

# FNQ Regional Water Alliance

## Minutes

<b>Meeting No</b>	37
<b>Meeting Name</b>	FNQ Regional Water Alliance
<b>Date</b>	9 February 2024
<b>Time</b>	9:30am
<b>Venue</b>	Committee Room, Level 3, Cairns Regional Council, Spence Street, Cairns

### 1. ATTENDANCE

Name	Organisation
Toni Veronese <i>via teleconference</i>	Cairns Regional Council
Simon Page	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Manu Gravatt	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Robyn Maddalena	Cook Shire Council
Brian Pickering	Croydon Shire Council
Garry Pickering	Croydon Shire Council
Peter White	Douglas Shire Council
Cassandra Budd	Mareeba Shire Council
Morris Hamill	Mareeba Shire Council
Bruce Gardiner	Tablelands Regional Council
Jennifer Hartwig	LGAQ
David Wiskar <i>via teleconference</i>	QLD Water
Richard Kidston <i>via teleconference</i>	RDMW
Christopher Land <i>via teleconference</i>	Queensland Health
Lee-Anne Willis <i>via teleconference</i>	Water Industry Worker
Amanda Hancock	FNQROC

### 2. GUESTS

Name	Organisation
Kym Mansfield	QUT
Professor Yang Liu	QUT

### 3. APOLOGIES

Name	Organisation
Adam Schmalz	Cairns Regional Council
Mark Wuth	Cairns Regional Council
Shane Bandiera	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Kerryn Bull	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Peter Tonkes	Cook Shire Council
Raju Ranjit	Etheridge Shire Council
Geoff Tansley	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
Elai Semesi	Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
Muhammad Abdullah	Tablelands Regional Council
Kiley Hounslow	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
Sam Bann	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
Dinesha Emmerly	RDMW
Ingrid Fomiatti Minnesma	RDMW
Richard Kidston	RDMW
Brad Milligan	QLD Health
Jess Dean	QLD Water

### 4. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes noted and accepted.

### 5. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Action Item	Action	Responsible Person(s)	Status
34.1	Shane Bandiera to provide Amanda with details of non- accredited training to potentially be included in the WIW program. Amanda to circulate to councils to review and for councils to add any further training for inclusion. Amanda to then send the details on to Lee-Anne to investigate further.	Shane Bandiera, CCRC	Lee-Anne to follow up with Shane
35.6	Amanda to circulate the Planned Regional Water & Sewer Infrastructure Upgrades captured in the last State Advocacy document. Councils to review and update as appropriate and return to Amanda before the next Water Alliance meeting.	Amanda Hancock & All Councils	See Item 10
36.1	Councils to check and advise Lee-Anne, WIW of the status of training reimbursements due.	All Councils	See Item 11
36.2	Amanda to circulate again the Planned Regional Water & Sewer Infrastructure Upgrades captured in the last State Advocacy document. Councils to review and update as	Amanda Hancock & All Councils	See Item 10

	appropriate before the next Water Alliance (See Action Item 35.6)		
36.3	Morris, MSC to liaise with QLD Water regarding participation in QLD Water's HR/IR project.	Morris Hamill, MSC	Complete

## 6. WATER CAPABILITY PROJECT – BEN STEEL & ANDREW HURFORD, STANTEC

Ben Steel, Project Manager, Stantec provided a presentation on their work to date on the Regional Water Capability project.

*A copy of Stantec's presentation circulated with the minutes.*

## 7. REGIONAL DROUGHT RESILIENCE PLAN (RDRP) & EPA DRAFT GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS GUIDELINE – MARIA ANSELMO, FNQROC

### Draft GHG Emissions Guidelines for EA Applications

Maria Anselmo, FNQROC Regional Climate Resilience Coordinator, provided a brief update on the GHG Emissions Guidelines for any new and amended Environmental Authority applications.

The new guidelines are applicable to any new and amended EA applications.

#### Guideline Purpose

- Set minimum expectations for information provided with EA applications in relation to GHG emissions under existing regulatory framework i.e., *Human Rights Act 2019, Environmental Protection Act 1994*.
- Limited to **new and expanded applications**.
- Not intended to duplicate Commonwealth requirements. Rather, provide consistency at the State level.
- Aligns Queensland with other jurisdictions that have similar requirements.
- Address community expectations to consider GHG emissions when deciding EAs.
- Provides for rigorous, defensible decisions – recent Land Court decisions confirmed emissions should be considered as part of the EA assessments.

