



FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL WATER ALLIANCE

Minutes

Meeting No	26
Meeting Name	DWQMP External Audits – Regional Close-Out Meeting
Date	10 May 2021
Time	10:00 am
Venue	Committee Room – Level 3 – Cairns Regional Council

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Wendy Hughes	FNQROC
Dan Deere	Water Futures
Mark Wuth	Cairns Regional Council
Peter Martin	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
Victor Mills	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
Robyn Maddalena	Cook Shire Council
Shane Bandiera	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Morris Hamill	Mareeba Shire Council
John Bishop	Cairns Regional Council
Jon Turner	Tablelands Regional Council
Shane Pfeiffer	Cairns Regional Council
Manu Gravatt	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Garry Pickering	Croydon Shire Council
Adam Schmalz	Cairns Regional Council
Rohan Geddes	Mareeba Shire Council
Toni Veronese	Cairns Regional Council
Kate McCreery-Carr	Cairns Regional Council
Peter White	Douglas Shire Council
Ada Pasanen	Douglas Shire Council

Apologies

Name	Organisation
Shane Butler	Etheridge Shire Council
Amy Yates	Mareeba Shire Council
Jennifer Godin	Cook Shire Council
Ben Hill	Carpentaria Shire Council
Gene Brooks	Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
Graham Stanford	Tablelands Regional Council
Mark Kelleher	Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
Mark Vis	Tablelands Regional Council
Michael Suhan	Carpentaria Shire Council
Paul Hoyer	Douglas Shire Council
Peter Tonkes	Douglas Shire Council
Preston Andrews	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
Ian Hocking	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
Jason Wilkie	Douglas Shire Council
Danielle Jensen	Tablelands Regional Council
James Pedersen	Mareeba Shire Council
Melissa Mitchell	Douglas Shire Council
Natasha Glaskin	Tablelands Regional Council
Gidi Azar	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
Rebecca Fitzgerald	Croydon Shire Council
Geoffrey Smart	Cassowary Coast Regional Council

1. Welcome and apologies

Meeting opened 10.05am. W Hughes thanked everyone for coming and welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Confirmation of previous minutes

Minutes noted and accepted.

3. Business arising

Item	Action	Responsible
25.1	All Councils are to ensure relevant resources and personnel are available and accessible for their audit as per the agreed regional schedule.	All
Item Update: Completed with audit delivery		

Item	Action	Responsible
25.2	D Deere to contact individual Councils approx. 2 days prior to their scheduled audit to finalise agenda and site visit details.	D Deere
Item Update: Completed with audit delivery		
25.3	W Hughes to circulate the details required for Councils to raise a purchase order against the DWQMP External Audit project.	W Hughes
Item Update: Completed with minutes		

4. Regional audit outcomes

Dan thanked all councils for being available to accommodate the audit as scheduled. All audits have now been completed with initial reports to be provided back to councils by 21 May. Reports will initially be provided as a draft to enable comments prior to submission to the regulator.

Audits were conducted against: (a) 2019 guidelines; and (b) any specific items noted previously by the auditor for individual councils. It was noted that non-compliance issues were low across the region.

Overview of key findings

Refer to PowerPoint presentation provided with minutes.

Key lessons

The regional audit highlighted common challenges which presents an opportunity to undertake collaborative projects. The following potential initiatives were discussed.

Infrastructure:

- Consider taking a regional approach to asset management standards.

Systems:

- Consider sharing experiences around what instruments work well under the climatic conditions.
- There is an opportunity to collaborate more actively on procurement of consumables.

There may be an opportunity to re-structure the regional audit program to combine related audits. This would reduce audit fatigue and simplify the process. For example, asset management, recycled water and water quality audits combined into one. This would need to be discussed with the regulator prior to adopting.

Action 26.1: W Hughes to circulate DWQMP audit summary notes as presented by D Deere with the minutes.

Tropical/outback environment issues specific to the region

Discussion was held regarding the challenges unique to operating in tropical/outback climates.

Emerging issues to consider

- Opportunistic pathogens – water borne diseases such as legionella and micro bacteria.
- Working with catchment management organisations to align with environmental guidelines (water and waste divisions combining on issues in collaboration with NAMAC).

Policy updates

- Asset management is likely to be scrutinised more closely by the regulator in future.
- Road, telecoms, power etc – there is a need for better integration across other parts of council and with other utilities as part of the asset management approach.
- From 2022 onwards there may be chlorate guideline values introduced into the DWQMP framework.

