



Operator

September 2023 The Water Industry Operators Association of Australia Magazine

NEW ZEALAND
OPERATOR TOUR

2023
QUEENSLAND
CONFERENCE
REPORT

QUEENSLAND
AND NATIONAL
AWARD WINNERS
RECOGNISED



TASMANIAN AWARD
WINNERS RECOGNISED



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From the CEO's Desk - Dean Barnett

Welcome to the September Edition of Operator.

I have now been in the CEO role for a bit over a month, and it is a great privilege to be part of the WIOA team, which is focused on our volunteers, committee members, association members, sponsors and exhibitors, while supporting the operations sector of the water industry nationally

The team is working hard on the implementation of a new membership customer relationship management system. What does this mean for you? A seamless and electronic membership management system. Watch this space as we share its functionality towards the end of the year.

We have also reviewed our structure to ensure we continue to provide and enhance our service offerings. Our valued long-term employees will continue in their roles: Ann Austin - Administration Coordinator & Sherryn Wall - Digital Design Coordinator. Ella Wilson continues as our Administration Trainee.

Katy O'Sullivan joined us in September as our new Manager - Communications, Events & Office Support. Glenn Alford has been promoted from Events Coordinator to our new Manager - Membership, Sponsor & Exhibitor Support. The revised structure is designed to also support the delivery of our strategy.

Our WIOA Ltd Board, WIOA Ltd Members, WIOA Inc General Committee is looking at our governance structure as a project called "One WIOA". This review is designed to identify any business governance efficiencies.

Did you know that The Water Industry Operators Association of Australia has a structure with two entities:

- Water Industry Operators Association of Australia Inc (WIOA Inc)
- Water Industry Operators Association of Australia Ltd (WIOA Ltd)

The Water Industry Operators Association of Australia Inc (WIOA Inc) is an association which is incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic).



It was established in 1973. WIOA Inc currently has approximately 4,500 members. In 2006, WIOA Inc moved from being a Victoria-only association to providing services on a national basis.

In order for the Victoria-only association to trade outside Victoria, the Water Industry Operators Association of Australia Ltd (WIOA Ltd) was formed in January 2007, under the Corporations Act 2001 as a company limited by guarantee, with the voting membership limited to four members being three respected senior representatives and one Inc member being the President. We will keep you posted on any progress.

I hope you enjoy this edition,

Dean Barnett
WIOA Chief Executive Officer

September 2023

Cover Delegates checking out the latest products on display at the annual Queensland Conference held on the Sunshine Coast in July

Operator is produced by the WIOA
PO Box 6012, Shepparton, Victoria 3630

Managing Editor George Wall

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Online wioa.org.au
Email info@wioa.org.au

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Member Profile - David Sheehan

Position Manager Water Regulations

Employer Coliban Water

Nickname Dave (yes, I know, really imaginative!)

Favourite Team South Sydney Rabbitohs (great to be seen in the Red and Green)

Favourite food Good Pizza or good quality dark chocolate (but not at the same time)

Who do you admire? My mother and my wife

Three people you would invite to dinner

Thom Yorke - Lead Singer of Radiohead, Sam Neill - Actor, and Jacinda Ardern - former NZ Prime Minister

Thoughts on the water industry at the moment?

I started in the water industry way back in 1984. Over that period, the fundamentals really haven't changed that much – harvest, treat, distribute drinking water, collect wastewater, treat, and repeat. The big changes have been in relation to the application of economic regulation to price setting, improved health and environmental regulation, and an increased role for water corporations in liveability and climate resilience.

Like many sectors, an ageing workforce, the scale of required asset renewals, and responding to a changing climate, are the front-and-centre challenges for the next 3-5 years. Having said that, none of these challenges are insurmountable, and the industry is well-placed to meet these challenges, and continue to provide reliable water and wastewater services.

Your involvement with WIOA, & as a new member on the WIOA committee, what contributions are you hoping to make?

I have worked in the water industry for over 35 years, and, over that time, I have worked in a range of roles, both operational and regulatory, primarily in the area of drinking water quality.

I first got involved with WIOA in 2007, around the issue of operator competency, and how best to manage that issue. Since then, I have presented at WIOA conferences, presented talks at other WIOA events, and written or co-authored articles for WaterWorks and other WIOA publication. I was also lucky enough to be made an IDIOT in 2017.



Whilst a member of the WIOA Committee, I would like to use this long-term experience to continue to progress the broad vision of WIOA, which is delivering operational excellence. My particular areas of interest are advocating for a sustainable and high-quality operator training sector, which ensures that the water industry continues to have access to a well-trained and competent operational workforce, and how we provide adequate training opportunities and support to those operators working in regional or remote settings, given the challenges faced by operators working in these locations.

As noted above, I have been fortunate to have worked for both water utilities and in a regulatory role, was a member of the board of Water Research Australia for eight years, and I also have national and international networks that I can draw on, if and as needed, to support the Committee's work.

Tony Hourigan Life Member

Tony Hourigan was awarded a Life Membership of WIOA via Zoom at the Bendigo Conference in March.

Tony was presented his Life Membership plaque and pin at the recent Tasmanian Interest Day in July.



Tony pictured with George Wall

Wear it Purple Day

At WIOA we embrace Diversity & Inclusion, and consider it integral to our culture, our values, and the way we do business.

Friday 25 August 2023 was Wear it Purple Day, which strives to foster supportive, safe, empowering and inclusive environments for rainbow young people.

Pictured are members of the WIOA Diversity & Inclusion Group, Advisory Committee, and Staff who supported the day with a quick catch up in the morning online and some valuable messages shared.



WIOA Members in their finest Purple colours!

Network Operator Development Program - 2022 Graduation

The fifth staging of the Network Operator Development Program was completed in 2022 and the participants joined the other guests at the Presidents Dinner at the Bendigo conference for the graduation ceremony in March 2023.



