

FNQ Regional Water Alliance

Meeting Details

Meeting No	30
Meeting Name	Regional Water Alliance
Date	18 February 2022
Time	10.00am – 1.00pm
Venue	McKenzie Meeting Room , Level 2, Cairns Regional Council <i>Note: Please allow time for security sign-in at reception.</i>

Remote Access Details

FNQ Regional Water Alliance

Fri, Feb 18, 2022 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM (AEST)

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Agenda

1.	Welcome and apologies	
2.	Confirmation of Previous Minutes	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of Meeting No. 29 held on 19 November 2021 	Pages 4-11
3.	Business Arising from Previous Minutes: 19 November 2021	W Hughes

Item	Action	Responsible
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.	W Hughes
Item Update: Complete.		
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.	W Hughes/ C Blake
Item Update: In Progress. Incident response guidelines are still under review.		
Action 29.3	W Hughes to update the Alliance on Jobs Queensland regional workforce plan outcomes when known.	W Hughes
Item Update: Ongoing. Refer Agenda Item 6.		
Action 29.4	W Hughes to circulate qldwater presentation update with the minutes.	W Hughes
Item Update: Complete.		
Action 29.5	<p>Alliance members to nominate regional procurement sub-committee representatives to inform initial project scoping and market sounding for proposed new projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Fire hydrant servicing and maintenance b) Water main air scouring and flushing maintenance c) Sewer main fogging maintenance <p>Councils nominated representatives need to be suitably authorised to share data with both FNQROC and other committee members.</p>	Councils
Item Update: Councils to nominate representatives. Refer Agenda Item 7.		
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.	A Hancock
Item Update: On hold pending advice of sub-committee nominations.		
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.	C Blake
Item Update: The CHO direction for 'COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements for Workers in a high-risk setting Direction' (Effective from: 8:30am AEST 11 December 2021) does not identify		

locations where water operators would typically work i.e. WTP as a high-risk setting that requires vaccination to enter. If they needed to access a high risk setting e.g. schools, correctional facilities, defined areas within an airport, etc then they need to comply with the COVID-19 vaccination requirements. (NOTE: this is current as of 18 Jan and is subject to change.)		
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.	W Hughes/ R Cosgrove
Item Update: Complete. Refer Agenda Item 4.		
Action 29.9	W Hughes to circulate date claimers for 2022 Water Alliance meetings.	W Hughes
Item Update: Complete		

4.	Regulatory/policy updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dept Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on State policy issues (Brisbane Office) • Update on regional projects and issues (Cairns Office) • Environmental Health Services, QLD Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Water Officer, Chris Land • General update 	D Emmerly I Fomiatti Minnesma/ S Dempster C Blake/ C Land
5.	qldwater <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General update 	R Cosgrove
6.	Regional workforce plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed structure and approach 	W Hughes Pages 12-13
7.	Regional procurement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominations sought for regional procurement sub-committee members <i>Reminder – they will discuss:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fire hydrant servicing and maintenance ○ Water main air scouring / flushing maintenance ○ Sewer main fogging maintenance 	All
8.	Lessons learned	All
9.	General business	All
10.	Points for noting to the FNQROC Board	All
11.	Next meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday 13 May 	
12.	Meeting close	



FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL WATER ALLIANCE

Minutes

Meeting No	29
Meeting Name	FNQ Regional Water Alliance
Date	19 November 2021
Time	10:00 am
Venue	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
Action 28.1:	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
Item Update: Complete.		
Action 28.2:	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
Item Update: Complete. Circulated with minutes. Criticality tool also available online at https://qldwater.com.au/asset-criticality . Case study presentation scheduled to provide opportunities for feedback on tool development – refer Agenda Item 5.		
Action 28.3:	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
Item Update: In Progress. Update to be provided – refer Agenda Item 6.		
Action 28.4:	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
Item Update: In Progress. Further scoping required – refer Agenda Item 8.		
Action 28.5:	W Hughes to explore training opportunities that may assist Councils with Councillor education around land use planning legislation and its impact.	W Hughes
Item Update: 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.
- Procurement activities are to operate within these guidelines:
 - Where there exists limited supply for a product and/or service,
 - Where member councils are competing against each other for the same goods and/or services
 - Where there is the opportunity for improved service delivery and/or
 - Where member Councils would benefit from the sharing of knowledge and collaboration
- 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 contractors can opt in or out of.
- Service provision contracts only. Won't need a program coordinator/superintendent like sewer relining.
- Commencing investigations:
 - Step 1 – Alliance members to nominate sub-committee representatives with meeting to be scheduled for first quarter of 2022. Councils nominated representatives need to be suitably authorised to share data with both FNQROC and other committee members. 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

Councils nominated representatives need to be suitably authorised to share data with both FNQROC and other committee members.

