



CHANGES TO THE WATER INDUSTRY SKILLS TASKFORCE JUNE 2015

The Water Industry Skills Taskforce (WIST) was established in 2008 following a workshop convened by the Australian Water Association (AWA), the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) and the National Water Commission (NWC). The purpose of the workshop was primarily aimed at developing approaches to address a growing skills shortage in the water industry.

The AWA has led WIST activities since the establishment of the taskforce. Taskforce membership has changed over time to address emerging needs, while retaining a focus on WIST's original role – to promote and oversee a nationally-coordinated effort to address the skills shortage in the water sector.

Since 2008, there have been many other significant changes in the regulatory environment within WIST was created, including the demise of the NWC and other Federal Government restructuring, which has made the promotion of the needs of the water industry in relation to skills, as well as other areas of interest, more difficult.

WIST, through AWA, has historically overseen a number of key initiatives, including those focussing on careers marketing, industry mentoring, industry secondments and water treatment operator certification.

WIST originally had a projected five year life, with this five year period nominally ending in 2013. AWA continued to manage the Taskforce for an extended period beyond the last funded project, but indicated in early 2015 that it was no longer in a position to maintain this support.

AWA is to be commended for its leadership in championing the national water skills agenda and its ongoing role in WIST.

WIST members met initially in February 2015 and resolved unanimously to continue the Taskforce in a modified form. On 31 March, WIST further resolved to appoint the Queensland Water Directorate (*qldwater*) as Taskforce Secretariat for a period of 12 months. Dave Cameron, *qldwater* CEO was elected Chair. It is intended that these roles will be reviewed on 31 March 2016 with a new Secretariat and Chair appointed.

WIST's purpose is to "facilitate collaboration in the water industry for ongoing access to quality education and training" with a renewed focus on skills outcomes for VET and professional fields, not specific occupations or qualifications. A revised Terms of Reference has been approved.

Short term priorities for the Taskforce include:

- Revising Taskforce membership, with invitations to be made during May.

- Representations to the federal Department of Education and Training to ensure WIST is recognised as the key body representing the water sector under the “[New Arrangements for Training Product Development for Australian Industry](#)” and development of a general advocacy platform to government.
- Finalise as far as possible work to date on the “Operators within Drinking Water Systems Certification Framework” and continue to lobby for its adoption.
- Act as a champion for our industry and host for Government Skills Australia’s resources and initiatives, with the cessation of Industry Skills Councils.
- Meet to strategically review other project opportunities.

Current WIST members include:

The Queensland Water Directorate (Dave Cameron)

The Australian Water Association (Jonathan McKeown, Amanda White)

Government Skills Australia (Peter Bernich)

Australian Services Union (John Harris)

GHD (Chris Hertle)

Coliban Water (David Sheehan)

The Water Services Association of Australia (Adam Lovell, Peter Gee)

The International Water Centre (Mark Pascoe)

The Water Industry Operators Association of Australia (George Wall)

The NSW Water Directorate (Gary Mitchell)

WIST intends to issue periodic communications through its members’ networks as its work program develops.

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