Opportunities for new regional projects

- Research around protozoan pathogen risk. No data from the tropical zones at this stage. Cryptosporidium analysis is another research project option.
- An analytical instrumentation review – built-in, self-calibration devices can potentially be explored leading to similar instruments being installed across the region.
- Backflow prevention is currently a subjective criterion – there is an opportunity to establish a common position across FNQROC councils.
- Enhancing SWIMLocal – there is an opportunity to partner more closely if this is relevant and acceptable from a CCC perspective.
- Training and mentoring – consider a formalised mentoring program to improve learning opportunities and upskilling. There is potential to enable this through a regional workforce skills database.

Action 26.2: All members to consider the opportunities raised as potential regional projects (asset management standards, field instrument standards, consumables shelf life standards, combined regional audits, pathogen research, regional skills database) and be ready to discuss at the meeting in July.

General discussion relating to audit

- Crypto – recommendation to clarify levels in the guidelines. Different messages come from the department to Councils. D Deere to discuss with the regulator.
- What may be common to all councils around risk aversion. Dan to consider in light of the regional audit findings.
- Staffing/internal resourcing is a common challenge – high ‘key person’ risk with many water divisions built around individual people. Benchmarking of resourcing across councils to be considered to help build business cases for more staff. Consider a centralised database for

the region – aim to build corporate knowledge on skill sets available to facilitate secondments, mentoring and backfilling as needed.

- Chlorates – there may be some other studies we can leverage off that examine temperature and concentrations. SEQ Water may have examples.

Action 26.3: D Deere to discuss crypto level guidelines with the regulator to clarify the requirements for Councils.

Action 26.4: D Deere to consider additional opportunities for regional projects, taking into account current risk management initiatives and their effectiveness in adding value for service delivery.

Action 26.5: W Hughes to investigate examples of staff/internal resourcing benchmark reports to aid in understanding the options for a regional benchmarking project to be initiated.

Action 26.6: W Hughes to contact SEQ Water to investigate accessing sample chlorate studies.

5. Confirmation of audit reporting schedule

Reports are being finalised for submission to the regulator.

A Statutory Declaration will need to be signed by each Council and returned to FNQROC by Monday 24 May. The Statutory Declaration must be witnessed by a JP or similar (eg Accountant).

Standalone reports for each Council will be submitted to the regulator together with an FNQROC summary report that highlights common regional findings. All reports and statutory declarations must be submitted by 31 May 2021.

D Deere will submit all reports on behalf of the region.

Project invoices will be issued to Councils by FNQROC by the end of May.

Action 26.7: All Councils to provide a signed Statutory Declaration for their individual water audit reports to FNQROC by 24 May.

Action 26.8: D Deere to submit audit final reports to the regulator by 31 May.

Action 26.9: FNQROC to issue DWQMP project invoices to all Councils by 31 May.

6. Strategic regional projects

Long Term Analysis of the Role of Dams

W Hughes provided a high-level summary of the FNQROC Dam study, *Long Term Analysis of the Role of Dams*. Water security is a core priority for the FNQROC board. The study has implications for the regional water alliance in relation to future infrastructure demands.

Action 26.10: W Hughes to circulate a copy of the FNQROC strategic dam study with the minutes.

Biosolids contract review

FNQROC coordinates regional contracts for the Removal and Beneficial Reuse of Biosolids which have been in place since June 2017. The current contracts between FNQROC participating councils and Arkwood are due to expire 31 May 2021. There is a final 12- month extension option available and if this option is exercised the contracts will end in May 2022. The procurement process for new arrangements will therefore need to commence in the next few months.

A number of EOI considerations were discussed:

- Emerging technologies
- Emerging contaminants (will impact on time period for contracting)
- Impact on users of biosolids and continuing supply contracts
- Impact on treatment plant level processing (may require shorter contracts)

Action 26.11: FNQROC to coordinate a special meeting between the procurement, water and materials recovery technical committees to discuss biosolids reuse and the implications of resource recovery for procurement contracting. Meeting to be scheduled for end May/early June.

7. General discussion

- The Minister for Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW) has announced the initiation of Regional Water Assessments to better define opportunities to achieve economic development through water at a regional scale. The Tablelands, Cairns and Mareeba Shire Councils will be included in a combined State-led assessment. With a start date of early 2022, the project is expected to be an 18-24 month process and will assess:
 - Improvements to existing infrastructure
 - New infrastructure
 - Non-infrastructure solutions

8. Next Meeting Dates

- Friday 30 July
- Friday 24 September
- Friday 19 November

9. Meeting Close

12.05pm

Actions as at end of Meeting No. 26:

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Action 26.3	D Deere to discuss crypto level guidelines with the regulator to clarify the requirements for Councils.	D Deere
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