Mike Rankin leading a NODP session

It was great to see the course being held in person after the 2020-2021 cohort sessions had to be moved to an online format through Covid lockdowns. The real benefit of the program is the face to face interaction between the participants and the presenters and committee.



On site demonstration for the participants



Graduates and Committee at the Presidents Dinner

Although a little smaller than past groups with only eight participants finishing the course, this was one of the tightest knit groups we have ever had.

WIOA would like to thank the organising Committee of Neville Whittaker, Mike Rankin, Mick Mahoney, Andrew Povey, Dean Barnett, Grant Powell, Jamie Rossato, Michael Wink & George Wall for the effort they have put into delivering this program to a high standard year after year. We would also like to thank everyone who presented to the operators at any of the sessions throughout the year.



Members of the NODP Committee

The 47th Queensland Water Industry Operations Conference and Exhibition hosted over 800 people from across the water industry. This was the second highest attended event WIOA has run in Queensland. Held at the University of Sunshine Coast, USC Stadium on 19 & 20 July, the excellent attendance is testament to the strategic importance of this event to the Queensland water industry.

Rhett Duncan Executive Manager, Customer Delivery from our Host Sponsor Unitywater delivered a Welcome Address to the Delegates. His presentation was on some key initiatives at Unitywater and some insight on their future thinking, this was supported by Lyndon Davis who provided a very insightful Welcome to Country.

Mark Trembath provided the Opening Address and shared an update regarding WaterAid and their activities. This consisted of the work they are doing nationally and also internationally, he also invited the audience to participate in Walk for Water in October. By walking, running or riding for five days, you can raise awareness and funds to people around the world access clean water for the first time.

Daniel Spiller Chief Operating Officer - Water, Veolia Australia and New Zealand provided an insightful Keynote Address on the Ecological Transformation in the Water Industry. This presentation covered global challenges, digital future, from WWTP to resources and getting the basic right.

The Kwatye Award winner was announced at the Wednesday Meet the Exhibitors dinner. Congratulations to Steven Nash & Ricky Bertoli from Goulburn Valley Water. They were recognised for their project on the Duniak Moira Fishing Ponds at the Merrigum WTP.

At the Awards Dinner held on Thursday evening, Aron Smith from Cairns Regional Council was announced as the 2023 Queensland Operator of the Year. The Young Operator of the Year was Mitchell Gormley from North Burnett Regional Council, and John Sebasio was awarded the Operator of the Year Civil/All Rounder.

Others recognised at the dinner included Kathryn Turner from Urban Utilities who won the Award for the Best Paper by an Operator while the Best Poster Award was presented to Tristen Hahn from Seqwater.

The Brian Davis Award for the Best Paper Overall at the conference was awarded to co presenters Janice Wilson from Double Black Diamond Solutions & Reagan Whitehouse from Unitywater who talked about different learning programs, and how “one size does not fit all”.

The event included a comprehensive exhibition with just over 100 expo sites filled by around 90 companies who exhibited the latest in equipment, services, and process technologies available to the water industry. The team from Wilo, were awarded the Ron Bergmeier Award for the Best Exhibition Site.

The conference again hosted the Ixom Water of Origin, a taste off between the best sample from NSW - Shoalhaven Water's Bamarang WTP and QLD - Mackay Regional Council's Nebo Road WTP. Mackay Regional Council were judged the winner, and increased QLD's lead over NSW by 7-3.

The Queensland Main Tapping Competition was held with a great roll up of spectators to support the contestants on both days. The TasWater team of Cameron Lusk and Lynden Thurstan travelled up to Queensland to take on the reigning champs Jarryd Casey & Hugh Wilson from the City of Gold Coast. Although the Tassie team did produce the fastest time of the heats, the City of Gold Coast team were able to retain their title as the fastest QLD team and received the donation of \$1,000 to a charity of their choice thanks to sponsor Reece Civil & Viadux.

With a drone as the prize in the raffle, thanks to Control Components, everyone dug deep for charity raising **\$1,000** with all proceeds going to the Tongan Water Board as nominated by Host Sponsor Unitywater.



National - Kwatye Award
Steven Nash & Ricky Bertoli
Goulburn Valley Water

Queensland Conference 2023 Winners

Congratulations to all the award winners from the Victorian Conference and Exhibition.



Qld Operator of the Year
Aron Smith
Cairns Regional Council



Qld Young Operator of the Year
Mitchell Gormley
North Burnett Regional Council



Qld Operator of the Year Civil/All Rounder
John Sebasio
Veolia



Brian Davis Award for Best Paper Overall
Janice Wilson & Reagan Whitehouse
Double Black Diamond Solutions & Unitywater



Awards for Best Paper by an Operator
1. Kathryn Turner
Urban Utilities
2. Scott Lowe
Unitywater
3. John Holmes
Mackay Regional Council



Award for Best Poster by an Operator
Trusten Hahn
Seqwater



Ixom Water of Origin
QLD - Mackay Regional Council
Nebo Road WTP



Ron Bergmeier Award - Best Exhibition Site
Wilo



Queensland Main Tapping Competition
City of Gold Coast
Jarryd Casey & Hugh Wilson
\$1,000 to Charity
D.A.D.S - Dads Against Discrimination Support

Ixom Water of Origin - NSW/ACT v QLD

The staging of the 10th Ixom Water of Origin competition at the QLD Conference on the Sunshine Coast saw the winners from the NSW/ACT and Queensland competitions pitted against one another for Origin bragging rights.



The judges taking their time with both samples

Representing NSW/ACT was the team from Shoalhaven Water with a sample from their Bamarang Water Treatment Plant. They were competing against the team from Mackay Regional Council with their sample from the Nebo Road Water Treatment Plant.

