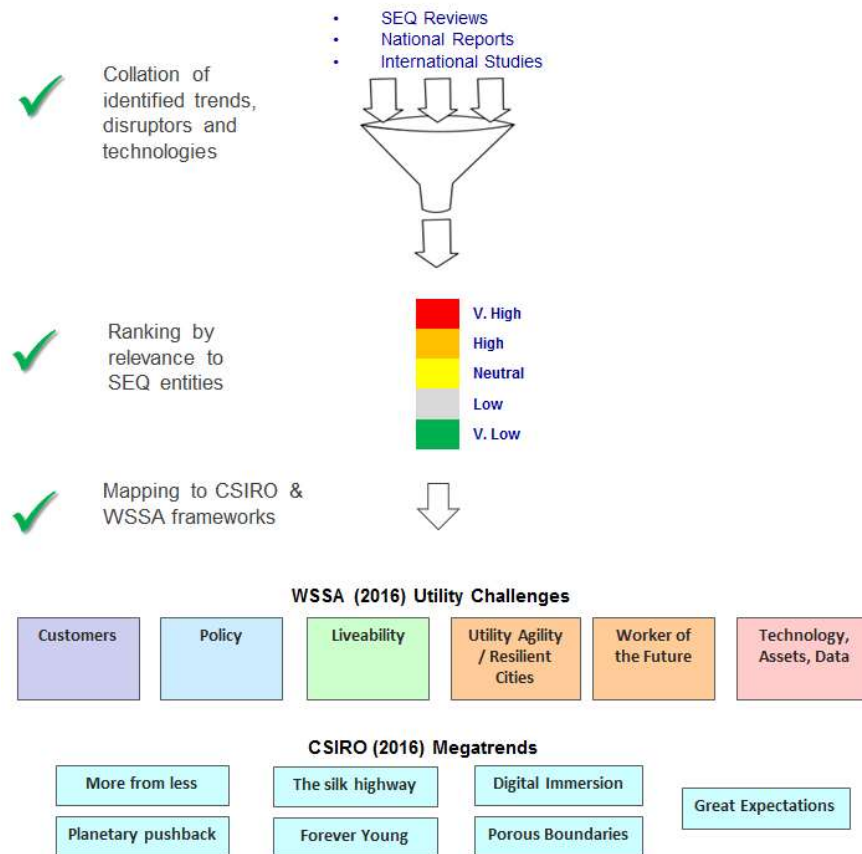
qldwater's work plan, therefore it is important to recognise the document for what it will be – a largely opportunistic script, with broad industry support, to steer future collaboration and advocacy.

3 Priority overview

The development of industry priorities commenced with work conducted to support the South-East Queensland Research and Innovation Group, a committee with representation comprising each Distribution Retail Entity, Council and Seqwater. A “Collation of Issues, Disruptors and Trends” was developed by **qldwater** with the aim of providing initial steps towards collaborative research and development aimed at maximising long-term customer benefit by:

- aligning with national research priorities (e.g. WSAA and the Australian Government Science and Research Priorities);
- avoiding duplication and building on current urban water research investments of the SEQ utilities and other urban utilities both nationally and internationally;
- responding to critical global trends as well as locally-specific disruptors and priorities; and
- promoting research processes and outcomes that attract external funding to better address emerging needs of the sector and its customers.

The initial methodology is described in the flowchart below, where “ranking” was based on predicted relevance, mapped to the CSIRO (2016) ‘megatrends’ and WSAA (2016) Water Utility Challenges. The risk of each impact was estimated by assessing the likelihood and consequence of each issue, and there were several further rounds of refinement at **qldwater** Innovation Events/ Annual Forums to develop the priorities currently reflected in this document.



So the priorities are not a comprehensive reflection of the business of water and sewerage, rather a risk-assessed reflection of external influences, ground-truthed through a range of strategic workshops. They overlap, and reflect a mixture of high level policy drivers and more operational challenges. They will continue to be refined over time.

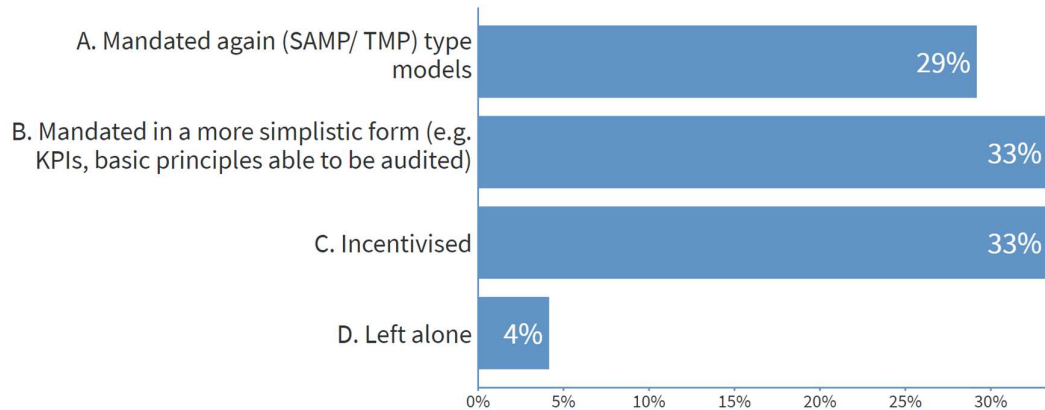
The content for this document was primarily developed through consultation with **qldwater** members and key stakeholders in 2019 and early 2020. Much has come through conversations, case studies and other observations. At events, polls, surveys and interviews were conducted in an attempt to provide real world context to assertions made.

A consistent view on a topic is a rare thing in an industry as diverse as ours. Tools like polls have proven to be invaluable in helping show a range of views to support a narrative. For example:



Should asset management planning be:

When poll is active, respond at [PollEv.com/qldwater](https://poll.ev.com/qldwater) Text QLDWATER to +61 429 883 481 once to join



While opinion is largely divided on the future regulated approach to asset management planning:

- 96% of respondents recognised that there is a need to change the status quo.
- While further analysis might be required, we are able to offer three high level policy options for consideration.

You will see evidence of the use of these tools throughout.