



# FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL WATER ALLIANCE

## Minutes

<b>Meeting No</b>	29
<b>Meeting Name</b>	FNQ Regional Water Alliance
<b>Date</b>	19 November 2021
<b>Time</b>	10:00 am
<b>Venue</b>	Committee Room – Level 3 – Cairns Regional Council

## Attendance

Name	Organisation
Toni Veronese	Cairns Regional Council
Andrew Healy	Croydon Shire Council
Peter White	Douglas Shire Council
David Fletcher	Etheridge Shire Council
Mark Wuth	Cairns Regional Council
Jon Turner	Tablelands Regional Council
Sam Bann	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
Simon Page	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Manu Gravatt	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Ingrid Fomiatti Minnesma	DRDMW
Shannon Dempster	DRDMW
Ryan Cosgrove	qldwater
Chris Blake	QLD Health
Wendy Hughes	FNQROC

## Apologies

Name	Organisation
Morris Hamill	Mareeba Shire Council
Rohan Geddes	Mareeba Shire Council
Gene Brooks	Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
Peter Martin	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
Robyn Maddalena	Cook Shire Council
Victor Mills	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council (via video)

### 1. Welcome and apologies

Meeting opened 10.00am. W Hughes welcomed all to the meeting.

### 2. Confirmation of previous minutes

Minutes noted and accepted.

### 3. Business arising

Item	Action	Responsible
<b>Action 28.1:</b>	Alliance members are asked to review the current water strategies for their Council and provide details of any significant water asset projects (project name, asset type, value and anticipated timeframe) to inform the FNQROC Board's regional water advocacy messaging.	All
<b>Item Update:</b> Complete.		
<b>Action 28.2:</b>	W Hughes to circulate the qldwater <i>Asset Criticality Tool</i> with the minutes. Alliance members to test and provide feedback to R Cosgrove for consideration as part of future tool updates.	W Hughes
<b>Item Update:</b> Complete. Circulated with minutes. Criticality tool also available online at <a href="https://qldwater.com.au/asset-criticality">https://qldwater.com.au/asset-criticality</a> . Case study presentation scheduled to provide opportunities for feedback on tool development – refer Agenda Item 5.		
<b>Action 28.3:</b>	W Hughes to work with C Sargent on a submission to Jobs QLD seeking operational resources to support the development of a water industry case study for FNQROC Water Alliance member Councils.	W Hughes
<b>Item Update:</b> In Progress. Update to be provided – refer Agenda Item 6.		
<b>Action 28.4:</b>	W Hughes to initiate discussions with FNQROC Procurement on the proposed regional procurement contracts for fire hydrant servicing and maintenance, water main air scouring and flushing maintenance, and sewer main fogging maintenance programs then update interested Councils at the meeting in November.	W Hughes
<b>Item Update:</b> In Progress. Further scoping required – refer Agenda Item 8.		
<b>Action 28.5:</b>	W Hughes to explore training opportunities that may assist Councils with Councillor education around land use planning legislation and its impact.	W Hughes
<b>Item Update:</b> Complete. Land Use Planning Training is available through Peak Services, LGAQ's HR and training division. 2022 course schedule and details will be provided by Peak when confirmed.		

Actions from minutes were noted and accepted with the following updates:

- **Action 28.1:** Complete. Significant water projects have been collated and identified a current regional need of around \$355M to complete currently known/planned projects. This includes \$215M for Cairns Water Security Stage 1.
- **Action 28.3:** Complete. Proposal to Jobs Queensland was finalised and submitted on Thursday 18 November.
- **Action 28.4:** Complete. FNQROC Procurement attended the meeting on 19 November and will continue to investigate.