**Draft GHG Emissions Guidelines for Environmental Authority (EA) Applications are open for feedback until COB Friday 16 February.**

Jacqui Hurwood from LGAQ is consolidating feedback from Councils and has asked for feedback to be emailed to her, she's also more than happy to talk through any feedback over the phone. If any of the Water Alliance would also like to discuss this further, Rudi Pretzler, Lead – Public Health and Waste, and Josie Raftery, Lead – Water and Wastewater Infrastructure are both very happy to discuss any questions or comments about their particular expertise areas. Their contact details will be shared along with a copy of the guidelines.

**ACTION POINT 37.1 Maria Anselmo to investigate if the new Greenhouse Gas Emissions Guidelines for Environmental Authority includes minor amendment applications.**

### Regional Drought Resilience Plan – Review of Water Security Actions

Maria provided an update on the progress of Regional Drought Resilience Plans for Gulf Hinterland and Wet Tropics.

After two rounds of engagement, analysis of climate science and a literature review of existing strategies and plans, the first draft with pathways and actions for achieving drought resilience is complete.

Water security was identified as a pathway for achieving resilience and today wanted to share the actions to answer three questions:

1. Have we missed any actions?
2. Are the actions identified already occurring? And if so, what are the gaps that can be addressed in this strategy?
3. Will these actions help the region's resilience to future drought events?

Discussed the possibility of funding to support the delivery of actions in the regional drought resilience plans and the responsibility of the Water Alliance in delivering actions related to water security. The final Regional Drought Resilience Plans are scheduled for release in June 2024.

Feedback from members:

- Overall, members agreed that the actions identified are needed to achieve resilience.
- Highlighted an internal funding gap for operational actions compared to capital projects, thus requiring external funding for the delivery of long-term water security strategies.
- Confirmed existing initiatives in water education campaigns, e.g., WaterWise, and the need for a Water Education Coordinator to deliver regional water education programs that facilitate water conservation behaviour.
- Detecting water leaks identified as a priority with recommendations to investigate a solution on a regional stage

**ACTION POINT 37.2 Maria Anselmo to consolidate feedback regarding the water actions identified in the Regional Drought Resilience Plan and share it with the Plan writing team.**

**ACTION POINT 37.3 Councils to send details of any existing leak detection arrangements to Amanda Hancock to consider the development of a potential regional leak detection arrangement.**

*A copy of Maria's presentation circulated with the minutes.*

## **8. REGIONAL BIOSOLIDS SUB-COMMITTEE – AMANDA HANCOCK, FNQROC**

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Amanda provided the following update:

- The Regional Biosolids Sub-committee met for the second time on 9 January 2024.
- At this meeting the innovative Resources and Waste Technologies (iRWT) team from RMIT University delivered a presentation on the research and development they are undertaking on biosolids thermal treatment options.
- This research is being carried out in partnership with the Australia Research Council's Training Centre for Transformation of Australia's Biosolids Resource and the team are keen to work the FNQROC as we continue to look at the various options that might be best suited to our region.
- Work is now underway to provide the team with information required to progress: -
  - Amount of biosolids produced at each location.
  - Treatment steps in each location.
  - If biosolids are dried, what is the process (example: solar dried)
  - How much FOGO is produced in each council.
  - How far are these FOGO facilities located from the water treatment plants?
  - Any available analysis on both biosolids and FOGO (example: elemental analysis, heavy metal concentrations etc.,)
- A Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) is currently under discussion.

## 9. NATIONAL WATER REFORM – AMANDA HANCOCK, FNQROC

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Amanda provided the following update:

- QLD Water circulated information at the beginning of January regarding the National Water Reform Consultation, with the Productivity Commission calling for submissions by 2 February 2024.
- In 2024, the Commission will advise on the progress of all Australian governments in achieving the objectives, outcomes and timelines anticipated under the *2004 Intergovernmental Agreement on a National Water Initiative (NWI)* consistent with the *Water Act 2007* (Cth).
- This is the third inquiry the Commission has undertaken on the progress of water reform in Australia.
- QLD Water have made a submission the key topics as follows:
  - Planning – Queensland has seen rapid population growth and the 2032 Olympics have been announced, leading to intensification of development and new industries (e.g., green H2) for which water and sewerage planning has not been captured adequately.
  - Skills — The previous inquiry was largely silent on this issue, but the skills deficit in Queensland has only gotten worse since that time.
  - Pricing – Cost-reflective pricing is not practicable for remote and regional Queensland, and infrastructure investment deficits are biting.
  - Regional governance – Since 2020 the QWRAP program has grown from 5 councils to 9, with total coverage of the state soon to be complete.

