



WIOA President's Message 2012

Welcome everyone, to the 75th Victorian Water Industry Engineers & Operators Conference.

It is a great honour to hold the position of President of WIOA at the 75th Anniversary of the Victorian Water Industry Engineers & Operators Conference. The planning that has gone into making this event a very special one has been immense and our dedicated team of staff have done a fantastic job in preparing for the conference. There are a quite a few new initiatives this year to help us celebrate the 75th conference milestone appropriately.

A special thank you is extended to the sub-committee who compiled the 75th Conference Anniversary commemorative publication detailing the history of this event. It has some interesting reading. For me, what I found amazing researching some of the archives from the 1930's was the issues around standards for sewer mains installation, and how we are still today discussing the same old problems of price versus quality. Back then it was lack of money in the government purses during a time of war, today its developers trying to deliver cheaper blocks.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of VicWater and having the event under the Regional Water Corporations banner allows all the Victorian Water Corporations to take it in turns to host the conference on a rotational basis. In 2012, the Host role is being undertaken jointly by Gippsland Water and East Gippsland Water.

As always, a number of organisations have taken on conference sponsorship roles and their support and assistance is invaluable. A big thank you is extended to our conference Prime Partners in Automation Group, Xylem (formerly ITT Water & Wastewater), Acromet Australia and Peerless Epigen. As a result of the generosity and support of these companies, as well as the support of all our other sponsors and exhibitors, we are able to keep the price of attending this event at an affordable level. I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by Chisholm Institute of TAFE who have assisted us by bringing two renowned international water industry experts, both of whom will be delivering keynote presentations at the conference.

The great feature about the Bendigo site is the ease of getting everyone and everything in and out of the venue. This would not happen if it were not for the volunteer work of the WIOA committee and many others who are just as passionate as we are about making these two days a success. This has always been the key to why these and other events organised by WIOA are so successful. The amount of volunteers that put up their hand to get involved is what makes our organisation stand out from the rest. From all levels of water corporations and industry suppliers, we have people lending a hand. Whether it's driving forklifts, filling water bottles, sweeping the floor or presenting papers, everyone gets in with nothing more than a "thanks mate" for reward.

One such volunteer is WIOA Life Member and Chairman, Ron Bergmeier. After 25 years of service to WIOA as a Committee Member, trade exhibition organiser and Board Chairman, Ron has decided it is time to enjoy his retirement. Ron intends to step down as chairman at the AGM in March 2013, so this is one of his last events in an official role. There wouldn't be many here that would not know Ron, and so many of us have benefited from his knowledge and support.

I will certainly miss Ron's contribution. He has without doubt been one of my mentors in the water industry, so if you see Ron around over the next couple of days please thank him for all the work he has done to help make this event what it is today.

As an organisation WIOA has built a very dedicated, competent and professional team of staff and a proactive Committee and Board, ably assisted by many Members on our various advisory committees. Together we are all committed to driving further growth within WIOA nationally.

Our membership numbers continue to grow, mostly as a result of the "Utility Corporate" membership category which provides proactive businesses the opportunity to keep their people up to date with what's going on in the world of build, operate and maintaining water and wastewater systems. Businesses can now sign up their operations staff in bulk with just one invoice to deal with. Not only does this type of membership give organisations the advantage of knowing best practice, it also gives them a voice on the type of activities it would like WIOA to be involved in.

Improving the knowledge and skills of operational staff in all facets of the water industry is one of WIOA's primary goals. We want everyone to become more competent, efficient and productive in the day to day operation of their systems. The development and provision of high quality resources and specialist learning events is one way we can do this. It is great to see that some water corporations are now using the "water" series of guide books as their reference material for developing standard operation procedures. Hopefully this will continue as we continue to roll out our Wastewater series in 2012 and 2013.

Water industry organisations such as Councils, water trusts and sewerage authorities of the past and the present day Department of Health, Water Industry Training Centre, AWA and water Corporations have supported this event because they know that for 75 years, operations people have come to this event to learn, teach, be involved and quench their thirst for knowledge. It is now your turn to get involved in this great event, so don't waste the opportunity. One thing all the WIOA committee love to see is the growth of people who attend our event. We see people who come for the first time return to present posters then papers, and in many cases it is not long after that, that we see them representing their business as a leader.

In closing, we hope that you enjoy this event and make the most of the opportunities on offer. We also encourage you to go back to your workplace and tell your supervisor/manager about the many positives that you have obtained from attending the conference. Perhaps they will be encouraged to send even more operations staff along next year. We also hope you will consider tapping into what WIOA has to offer by becoming a Member. This includes access to a range of services and information, as well as our informative website. The \$25 annual fee is money well spent and it is a very affordable way to keep abreast of what is happening in the operational side of your industry.

Remember the easy option is to sit in a smoko room and whinge about things that don't work, or you could take the harder but more rewarding choice of getting involved, learn and grow. It's up to you.



John Day – WIOA President