#### 4. Regulatory / Policy Updates

*Update from Ingrid Fomiatti Minnesma and Shannon Dempster, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW)*

- Barron water plan review – consultations are underway with relevant councils. Anticipate end 2022 completion.
- Regional water assessments - steering committee meetings are underway. Anticipate 12-18 month process for the review.
- Cairns water security – wet tropics water plan in place since 2014. DRDMW was involved in developing the Cairns water strategy and participated in the advisory group.
- Economic value of dams – Queensland bulk water security strategy (QBWOS) [available online](#). Business case development framework also [available online](#). Framework is used for significant projects such as NAIF applications.
- Building our Region Round 6 – construction EOIs close 23 November, planning EOIs close 21 December. Refer to DRDMW website for the [latest FAQs and program guideline Q&As](#). Any specific questions can be sent directly to S Dempster to be onforwarded to the right person.

*S Dempster and I Fomiatti Minnesma left the meeting 10.25am.*

*Update from Chris Blake, Environmental Health Services - Tropical Public Health Services, QLD Health*

- Water fluoridation – update to the code of practice released October 2021. Primary change relates to batch testing of fluoride – must now be through NADA approved labs and must be batch tested in Australia. Yearly audits on fluoride plants are being planned.
- Compliance plan update – from 2022 low exposure recycled water schemes will be a focus for review. Department is developing resources around undertaking audits. There are 10 schemes in our region across the council areas of Cairns, Cook, Douglas and Tablelands. Councils will be contacted when more is known about the auditing template. Trial audits are scheduled for January around the Wide Bay/Bundaberg region. FNQ audits are expected to commence mid-2022.
- DWQMP – currently working with indigenous councils around operating skills and capacity. Included a workshop in Cooktown last week to facilitate knowledge sharing between councils.
- Water quality technical group – the water group in Brisbane is reviewing incident response guidelines. Final stage of guideline review currently underway, consultation with councils to follow.

- [Medicines and Poisons Act 2019 \(MPA\)](#) released September 2021 (replaced Pest Management Act), has implications for drinking water schemes. Pest management must now be undertaken by a licensed pest management technician. No longer able to undertake pest treatments independently/in-house.
- Recycled wastewater audits scheduled to be completed January to June 2023. Pre-information will be discussed with the four relevant councils once more detail is known.

**Action 29.1:** W Hughes to circulate DRDMW presentation on Cairns water security, water storage economics, and Building our Regions Round 6 with the minutes.

**Action 29.2:** Regional update on outcomes of the DWQMP incident response guidelines review to be scheduled for a future water alliance meeting. W Hughes to liaise with C Blake on best dates.

## 5. qldwater Asset Criticality Assessment Tool

*Case Study presentation by Moira Zeilinga on behalf of QWRAP*

- R Cosgrove provided an overview of the criticality assessment tool and introduced M Zeilinga. The tool is a collaboration between councils and qldwater – developed in response to a need for smaller councils to classify assets in a structured way.
- Results are based on condition scores around criticality to enable objective and consistent decision making (based on criticality, not asset condition).
- Measures eight risk categories with impact on customer a key element.
- Scoring can be tied to each council's risk appetite. Through QWRAP, M Zeilinga can work with individual councils to setup business rules that aid in automating some of the process.
- [Training tool available on the qldwater portal](#) - includes examples of how to apply the framework. Key driver of development was to enable councils to use the tool in-house.
- Tip is to start with your top 1 or 2 assets – criticality scores of your most critical assets provide context around criticality of all other assets.
- Has been tested with Maranoa and Winton councils to make sure it's useful by smaller councils. Some lessons learned from testing to date will be implemented into the next phase of development.
- Access to quality input data is critical as this can impact on the results. Important to start the process by getting data into the right format initially – qldwater looking at ways to make this easier.
- Data can be provided back as a list and /or as GIS output to ensure assets have been captured correctly.

*M Wuth left the meeting 10.55am.*

## 6. Regional Workforce Plan – proposal for FNQ pilot

Update provided by W Hughes and R Cosgrove. The proposal has been finalised and was submitted to the Jobs Queensland CEO for consideration on Thursday 18 November.