Our judges for the competition included Ryan Walker representing sponsor Ixom, Desiré Gralton from the Queensland Water Directorate, and John Paulger a retired WIOA member.

The 3 judges had a very tough time determining a winner from the two samples, however in the end it was back-to-back wins for the team from Mackay Regional Council.

This now means the Queenslanders lead the Water of Origin competition 7 to 3 over NSW.



Mackay RC team pictured with Ryan from Ixom

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Gold Coast tap it 6 in a row - QLD Main Tapping Competition

Excitement filled the air at the 47th Annual QLD WIOA Conference and Exhibition as the Water Industry geared up for the 2023 QLD Water Main Tapping Competition, proudly sponsored by Reece Civil, Viadux, WIOA, Queensland Water Directorate, and hosted by Unitywater on the Sunshine Coast.

This event has a remarkable history, spanning 35 years, with its roots tracing back to the 1980's when skilled water industry workers engaged in friendly battles, showcasing their tapping prowess on live water mains. After a long hiatus, the modern competition returned in 2016, attracting top-tier teams eager to demonstrate their expertise in water main tapping.

Women of Water Breakfast

On Wednesday 19th of July the women registered to attend the annual QLD conference were invited to meet for the Women of Water breakfast.

This year 17 of us met at a cute little coffee shop in Buderim called Hamptons Espresso.

The operators, trainees, administration officers, sales reps and exhibitors that attended breakfast were able to network, share experiences, meet new people, and create or build on friendships that will hopefully continue to grow for years to come.

Thanks to WIOA for creating such a friendly space and wonderful opportunity for women to join together and connect both socially and professionally, and thank you to ProDetec for Sponsoring the Breakfast.

Contributed by **Rachael Vennix** from Toowoomba Regional Council.



A great turn out for the WoW Breakfast in Queensland

The current Australian record, set in 2018 by Trent Roberts and Spencer Stacey from the City of Gold Coast, is 1 minute 32 seconds.

The rules are simple yet challenging: Two-person teams compete in a time trial format, with each team skilfully tapping a 20mm water service on a 100mm DICL pipe, which is pressurised to simulated real world conditions. Competitors must install a length of poly pipe, a shut-off valve and ensure that no leaks are present in the assembly.



Going down to the wire, in the final heat of the day!

This year, the Gold Coast clinched the QLD State Title for the 6th year running with an impressive time of 1 minute and 51 seconds with Mackay Regional Council coming in a close 2nd to take out the runners up trophy.

In an unexpected twist, a team from TasWater, winners of the Victorian Tapping Competition in March, joined the event as exhibition guests and recorded the fastest heat time at 1 minute and 44 seconds. Although they couldn't take home the QLD trophy due to technicality, they proudly earned bragging rights as the first team to challenge the six-time champs from the Gold Coast.



For the win, \$1,000 has been donated by Reece Civil & Viadux to the Gold Coast's charity of choosing. WIOA also matched the donation of \$1,000 for the Tasmanian's.

Contributed by **Ben Pennell** from City of Gold Coast.

Aron is Queensland's Best in 2023

AUSTRALIAN
WATER
ASSOCIATION

Aron Smith from Cairns Regional Council was announced as the 2023 Queensland Operator of the Year at the Awards Dinner of the Queensland Conference in July.

Aron demonstrates an unwavering commitment to sustainable wastewater treatment in all of its facets, environmental protection, safety, operational efficiency, technical excellence, stakeholder management, and team leadership.

Aron began work with Cairns Regional Council in 2011. His enthusiasm, thirst for knowledge and drive has seen him progress through positions of Operator, Senior Operator, Leading Hand/2IC, Team Leader and Regional Team Leader in his time with CRC.

Aron currently leads a team of 11 staff across 4 WWTPs. The WWTPs range in age, condition, and configuration. He is well versed in the technical aspects of operation of all process units, is a leader in the refinement and perfection of sampling and laboratory procedures, but is also happy out in the field cleaning or supporting the trade staff.

Aron is very invested in improving plant processes. He has led many process optimisation and improvement projects over the years including the implementation and ongoing management of a bioreactor online nutrient analyser.

He has championed the use and management of this to reduce daily onsite lab testing, create alarms for early warning of a biological process upset and eliminating weekend attendance by implementing remote SCADA inspections.

Aron is a natural leader and does so by setting an exemplary standard of work ethic and commitment. He is a strong communicator and understands that many individuals contribute to the operation of a treatment plant.

At times it is impossible to share his passion and love of the workplace – its just off the charts! This is why Aron makes an excellent nomination, and a deserving winner of the Queensland Operator of the Year in 2023.

For winning the Award, Aron receives a plaque to keep and an all expenses paid opportunity to join the WIOA delegation on their tour to New Zealand in May 2024 courtesy of sponsor Australian Water Association – Qld Branch. The trip is valued at approximately \$3,000.



Qld Operator of the Year Civil/All Rounder



The Queensland Operator of the Year (Civil/All Rounder) Award was presented to John Sebasio from Veolia at the Conference on the Sunshine Coast in July.

John successfully single handedly operated the Bamaga WTP and Network for a period of six months in 2021-2022, despite having limited support due to the Council's transition in operations. His dedication ensured that all works were completed to the highest possible standards and that safe water supply was maintained throughout that period.

John previously undertook all the on-site water quality sampling and analysis. His attention to detail and compliance with SOP's ensured water quality monitoring data



was reliable, of a high quality, and fully compliant with the sampling program, regardless of the extremes in climate which occur in the Northern Peninsula. John has since passed these skills onto two new operators ensuring they received high quality training and supervision until they were competent to work on their own.

John's unwavering commitment and his ability to consistently complete tasks to the highest possible standards are highlighted by his exceptional work ethic and dedication to ensuring customer satisfaction.