*QLD Water & LGAQ's submission circulated with the minutes.*

## 10. PLANNED REGIONAL WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES – AMANDA HANCOCK, FNQROC

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Amanda provided the following update:

At the last 2 meetings councils were asked to review the information previously captured in the Planned Regional Water and Sewer Infrastructure Upgrades document used at the last State advocacy meeting to establish if it is still up to date. The action item remains outstanding. It is important to ensure that we have a current list of infrastructure priorities to consider should suitable funding opportunities arise.

Cairns Regional Council's priorities are as per the signed off advocacy stance which is available from Wendy Hughes.

**ACTION POINT 37.4 Amanda Hancock to circulate again the Planned Regional Water and Sewer Infrastructure Upgrades captured in the last State Advocacy document. Councils to review and update as appropriate before the next Water Alliance meeting.**

## 11. WATER INDUSTRY WORKER

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Lee-Anne Willis provided the following update:

- EnviroCheck
  - EnviroCheck RTO awarded Skills Assured Supplier status as mentioned in the skills partnership meeting on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> by Qldwater.
  - With EnviroCheck now having funding subsidy access, Lee-Anne has engaged in talks with the director Dr Julian Catmull.
  - Prior to commencing with S&B for the Cert III, councils confirmed they would like Lee-Anne to explore options with Envirocheck to deliver the qualification.
- Cert III WIO
  - Planning for the cohort is progressing with S&B.

- Names of the students are required for allocation of the schedule to minimise out-of-pocket expenses.
- Councils to advise Lee-Anne if they are available to be a host council. Host council requirements are to provide training facilities, supply catering for participants, and provide equipment and access to undertake practical learning opportunities – such as tour visits, hands on practicals, an employee as a subject matter expert where applicable.
- Training can commence in late April.
- Dates confirmation to take offline with Toni, CRC and Peter, DSC for the Network training for Block Three and Block Four.
- Cert IV WIO
  - Eight councils have submitted preferred units. DSC is one of the eight. Due to the complexity of the distance and units selected Lee-Anne is still in the planning stage with S&B. Some councils are still to confirm numbers for a training schedule to be developed. An update should be available in early March on final pricing and the dates for delivery.
- Contribution to LDPC role
  - In the coming month Lee-Anne will send out an MOU for new investing councils that participate in the Cert III / or Cert IV and will also request a PO for contributions for the LDPC role. DSC and CRC are current investing councils.
  - Based on the RDMW guidelines of water connections this is how the funding for the LDPC role is calculated.
    - Small councils less than less than 10,000 will be \$1600.00 +gst for the remaining contract term, of 30 June 2025. This is made up of two instalments, \$800 +gst for the FY 2024, and \$800 +gst for FY 2025.
    - Medium councils between 10,000 and 25,000 will be \$3,668.00 +gst for the remaining contract term, of 30 June 2025. This is made up of two instalments, \$1834 +gst for the FY 2024, and \$1834 +gst for FY 2025.
    - Large councils over 25,000 will be \$5,334.00 +gst for the remaining contract term, of 30 June 2025. This is made up of two instalments, \$2667 +gst for the FY 2024, and \$2667 +gst for FY 2025.
- Previous Cert III cohort
  - Due to some out-of-pocket expenses incurred by councils from the last years cohort, Lee-Anne has been working with Qldwater to supply information on costs.
  - Please provide Lee-Anne with assistance in providing information; some of which will be required from council's accounts team.
  - Please feel free to have the accounts teams contact Lee-Anne to discuss any queries they may have.
  - The date of the credit note and amount for reimbursement for CRC has been obtained.

**ACTION POINT 37.5 Amanda Hancock to circulate table provided by Lee-Anne Willis, WIW to assist with the provision of costs information to QLD Water which were incurred by last years Cert III cohort.**

## 12. QLD WATER – DAVID WISKAR

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David provided a presentation detailing the current work of the QWRAP program across the State.

David also advised of a national agreement to changes to the National Performance Report (NPR), details of which will be circulated with the minutes.

*QLD Water update and NPR presentations circulated with the minutes.*

*Toni Veronese departed 11.50am.*

## 13. LGAQ – JENNIFER HARTWIG

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Jennifer provided the following update:

### Motions

- The 2023 LGAQ annual conference motion outcomes are now published on congruent. Link provided for minutes.  
<https://congruent.lgaq.asn.au/article/?num=KA-11900>
- Motion resolutions are updated here <https://congruent.lgaq.asn.au/motions/>
- LGAQ are working to advance the water motion resolutions and looking at opportunities to align our advocacy with Qldwater, particularly pFAS, sunwater pricing, skills and training.
- Key water motions passed were detailed in the minutes of the last Water Alliance.