**Action 29.3:** W Hughes to update the Alliance on Jobs Queensland regional workforce plan outcomes when known.

## 7. qldwater update

*Update from Ryan Cosgrove, Project Coordinator/Researcher, qldwater*

- QWRAP research – funding has been allocated toward asset criticality tool trials.
- SWEAP – emerging contaminants a key topic at present. QCRAC sub-committee is particularly focused on this. Reviewing in context of environmental regulation. Developing responses to issues that may be raised so councillors can talk with authority on what's happening and how problems are being mitigated when asked by community members or media. Research available through QCRAC resources (reminder – login access to SWEAP can be arranged through R Cosgrove).
- H2S exposure standards are pending – industry advocating to halt this change as the standards may not be achievable, particularly by smaller councils.
- HPWJ of AC – submission has been made to obtain industry exemption to allow high pressure water jetting of water mains by councils.
- Drinking water quality advisory panel being established – opportunity to be involved. Core purpose is provision of consultation to the regulator, expected to be a strong group.
- Water services app – helps link with other councils on similar challenges/issues. Access through qldwater website.
- Asset criticality tool – will gradually be developed as an online portal that interacts with council systems through data links (similar to SWIM data system).
- New careers website – just launched. More interviews with workers will be added to cover all the different career options and roles available.
- Remote assistance tech – trials underway with tools such as Vuzix smart glasses to facilitate onsite troubleshooting. Becoming popular in SEQ, has potential for regional and remote councils.
- OGBR – developing a Point Source Information portal in partnership with DES.
- LGAQ – dam safety guidelines updated and circulated to councils. Annual conference resulted in motion to support continuation of QWRAP funding.

**Action 29.4:** W Hughes to circulate qldwater presentation update with the minutes.

*S Bann left the meeting 12.00pm.*

## 8. Regional procurement

*Discussion led by A Hancock, Procurement Coordinator FNQROC*

- A Hancock provided an overview of FNQROC procurement and when it makes sense to engage: (1) to achieve economies of scale; (2) to manage supplier-led competition between councils; and (3) to facilitate opportunities for councils to learn from each other. At least 3 councils need to opt-in to a project make it viable. Aiming to get more proactive instead of reactive to specific projects.
- Discussion on intended new projects:
  - Scheduling is the main driver. Change to regulation also driving need – fogging services for example now need to be delivered by a licensed technician and councils lack internal skills and resources to deliver.
  - Fire hydrants would require an initial assessment and likely need a rolling schedule, similar to sewer relining with a program of works for each year. Currently being

delivered inhouse, need to outsource. Local plumbing contractors may be able to deliver.

- May require some initial market sounding to find out who's around. Preference is to tender the new projects as 3 different packages of works that consultants can opt in or out of.
- Service provision contracts only. Won't need a project supervisor like sewer relining.
- Commencing investigations:
  - Step 1 – Alliance members to nominate sub-committee representatives with meeting to be scheduled for first quarter of 2022. Sub-committee to report back to Alliance via A Hancock.
  - Step 2 – build regional view of sites.
  - Step 3 – market sounding to find out who can potentially service the projects and to see what other regions are doing. RAPAD as an example to have a look at.
- R Cosgrove advised there are opportunities to fund procurement initiatives through the QWRAP bidpool. Funding still available, open until end of financial year.
- Additional updates:
  - Biosolids contract review – 30 June 2022 expiry. Pre-market approvals for methodology to be sought from councils. Still not a market in the waste organics space at this stage so best to keep it separate.
  - Water chemicals contract expires December 2022. Sewer relining will also have to go back out.

**Action 29.5:** Alliance members to nominate regional procurement sub-committee representatives to inform initial project scoping and market sounding for proposed new projects:

- a) Fire hydrant servicing and maintenance
- b) Water main air scouring and flushing maintenance
- c) Sewer main fogging maintenance

**Action 29.6:** A Hancock to schedule a regional procurement sub-committee meeting in the first quarter of 2022 to undertake initial project scoping of proposed new Water Alliance procurement initiatives.

## 9. DRAFT Regional Action Plan for 2022

W Hughes sought feedback on the draft Water Alliance action plan for 2022. With no changes requested the plan will be included in the 2022 FNQROC strategic operational plan for noting by the FNQROC Board.