Outside of work John volunteers for cultural festivals and other community events, is a volunteer coach for local sporting teams in basketball and rugby league teams, and is a role model and health advocate for remote indigenous community members.

For winning the award, John receives a plaque to keep, and a professional development opportunity to the value of \$1,500 courtesy of sponsor **Qldwater**.

Qld Young Operator of the Year

Mitchell Gormley from North Burnett Regional Council received the 2023 Queensland Young Operator of the Year Award at the Sunshine Coast conference in July.

Mitchell started with the North Burnett Regional Council in 2020 as a Trainee in the Gayndah Team. Mitchell was able to complete his traineeship almost 9 months early, and was offered a full time position within the team.

Mitchell has been an initiator of improvement measures and is always keen to provide useful feedback and ask thought provoking questions. By thinking outside the box Mitchell has assisted in highlighting tired practices and lifting the team out of the rut isolated teams can often fall into.

One example is the replacement of the aging lamellar settling tubes at the Mingo Crossing Water Treatment Plant to improve water quality and sludge setting in the clarifier. These were not that old, but because they were exposed to UV radiation, they were showing signs of early aging and Mitchell determined falling plant performance was attributable to this. Mitchell carried out his own investigations, following up on information gathered at the WIOA conference and trade show, got quotes and arrange fitment of the replacement parts.



Mitchell completes various tasks daily and prioritises jobs on their severity and criticality. With such a varied palette of tasks, and the close representative and community engagement that comes with small rural communities it can be a minefield to determine which tasks are really the most urgent and critical to the business unit. Mitchell has excellent decision-making skills to ensure that the major issues get addressed first and dealt with.

All of these reasons and many more, are why Mitchell was a worthy winner of the 2023 Queensland Young Operator of the Year.

For winning the award, Mitchell receives a plaque to keep and an all expenses paid opportunity to join the WIOA delegation on their tour to New Zealand in May 2024 courtesy of sponsor **Qldwater**. The trip is valued at approximately \$3,000.

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BIRDS EYE VIEW

Facilities Members Operate

Altona Treatment Plant



Altona Treatment Plant (ATP) services a catchment area of ~18km² which covers 20,000 properties (population around ~45,000-50,000) in the surrounding suburbs of Altona, Altona Meadows, Point Cook, part of Laverton & Sanctuary Lakes. Sewage flowing to ATP is typically ~16ML/d (Average Dry Weather Flow) and it is predominately domestic waste, which is composed of ~1% trade waste with no heavy industry discharges.

Altona Salt Reduction Plant produces two grades of water for its customers - 5.9ML/d of Industrial Water - Supplied to a local plastic manufacturer, and 3.1ML/d of Irrigation Water for local parks and golf clubs.



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- 2 Inlet Works
- 3 IDEA/SBR Tanks
- 4 Effluent Balance Tank
- 5 Aerobic Digester
- 6 Dewatering Building
- 7 Blowers for IDEAs
- 8 Tertiary Cloth Filters
- 9 UV Disinfection Building
- 10 Feedwater Tank for Salt Reduction
- 11 Salt Reduction Plant
- 12 Recycled Water (Irrigation Tank)
- 13 Recycled Water (Industrial Tank)
- 14 Recycled Water Pump Station
- 15 Office Buildings
- 16 Solar Panels Array
- 17 Emergency Storage Lagoon
- 18 A Forest for Australia by Agnes Denes

Kwatye Award Winner 2023



Steven Nash & Ricky Bertoli from Goulburn Valley Water were announced as the winners of the Kwatye Award for 2023 at the Queensland Conference on the Sunshine Coast for their project titled “Dunyak Moira Fishing Ponds at Merrigum WTP”.

“Dunyak Moira” in Yorta Yorta language means Fishing Lake, and that is the new role for two retired raw water storage basins at the Merrigum Water Treatment Plant. Goulburn Valley Water is partnering with Burnanga Indigenous Fishing Club to convert the retired 50ML and 12.5ML storages, idle for 20 years, and their surrounds into public recreational spaces.



Merrigum WTP before and after the Lagoon restore



The project once completed will provide an impact for the Burnanga Fishing Club as a public asset for their members and the local community to access. It will also work as a draw card for visitors to the small town of Merrigum, with a population of 600.



Building the Duck and Bird nests

Goulburn Valley Water have used recycled materials from other projects and retired assets to provide a leading example of circular economy. As well as the rehabilitation of retired water storages into community assets, the project has also used a placement of defective concrete pipes for fish habitat on the floor of both lagoons. Used retired power poles and harvested irrigation timber for duck and bird nests, large root balls recovered from storms in Victoria as fish habitat. All of this creating an environment endemic for flora and fauna in an area deprived of good protected sustainable environment, which is unique in this dairy community of Merrigum.



Bringing fish into the new lagoon

The project meets the diversity and inclusion goals by using the site to be reclassified for recreational purposes with Burnanga. The Fishing Club will have full access to the site and will lead the launch of the site in November 2023 as a community project with a Welcome to Country, fishing displays, demonstrations and lessons. They plan to use this site for education and healing purposes for their members and community.

As winner of the Kwayte Award, the opportunity to donate \$2,000 to the charity of program of their choice will be provided to Steve & Ricky and the team at GVW on behalf of sponsor **TRILITY**.

For more information on Dunyak Moira visit:

 www.gvwater.vic.gov.au/dunyak-moira



Steven Nash & Ricky Bertoli receive the Kwatye Award

Tasmanian Operator of the Year



At the Interest Day in Mowbray in July, Alex Smith was announced as the winner of the Tasmanian Operator of the Year.

Alex started at TasWater as a Trainee Water Services Operator within the Urban Network team. Alex has not worked in the industry before and jumped at the opportunity as she really enjoyed working in the outdoors and wanted to learn new skills.



