

# BETTER ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE TRAINING FOR THE QUEENSLAND WATER INDUSTRY



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*34th Annual Qld Water Industry Operations Workshop*  
*Indoor Sports Stadium, Caloundra*  
*16 to 18 June, 2009*

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## KEY WORDS

Training, qualifications, water industry worker, qldwater, TAFE.

## 1.0 DISCUSSION

A common complaint of the Queensland water industry is that it is difficult to access training that is tailored to the needs of water service providers. Current Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) delivering water industry training in Queensland have well recognised strengths but the demands of the industry for improved training products and new delivery approaches are outstripping the capacity of RTOs.

This situation is likely to get worse in the next few years. Skills shortages in technical industries, retirement of long-tem workers in an industry dominated by ‘baby boomers’ and increasing community and regulatory standards all contribute to what will be a critical issue for the water industry in the next decade.

The Queensland Water Directorate (*qldwater*) is a membership body for water service providers in Queensland and represents more than 95% of the, predominantly local government, water industry. Attraction and retention of staff is a principal concern of *qldwater* members and there is strong support at all levels for a program to develop better access to training to support staff recognition, career paths and skills development of water industry workers.

A program to develop better access to improved training provision has been underway for 18 months with the support of local governments, SEQ regional water bodies (including the new ‘Distribution Entity’), the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Environment and Resource Management the Australian Workers Union and TAFE Queensland. Strong support at political managerial and technical levels across the industry is needed for such a program to be successful and this can’t be achieved without feedback from industry members.

The presentation will provide a briefing on the development of the program to date including work towards updating training content, enhancing delivery approaches (including recognition of current skills) and improving flexibility of access to appropriate training that is relevant to both existing and new workers. This program is currently being trialled in a Certificate II (civil) qualification in South East Queensland but is being expanded to include other qualifications state-wide.

A key element of the program is driving education and training to reflect the needs of the water industry including the training and career paths desired by staff.

While a number of formal mechanisms and reference groups have been created among the industry, informal comments and critical feedback from all members of the water industry are always required.

This presentation will be in a session that will include time for questions and feedback. In particular, direction is sought on issues such as:

- is training towards formal qualifications of interest to industry members?
- what are the major barriers to undertaking training?
- what format of training is most suitable for your workplace?
- how important are formalised career paths for water workers?
- what training options should be more readily available?