## 10. FNQROC Board – Advocacy Update

W Hughes provided an update on the FNQROC Board Federal delegation scheduled for 22-24 November. Two water projects will be discussed with Ministers during the delegation:

1. *Cairns Water Security Stage 1* – requesting \$215M commitment (combined Federal and State)
2. *National Water Pricing Policy* – amend economic modelling to recognise dam life as 100 years instead of 30 years; amend pricing policy to recognise irrigators are not the sole beneficiary of bulk water supplies by also capturing indirect economic beneficiaries.

## 11. Lessons Learned

- Councils shared experiences relating to construction market/consultancy contracts which are generally behind and slipping. Not enough people on the ground to deliver on projects.
- In some cases consultancy projects are not attracting responses at the time of tendering. There are also pricing pressures – suppliers trying to pass these costs to councils.

*T Veronisi left the meeting 12.30pm.*

## 12. General Business

- Mandatory vaccinations driven by CHO emergency powers are posing a challenge. LGAQ undertaking a survey to understand impacts across the State. C Blake will seek to find more information on implications for water operations and provide this back to the group.
- DRDMW Policy team in Brisbane are keen to provide an update at a future meeting.

**Action 29.7:** C Blake to seek clarification on implications of mandatory COVID vaccinations in relation to water service operators in FNQ and provide information back to Alliance members.

**Action 29.8:** W Hughes to liaise with R Cosgrove on scheduling a regional update by the Brisbane-based DRDMW policy team at a future water alliance meeting.

## 13. Points for noting to the FNQROC Board

- The regional Water Alliance action plan for 2022 has been set and will focus primarily on delivering a long-term regional workforce plan. The aim is to better understand the operational workforce, identify any gaps, and then work towards developing a plan that will meet future workforce needs and build regional redundancy.
- To support the development of the workforce plan, in partnership with qldwater the Alliance prepared a submission to Jobs Queensland to secure their expertise to support FNQROC in developing the workforce plan. The submission was lodged on Thursday 18 November.

#### 14. Next Meeting Dates

Water Alliance meetings in 2022 will be scheduled on the following dates:

- Friday 18 February
- Friday 13 May
- Friday 12 August
- Friday 19 November

**Action 29.9:** W Hughes to circulate date claimers for 2022 Water Alliance meetings.

#### 15. Meeting Close

12.45pm

#### Actions as at end of Meeting No. 29:

Item	Action	Responsible
<b>Action 29.1</b>	W Hughes to circulate DRDMW presentation on Cairns water security, water storage economics, and Building our Regions Round 6 with the minutes.	W Hughes
<b>Action 29.2</b>	Regional update on outcomes of the DWQMP incident response guidelines review to be scheduled for a future water alliance meeting. W Hughes to liaise with C Blake on best dates.	W Hughes/ C Blake
<b>Action 29.3</b>	W Hughes to update the Alliance on Jobs Queensland regional workforce plan outcomes when known.	W Hughes
<b>Action 29.4</b>	W Hughes to circulate qldwater presentation update with the minutes.	W Hughes
<b>Action 29.5</b>	Alliance members to nominate regional procurement sub-committee representatives to inform initial project scoping and market sounding for proposed new projects: a) Fire hydrant servicing and maintenance b) Water main air scouring and flushing maintenance c) Sewer main fogging maintenance	Councils
<b>Action 29.6</b>	A Hancock to schedule a regional procurement sub-committee meeting in the first quarter of 2022 to undertake initial project scoping of proposed new Water Alliance procurement initiatives.	A Hancock
<b>Action 29.7</b>	C Blake to seek clarification on implications of mandatory COVID vaccinations in relation to water service operators in FNQ and provide information back to Alliance members.	C Blake
<b>Action 29.8</b>	W Hughes to liaise with R Cosgrove on scheduling a regional update by the Brisbane-based DRDMW policy team at a future water alliance meeting.	W Hughes/ R Cosgrove
<b>Action 29.9</b>	W Hughes to circulate date claimers for 2022 Water Alliance meetings.	W Hughes