For the first two years, Alex was seen to be lacking in self-confidence around our operations and when undertaking field tasks. Although when in the classroom, she was then seen to be assisting other Operators with their assignment and assessments.

Over the past 12 months, Alex has really excelled with her confidence, decision making, and assisting in day-to-day Operations within her Network team. More recently Alex has stepped into a leading hand role whilst another employee is on Secondment. This shows that Alex is more than capable to exceed in what is expected of her within the business.

Alex has a strong focus on Health and Safety, and this has been noted by our Safety Team when undertaking leadership walks on her sites. A formal discussion is always had around risk assessments, identifying risks onsite, and ensuring we have eliminated or reduced to a safe standard.

Overall, we are proud of Alex's personal performance and self-development through her time at TasWater, which we hope will continue for many years.

Tasmanian Young Operator of the Year



Cameron Stebbings was announced as the winner of the Tasmanian Young Operator of the Year at the Interest Day in Mowbray in July.

Cameron (or Herdie as he is often formally known as), is always the first one in the door in the morning, and the last one to leave at night.

Often you will find him of an afternoon looking for additional work from his Coordinator, restocking trucks with other operators or removing the rubbish bin liners from the crib room.

Cameron has been in the industry for coming up 12 months and you would never know. He displays every quality you look for in a young operator including professionalism, enthusiasm, and commitment.

He naturally carries the ability to lift morale within the team environment and encapsulates the essence of what positive culture is within the workplace.

Cameron supports his teammates including the support of on-call or unplanned overtime at short notice.

He is always willing to put his hand up and is often the first person on the shovel when its required.

A true team player, with a "give anything a go" attitude, is what makes Cameron a deserving winner of the Young Operator of the Year Award.



Tasmanian Interest Day - Mowbray

On Tuesday 4th of July in Launceston, Tasmania held a combined Interest Day and the Ixom Best Tasting Tap Water Competition. The event was a huge success and saw people attending from all over the state. We are now starting to see numbers return to pre covid levels which was hugely encouraging.

We had a packed program of speakers which was kicked off by George Wall interviewing Brielle Grey on her experiences on the recent WIOA Tour of New Zealand. Brielle is a long-standing member of the Tasmanian Advisory Committee and a previous winner of the Young Operator of the Year award.



George Wall & Brielle Grey

This was followed up by a couple of presentations from TasWater on a huge scale of investment in water and wastewater infrastructure currently in the pipeline.

Next was a fascinating and down to earth real-life view of the challenges of making potable water in the Antarctic. We were joined online by the people working in these challenging environments and could hear firsthand about the challenges they face.

The Taste Test was up straight after lunch and saw 12 water treatment facilities battle it out. For the first time ever, we had an entrant from Mcquarie Island in the Antarctic. You can read more about the Taste Test on the next page.

Contributed by **Stephen Westgate** from TasWater



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Fern Tree make it two years in a row

IXOM

The Ixom Best Tasting Tap Water in Tasmania competition was held as part of the Tasmanian Interest Day in Mowbray in July.

All water suppliers throughout Tasmania were invited to submit a sample of their finest drop to go into the running to win bragging rights for the next 12 months as the Best Tasting Tap Water in Tasmania.



Grand Final judging underway in Tassie

All the participants from the Interest Day were given the opportunity to try each of the 12 samples entered and narrowed it down to a final 3 to be judged in the Grand Final. The finalists were from Barrington, Fern Tree and Glen Huon.

It was then up to our 3 Grand Final judges to determine the best sample, and it was announced that Fern Tree WTP were back-to-back winners.

The Fern Tree WTP water is sourced from the Mount Wellington/North West Bay River and supplies approximately 20% of Greater Hobart's 93,000 connections.

It has a 50ML/d capacity and the treatment consists of chlorination for disinfection, as well as fluoridation.

The Fern Tree sample will now go on to represent Tasmania in the Best Tasting Tap Water in Australia national final to be held at the Lilydale Show on Saturday 18 November.



Search for the Best Tasting Tap Water in Australia

IXOM

We are pleased to confirm the Ixom Best Tasting Tap Water in Australia will be held on Saturday 18 November 2023.

As winners of the 2022 competition, Melbourne Water in conjunction with WIOA have chosen the Lilydale & Yarra Valley Show to host the National final for 2023.

All the State winners have been invited to submit their winning sample into the National competition. We have organised a marquee at the Show and attendees will be able to sample all the State winners and cast a vote on which one they think is the Best Tasting Tap Water in Australia.

Finalists include:

- Tasmania – Fern Tree WTP – Tas Water
- Victoria – VIC Desal Plant – WaterSure
- South Australia – Olympic Dam Desal Plant – BHP
- QLD – Burgowan WTP - Fraser Coast Regional Council
- NSW/ACT – TBC
- WA – TBC



The NSW/ACT representative will be decided at the upcoming NSW Conference in Canberra on 1 November. Enter your sample in the State competition to be in for a chance at the National competition. The sample from WA will also be determined later this year.

The winner of the National final in 2023 will then be sent across to the Berkley Springs International Water Tasting Competition in February 2024 to represent Australia. Good luck to all the entries!

Lilydale Show Information:

Tickets - Adults \$18, Children \$6, Family \$40



<https://lilydaleyarravalleyshow.com.au/>

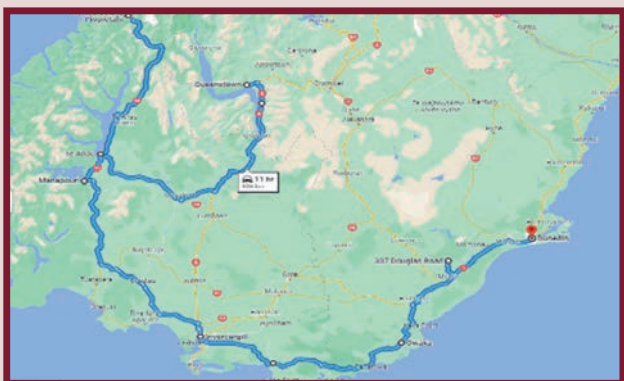
Ozzies Tour over the Ditch

On Friday 12th of May, 21 people from across Australia and 2 Kiwi Hosts meet in Queenstown New Zealand to kick off the WIOA Study Tour and participate in the Water Industry Operators Group NZ (WIOG) annual Conference for 2023. Bruce & Dion were our trusted Bus Driver & Tour Guides for the 8 days.