### QWRAP

- **Funding for travel and accommodation associated with training.**  
Councils may not be aware that as part of the QWRAP they can access bid pool funding to cover the costs of travel and accommodation for staff to attend training e.g cert 3. Cost claims can be retrospective too so long as the criteria of 2 or more participating councils is met. standard rules around travel allowance in local government apply here for cost efficiencies.
- **Funding for project management**  
Please note there is also new funding allocations of \$175 per year for project management which can apply to any sort of significant water/sewerage collaborative project. Criteria for project management is still being defined, but please let us know if there is anything we can do to assist the alliance if you are seeking project management funding support within your bid pool applications. There is \$175 K in project management funding that has yet to be accessed.
- **Bid Pool Documents**  
Bid pool documents are being reviewed again in 2024 to incorporate project management funding criteria. These will be sent to QWRAP regions for feedback following the 13 February PSC.

### Chlorine Training

- NQ are looking at doing accredited chlorine gas training and have asked if any FNQ would be interested.

### Research Opportunities

- In 2024, QWRAP are looking to explore opportunities for research with universities and in particular any interest in research work with QUT and their new water research lab facilities - Yang Lui and Kym Mansfield from QUT are attending QWRAP meetings to talk about their work and research opportunities at the new WISE Water Innovation and Sustainable Environments Laboratory (WISE Lab) that opened in December.

### FNQ

- *Application for project Regional Water Capability* has been approved by PSC. Just waiting on LGAQ president signoff of approval letter.

### Caretaker Period

- Please note that during caretaker period now applies from 29 January to 16 March 2024.
- Councils are prohibited from making decisions including to enter into a contract greater than \$200,000 or 1% (whichever is greater) of the local government's net rate and utility charges (as stated in the local government's audited financial statements included in the local government's most recently adopted annual report. **(Factsheet attached)**
- This includes combined costs of in-kind and cash contributions of individual councils to QWRAP projects.
- While this won't affect the majority of QWRAP projects, it's important to keep in mind when writing funding applications during this period.

## 14. REGIONAL JOINT PURCHASING – ELLIOTT MEELEN, FNQROC

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Elliott advised:

- Councils are asked to consider their participation in the 24/25 arrangement.
- An email will be circulated shortly with a request for programs.

## 15. DRIVING SUSTAINABLE URBAN WATER MANAGEMENT – PROFESSOR YANG LIU AND KIM MANSFIELD, QUT

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- Professor Yang Liu, accompanied by Kym Mansfield delivered a presentation on the new research facility at QUT. A copy of the presentation will be provided in due course.
- The team are keen to work with councils to address water treatment challenges faced by the region.

*A copy of a Capability Statement for Professor Yang Liu and the Research Team at QUT and an overview of QUTs water research capabilities circulated with the minutes.*

## 16. UPCOMING EVENTS

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Various Urban Water Risk Assessment Tours taking place across the region.

QLD Water SWEAP meeting – 7 March 2024

QLD Water Skills Forum – 19 April 2024

## 17. GENERAL BUSINESS

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Jennifer, LGAQ advised that she would be on maternity leave shortly. Recruitment is underway, in the meantime, Josie Raftery is available for any queries.

Christopher Land, QLD Health advised they are focused on the learnings from the various water security/public health issues that arose following Cyclone Jasper.

## 18. NEXT MEETING

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Next meeting scheduled for Friday 10 May 2024 in Cairns.

**The meeting closes at 12.30pm.**

**Minutes prepared by Amanda Hancock, Regional Strategic Infrastructure Coordinator**

**ACTION ITEMS OVERLEAF**



## AGREED ACTION ITEMS

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37.1	Maria Anselmo to investigate if the new Greenhouse Gas Emissions Guidelines for Environmental Authority includes minor amendment applications.	Maris Anselmo, FNQROC
37.2	Maria Anselmo to consolidate feedback regarding the water actions identified in the Regional Drought Resilience Plan and share it with the Plan writing team.	Maria Anselmo, FNQROC
37.3	Councils to send details of any existing leak detection arrangements to Amanda Hancock to consider the development of a potential regional leak detection arrangement.	All Councils
37.4	Amanda to circulate the Planned Regional Water & Sewer Infrastructure Upgrades captured in the last State Advocacy document again. Councils to review and update as appropriate and return to Amanda before the next Water Alliance meeting.	Amanda Hancock, FNQROC & All Councils
37.5	Amanda Hancock to circulate table provided by Lee-Anne Willis, WIW to assist with the provision of costs information to QLD Water which were incurred by last years Cert III cohort.	Amanda Hancock, FNQROC