**Queensland Water Skills e-Flash #4**

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

**(Issue #4 – 19 December 2011)**

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**1.       Outcomes of Water Skills Partnership Project Prioritisation Workshop**

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A workshop with industry was held on 16th November to prioritise the projects for the Queensland Water Skills Partnership. A demand forecasting activity was also undertaken to develop some agreed projections for staffing levels and skills requirements into the future. Further refinement and expansion on these projects will be conducted before making the data available to industry.

Key projects for the skills partnership determined at the workshop included;

* Water Operations Training: ***qldwater*** to continue to act on behalf of the Queensland industry on key national bodies including, Water Industry Advisory Committee (WIAC), Water Industry Strategic Advisory Group (WISAG) and AWA RPL Resources Project. ***qldwater*** will continue to liaise with RTO’s and industry and pilot new water courses.
* E-Learning: coordinate a Water Skills Video Library for the collection of a suite of videos for key tasks/activities (pending successful funding application).
* Legislative responsibilities training: develop a training course (online and face-to-face options) for training in key water industry legislative responsibilities and requirements.
* Engage with schools: Investigate programs for industry school engagement such as Gateway to Schools Program.
* Regional Training Alliances: develop a mechanism for regions to coordinate training activities between providers, including shared calendar, regional training hubs. Pilot a number of short course training workshops in regional hubs.

An Industry Leaders Group meeting will take place early in 2012 for further refinement and actioning of the projects.

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**2.       Strategic Investment Fund – Training Places funding available**

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***qldwater*** have signed a contract with Skills Queensland which will initially see a further $540,000 of funding for direct training places, on top of monies already secured through User Choice and other programs. LGAQ will administer the funding and contract arrangements, in a similar manner to the process for the now expired PPP funding.

Qualifications funded are at Certificate IV level and higher. As LGAQ have a separate SIF allocation for Local Government water service providers, the ***qldwater*** funding will primarily fund places for non-council providers including; Queensland Urban Utilities, Allconnex, Unitywater, Seqwater, Sunwater and Wide Bay Water. A portion of the ***qldwater*** funds will be reserved to be directed towards stimulating delivery of new qualifications, and we are currently determining how best to develop these pilot activities.  The strongest interest to date is around asset management training, specifically contextualised for water.

SIF will cover 70-75% of the training costs with industry required to provide the remainder.  A call for expressions of interest will go out in early 2012 and it is anticipated that contracts will be finalised by end of March 2012.

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**3.       Water Skills Formation Strategy achievements – strategy concludes 31ST December**

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The Queensland Water Skills Formation Strategy (SFS) was created in 2009 with funding from the Department of Education and Training for a two year period. The Strategy concludes on 31st December this year. Over the course of the two year project a number of significant achievements were made and importantly, it was the first mechanism for industry to collaborate on skills and workforce development projects.

Some of the key outcomes of the SFS include;

* Most importantly, the Queensland Industry came together for the first time to address skilling issues and now has a coordinated voice contributing to the national skills agenda.
* Negotiations with DET were successful to allow Certificate II in the Water Operations Package to be classified as a Priority One under the User Choice Program.  As Certificate II is entry level for the water industry, this will see more employees undergoing training.
* Certificate IV and Diploma in Water Operations were declared traineeships in Queensland, allowing access to Commonwealth incentives for eligible trainees.
* The Queensland Urban Water Industry Workforce Snapshot 2010 was published providing an overview of the Queensland Urban Water Industry staffing levels, job roles, and employee demographics.
* Workforce Case Study reports for Banana Shire Council and Cairns Regional Council were completed and summary information shared with the wider industry to promote well implemented workforce development practices as well as highlight common areas in which the water industry can improve.
* A Collaborative Agreement to promote and use H2Oz site and materials (Australian Water Association project) for promotion of water industry careers was agreed to by Industry Leaders Group.
* Young Operator of the Year and Operator of the Year (Civil) Awards were created, promoted and awarded to recipients for 2010 and 2011 at the Water Industry Operators Association (WIOA) state conferences.

***qldwater*** plans to continue the important work that the SFS has undertaken through the Queensland Water Skills Partnership.

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**4.       Queensland Water Skills Partnership – Discounted membership for remaining financial year**

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The Queensland Water Skills Partnership was created to continue the important workforce development and skills work that has been undertaken through the Water Skills Formation Strategy (SFS). There are currently 12 subscribers to the skills partnership.

The Partnership needs to grow its membership to demonstrate to DET, Skills Queensland and other key national bodies that Queensland has a co-ordinated voice for water skills in the state and to assist in levering more State and Federal investment.  ***qldwater*** is now offering a subsidised rate to subscribe to the partnership for the remaining 2011/2012 financial year and be involved in the projects for this important skills work. The subscriber rate for the remainder of the 2011/2012 financial year is therefore only $12.50 per employee, further information can be found on the ***qldwater*** website or by contacting Michelle Hill at mhill@qldwater.com.au.  The call for membership for the 2012/13 financial year will be made through written invitation to each water service provider in early 2012.

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**5.       International WaterCentre Launches new Graduate Certificate in Water Planning**

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The International WaterCentre (IWC) has developed a new Graduate Certificate in Integrated Water Management (Water Planning) focused on building capacity in effective community participation, social assessment and conflict management.

The program is available to Australian/NZ citizens and Australian permanent residents. It is designed to accelerate career development and encourage dialogue across disciplines among water planners.

The program will commence in Semester 1, March 2012 at Griffith University

For further information visit their website at <http://www.watercentre.org/education/water-planning>

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