It was such a privilege to join the tour with such a prestigious water industry group, consisting of our Operators of the Year and PASS Award winners.

We visited the Bruce WTP, Manapouri WTP, Branxholme WTP, Te Anau WTP & WWTP, which provided our group with the opportunity to discuss treatment plant processes, understand any challenges, solutions, technology, and systems on a more personal level.



In between site visits and conference activities we also squeezed in some tourist activities touring the beautiful Milford Sound Lunch Cruise, and also exploring the towns that we visited.



We then headed towards Dunedin to spend the next 2 days at the WIOG Conference. Attending the Conference provided the opportunity to strengthen our relationship with WIOG.

It was great listening in on the paper sessions, and attending their best tasting tap water and water mains tapping competitions. I am curious if we could merge these competitions into an international event in the future?

We were all very proud to witness the first international WIOG Life Member recognition going to George Wall at the Awards Dinner on the final night.



I have to take my hat off to the operations staff for taking the time out to showcase their sites, with their passion and commitment being evident.



I hope this is enough motivation for others to nominate or be nominated as the Operator of the Year, Young Operator of the Year, or PASS Award winner, to join this amazing opportunity in May 2024.

Contributed by Dean Barnett - WIOA

Participants Highlights

This proved to be a valuable and interesting experience to be able to look at how other water authorities run their systems, and to see a large range of different assets, dealing with different demands. I also enjoyed talking to operators from both Australia and New Zealand, to discuss issues we all faced, and how we solve them in our own authority. It was also good to see the technology and talks on offer at the New Zealand Water Conference, to see how technology and systems differ to Australia.

Contributed by Tom Bennett - Barwon Water



Excellent tour of the South Island Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants. Interesting to see the differences in legislation between Australia and New Zealand. Awesome WIOG conference in Dunedin. The technical papers were well presented.

Contributed by Shane Bandiera – Cassowary Coast Regional Council

The 2023 WIOA New Zealand trip was one to remember. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to see New Zealand and create new friendships with operators not only in Australia but our friends across the ditch. Being exposed to different treatment processes that I haven't experienced so far was fantastic. Have begun to bring some of the things I saw on the tour to the daily operation of my plant.

Contributed by Lillee Hardy



My overall experience was fantastic. It was great to socialise with operators from aspects of life from across the country. Hearing their experience within the water industry, their knowledge and passing knowledge between operators. It was great to see how treatment plants are operated in a different country, the different regulatory requirements and different experiences of the Kiwi operators. What I learnt was, how a different range of treatment plants operate that I have not experienced before and shared knowledge between the operators. Thanks again Dean and the WIOA team for a great experience.

Contributed by Ben Haddock – Southern Downs Regional Council



The Australian contingent had a wonderful New Zealand trip which included the conference in Dunedin. We visited a varied amount of treatment plants both water and wastewater and discovered that our Kiwi friends have similar challenges to Australia. The plant operators are also very passionate about their plants and were very happy to impart their knowledge. It was also a privilege to be present for the award presented to George Wall at the Dunedin conference. What a well deserved award to a very special person. It was also a pleasure to meet Dion and Bruce who were our excellent Kiwi guides, and nothing appeared to be too much trouble. Also, a big thank you to George and Dean who had the unenviable task of looking after the Aussie group.

Contributed by Neil Wilcox – Suez

I had an amazing time. I would recommend it to anyone who is on the fence about going. We had a great group of people and WIOA treated us like family, I would go again tomorrow. I learnt a lot about the challenges the industry in New Zealand is facing due to tighter environmental regulations. I'll be able to relate this back to my own work with the changes to the environmental act coming into effect the past few years.

Contributed by Michael Tulloch – Gippsland Water

Operator Asset Condition Monitoring Training

It finally happened! On 1 & 2 March 2023, Operator Asset Condition Monitoring training was delivered to a dozen Goulburn Valley Water (GVW) Operators assembled from each of the GVW all districts.

The training was delivered by Andrew Evans from Ventia at the Shepparton Operations Centre training room, the Shepparton WTP and the Shepparton WMF.



Andrew delivering training to the GVW staff

The training covered a range of topics related to the operation of and maintenance pumps and motors. The course covered lubrication fundamentals and application; pump, motor and electrical thermography; pump and motor vibration analysis; and bearings and seals basics.



The training consisted of 60% classroom theory and 40% hands-on or in-field based activity and observation.

Participants were surveyed about the training and feedback was excellent, with many of the Operators keen to do even more specific training in future if possible.

Hopefully this will be the start of a successful return to Operator asset condition monitoring in GVW.

Mundi Mundi Bash

A couple of our WIOA Victorian Advisory Committee members and our CEO crossed the border into NSW last month attending the Mundi Mundi Bash, a 3-day family friendly festival, where you camp onsite.



Do you recognise these Mad Max WIOA members?

Everyone dressed up and danced in the world record "Nutbush", it was all for a good cause, with the event raising approximately \$160,000 for the Royal Flying Doctors Service



World Record Nutbush Dance



George receives WIOG NZ Life Membership

Congratulations to WIOA MD George Wall who was recognised as a Life Member of the Water Industry Operations Group of New Zealand (WIOG) at their annual conference awards dinner in Dunedin on 18 May 2023.