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
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.	W Hughes
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.	W Hughes/ C Blake
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Action 29.4	W Hughes to circulate qldwater presentation update with the minutes.	W Hughes
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Concept for water sector workforce plan – FNQROC region

Discussion Paper – Friday 18 February 2022

DRAFT research question

- What sequence of levers/actions will allow 12 FNQ regional councils to modernise and grow the water operations workforce to ensure delivery of services, improve public health and safety outcomes, meet the needs of a growing population and industrial base, and respond to ongoing changes to water regulation?

Desired outcomes of workforce plan:

- Identify barriers for workers to enter the public water sector and options to mitigate and/or remove them
- Identify trends that are shaping the market and how they're expected to change over time
- Identify levers to pull, the attractiveness of each, and potential sequencing to modernise and grow the workforce sustainably
- Strengthen the capacity of councils to identify workforce development needs, skills shortages, and specific occupations that require targeted training or reskilling

Potential stakeholder/advisory group arrangements to explore:

- qldwater
- Jobs Queensland/ DESBT/ TAFE
- CSIRO Data61
- Qld Health
- DRDMW
- Business Liaison Association

Scope/Definitions:

Geography

- FNQROC Water Alliance members (12 councils)

Workforce of interest

- Drinking water and wastewater facility operators, engineers and SCADA operators

Workforce supply

- Number, skills, training, and other characteristics of people *currently engaged* in the water sector workforce
- Number, skills, training, and other characteristics of *potential workforce* in the region (people not working in the sector who are already qualified or have partially completed their apprenticeship)
- Number, skills, training and other characteristics of *unskilled workforce* in the region that can potentially be trained to work in the water sector (unskilled workforce capacity)
- Number, skills, training and other characteristics of potential *school-based trainees* in the region

Workforce demand

- Consider opportunities now and in the future (10-year timeframe)
- Skills or training required to meet this demand
- Consider what disruptors could occur that inhibit staff retention (mining boom, COVID, migration between cities and regional areas, Olympic Games 2032)

Concept for water sector workforce plan – FNQROC region

Discussion Paper – Friday 18 February 2022

DRAFT project structure

Part A: Scene setting – workforce planning context

1. Growing trend for increased focus on safety, health and wellness at work (implications for workers plus the wider population through service delivery)
2. Impacts of ageing infrastructure on regional communities (implications for service level standards, rates payable)
3. Regional migration/population and tourism trends (implications for demand in regional areas)
4. Growing trend towards AI and other technologies (implications for infrastructure investment, customer expectations)
5. Implications of the above – setting the vision for the FNQROC public water sector (what do we want our workers to be focussed on and known for? eg environmental leadership, technology leadership, customer/community leadership)

Part B: Current State of the workforce in FNQ

1. Where are we now (ageing population, loss of workers to other sectors, increased health regulation)
2. Regional workforce profile (current workforce data/regional composition)
3. Regional education and training profile (what people are currently training for – potential switching opportunities?)
4. Regional qualifications profile (potential pool of qualified workers in the region)
5. Regional skills profiles by Council (current workforce and skills/certifications)
6. Barriers to workforce development (attraction, retention, salaries, transport, housing, operational differences between Councils/labour mobility)

Part C: Future State of the workforce in FNQ

1. Key megatrends (technology/AI, demographics/migration, working remotely)
2. Significant regional projects confirmed or planned by Councils
3. Regional skills demand profiles by Council (size and type of future workforce needed)
4. Common challenges and opportunities (gap analysis – instead of focussing on specific job descriptions, can we focus on skill clusters to increase labour mobility?)
5. Future workforce scenarios (eg status quo, increased technology, full automation)

Part D: Priorities and recommendations

1. Core themes and resulting recommendations (skill/upskill/reskill, attraction and retention, transitioning to new technologies, networks and collaborations, regional migration)
2. Roadmap to implementation (who will do what, timeframes, KPIs, funding options)

Part E: Policy recommendations

1. Regional leadership (eg shared platform for job postings open to all water sector workers across the region – real-time flexibility of job sharing)
2. Education and training (opportunities to advocate for new policy initiatives; introduction of school-based traineeship programs)
3. Innovation and entrepreneurship (frameworks required to foster and support)