The award is in recognition of the support, encouragement and knowledge that George has shared with the WIOG Executive, Committee and operators in NZ over an extended period.



George pictured with WIOG Life Member Martyn Simpson

Distribution Seminars

WIOA Staff George & Dean have been busy running Distribution Seminars for our Members across NSW & Victoria.



George Wall delivering a Distribution Seminar in Albury

Thanks to support from Albury City Council there were two Seminars held in March on consecutive days for staff from Albury City and the surrounds.

Then in May they headed over to Bendigo to run the same course on behalf of Coliban Water and the wider Victorian industry.

Please contact the WIOA office if you would like more information about a Distribution Seminar in your area.

Central Highlands Water Celebrates 100th Drinking Fountain

Central Highlands Water (CHW) celebrated their 100th Choose Tap drinking fountain with a new installation at Gong Gong Reservoir Park.

The new drinking fountain marks the 100th installation across the CHW service region, which provides easy access to quality drinking water, in a sustainable way, to the local community.

Since the first installation in 2015, in partnership with local shires and councils, schools and many community organisations, CHW has continued to encourage reducing single-use plastic waste to protect the environment for future generations.

In addition to the fountain, CHW installed their first bicycle repair station for recreational cyclists accessing the Gong Gong Reservoir Park. The station includes a bicycle pump and tools to assist cyclists in maintaining their bicycles while visiting via the Yarrowee River Trail and surrounding roads.

The amenities, combined with CHW's Choose Tap program, will encourage the community to choose tap water over bottled water, for health, cost, and sustainability benefits.

The eye-catching fountains feature the artwork of Billy-Jay O'Toole, a proud Wadawurrung Traditional Owner. The artwork, known as Managing Country Together, represents the relationship between CHW and the 4 registered Aboriginal Parties on which CHW's catchment extends, being Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wurundjeri and Barenji Gadjin.



Choose Tap Ambassadors pictured at the opening

CORPORATE MEMBER NEWS

TRILITY kicks off as a fully Registered Training Organisation

TRILITY is very proud and excited to announce that we are now a fully Registered Training Organisation, with enrolments commencing immediately.

For over 30 years, TRILITY has been an industry leader in the delivery of water and wastewater services in Australia and New Zealand. This expertise lies in its team of highly skilled operators who have extensive hands-on experience and knowledge of drinking water, wastewater, recycled water, biosolids, treatment and processes, regulation, compliance, and risk management, making it a perfect extension for the company to share its expertise through its training services.

As a Registered Training Organisation, we will offer a range of nationally recognised qualifications and training programs designed specifically for water industry operators. Our programs will cover a broad range of topics, including water treatment processes, wastewater treatment, water quality management and network operations, all delivered by water industry professionals.

We aim for TRILITY Training Services to be the industry leader in training the National Water Training package for the Australian water sector.

Francois Gouws' TRILITY's Managing Director, said, "Our plan has always been to diversify our business, and after researching and consulting the water sector, we recognised a gap in certified training and who better to train the industry than one of its own."

Gouws said, "It has taken some time and much work to get us to this point; we are excited to launch ourselves as a Registered Training organisation. We also must recognise the support of industry partners and associations because this would not have been possible without them."

Adrian Blinman, TRILITY Business Growth Manager, who led the development of TRILITY Training Services, said, "This has been an incredible and fulfilling journey. It's exciting to be finally delivering our training services to the water sector."

For more information:

 <https://trility.com.au/trility-training/>



Melbourne Water presents "Super Sewage" at Scienceworks



Melbourne Water is excited to announce that during the school holidays from 16 September to 1 October 2023, we will

be taking over the StemLab at Scienceworks. We will be delivering a fantastic activation called 'Super Sewage', which includes a unique and engaging 'choose your own adventure' storytelling experience as well as a fun 'pipe promise' activity.

The experience is specifically designed for children aged 6-12 and is part of the Hobsons Bay sewerage upgrade project, also known as the Super Sewer Project. This project aims to make improvements to our infrastructure to support the growing population in the area.

The 'Super Sewage' activation at Scienceworks will provide an educational and entertaining experience for children, allowing them to learn about the importance of sewerage systems and their role in maintaining a healthy and sustainable environment. Children are invited to immerse themselves in a captivating narrative where they will make decisions that impact the outcome of the story. This interactive activity will encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

General Manager of Scienceworks, Jonathan Shearer, said, "Super Sewage is an interactive journey of discovery, giving children the opportunity to learn about each stage of the sewerage system through play-based STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) learning in the context of real-life engineering."

In addition to the storytelling experience, the 'pipe promise' activity will engage children in a hands-on learning opportunity. They will have the chance to explore the inner workings of a sewerage pipe and understand how it functions. Through this interactive activity, children will gain a deeper understanding of the infrastructure required to manage wastewater and the importance of responsible water usage in an entertaining way.

For more information:

 <https://www.melbournewater.com.au/things-to-do/events/super-sewage>



CORPORATE MEMBER NEWS

Largest “Fatberg” in Unitywater History uncovered

Weighing in at over a tonne, it's the biggest fatberg Unitywater has ever discovered in its sewerage network. The smelly, congealed mass is a result of people flushing wet wipes and other items that don't belong in the sewer.

Unitywater Executive Manager Rhett Duncan said “it was an overnight job” to clear the messy problem from a sewage pump station in Brendale.

“It took most of the night by the time our crews lifted the pump and dug the rags and fatberg off by hand and got it operating again,” he said.



“It's not a nice job and doesn't smell very pleasant, but somebody has to do it and we have the right crew for the job. We'd love to be using the crews to do maintenance work elsewhere on our network.”

Mr Duncan said fatbergs and blockages were easily avoidable by ensuring anything other than pee, poo and paper were put in the bin.

“We ask people to only flush the Three Ps – pee, poo and toilet paper,” he said.

“The same goes for the kitchen sink – fats and oils belong in the bin as these can clog private plumbing as well as wreaking havoc on the sewerage network.

“If people are flushing things that don't belong in the sewer, it can block private plumbing and that can certainly lead to expensive personal plumbing bills.”

For more information:

 <https://www.unitywater.com/wetwipesarerubbish>



Walk for Water is here again!

Imagine having to walk more than half an hour to reach the nearest water source. This is the harsh reality faced by millions of people on a daily basis.

771 million people in the world - one in ten - do not have clean water close to home. For hundreds of millions of people, especially women and girls, that means long, dangerous and physically painful walks to collect water from sources that could be filthy.

WaterAid is committed to helping communities gain access to clean water sources close to home, freeing up women's time and enabling girls to spend more time going to school.



By taking part in Walk for Water, you will be helping people around the world access clean water close to home, in their schools, and at their healthcare facilities.

You don't have to be an elite athlete to take part. All we ask is you walk, run or ride for five days between 2nd and 6th October.

Last year alone, we helped over 1.6 million people access clean water at their healthcare facility through our direct work in communities, and even more through our advocacy and policy work around the world.

To register for Walk for Water please visit the WaterAid website:

 <https://fundraise.wateraid.org.au/event/walkforwater-2023/>



CONTRIBUTE TO CORPORATE MEMBER NEWS

WIOA's quarterly publication Operator is produced in February, May, August and November each year and is an effective way of keeping the WIOA community in touch.

Each edition we feature a number of news items from corporate members on new products or services to the industry. Content is not to be overtly promotional like an advertisement or advertorial, but more information that would be of interest to our members.

 wioa.org.au/publications/operator.htm

Operator



New Members

Welcome to the following people and companies who have recently joined our Association as a Member or Corporate Supporter.

New Individual Members

Teresa Esser, Neville Bell, Aaron Calhoun, Steve Wood, Sarah McMullen, Jake Van Der Mark, Ben Bessell, Niru Vemuri, Nicholas Hoare, Andrew McIntosh, Andrew Barton, Robert Medland, Matthew Sims, Nicolas Contreras, Mark Burns, William Hughes, Brad, Clow, Geoff Tansley, Daniel Gatto, Glen Errington, Paul Blomfield, Hemraj Fernando, Emma Jefferis, Rob Burge, Mitchell Frost, Andy Goul, Gregory Brereton, Xiangsheng Cao, Shawn McCulla, Jade Drayton, Helen Payne, Sally Byrnes, Conelia Weibels, Daimien Hancock, Matt Palmer, Lachlan Bonning, Trent Moore, Matthew Lindeman, Luke Breitkopf, Geoff Stapylton, Luke Hartsuyker, Ryan Hugo, Ben Hollis, Denis Tinsley, Gary Mulley, Joel Flakus, Glenn Schafer, Jake Avery, Omar Kabbara, Samuel Alley, Cooper Henderson, Scott Irving, Dale Nevin, Matthew Lewis, Jenson Rogers, Matthew Ayling, Michael Dabbs, Steven Holt, David Lloyd, Kurt Lomas, Jordan Huender, Shane Lenard, Harrison Murphy, Byron Kipreotis, Caiden Wakefield, Finn Black, Noah Battison, Liam Norman, Connor Doyle, Kye Anderson, Sabina Todd, Les Treoloar, Craig Hanran, Billy Pratt, Tony Scorinis, Wal Welsh, Robyn Maddalena, Neil Thompson, Jason O'Bryan, Blake Thompson, Max Turner, Trent White, Shane Wilson, Ben Janson, Janette Briggs, Jack Elsley, Darren Matuku, Michael Murray, Leonie McIntosh, Tammy Zerner, Terry Whittle, Michael Northcott, Seungchan Bang, Matthew Murdoch, Jodi Kerrigan, Michael Hamblet, Scott Bradshaw, Rhys Crouch, Liam Sinclair, Amy Handema, Paul Midgley & Ryley Campbell.

New Utility Corporate Members

Gladstone Regional Council, Lulo Engineering & Cook Shire Council.

New Corporate Members

Synergen Met, Plumboss Australasia, The Pump House, Acrulog, GoPoly, SDR Scientific, Enmach, TWS Evolution, Utilex Group & Ultraspin Technology.

WIOA Committee



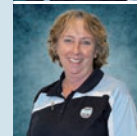
President
Sally Shepherd
0409 800 534



Vice President
Ryan McGowan
0440 055 508



Secretary
George Wall
0407 846 001



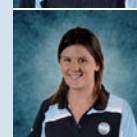
Jill Busch
0417 399 198



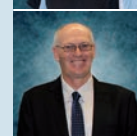
Heidi Josipovic
0429 701 237



Mark Samblebe
0400 126 141



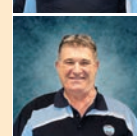
Elise O'Keeffe
0438 346 852



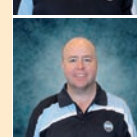
David Sheehan
0417 376 685



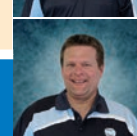
NSW Advisory Committee
Alan Butler
0419 432 579



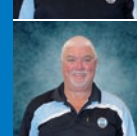
QLD Advisory Committee
George Bellizia
0407 651 727



SA Advisory Committee
Robran Cock
0407 226 130



TAS Advisory Committee
Stephen Westgate
0417 126 758



VIC Advisory Committee
Anthony Evans
0419 103 885

WIOA Coming Events

21 September	WIOA Talks Webinar - Data Science in Operations
1 October	Team of the Year Award, applications close
13 October	FNQ Operations Interest Day and Optional TRILITY Barefoot Bowls, Cairns
1 & 2 November	15th WIOA NSW Water Industry Operations Conference & Exhibition, Exhibition Park in Canberra (EPIC)

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