

Introducing



Sustainable supply of safe drinking water to urban areas is one of the most pressing challenges facing Australia. A population increase of 35% is projected in our capital cities by the year 2030, while lack of rainfall is decreasing yields by up to 25% in some water supply catchments. Urban water utilities are investigating new and alternative sources of water, at the same time mindful of the need to protect public health and minimise impact on the environment. To meet these challenges, decisions on policy, regulation, investment and operations must be informed by high quality science.

Water quality can never be taken for granted.

The Formation of WQRA

After 13 years the CRC for Water Quality and Treatment, formed under the Commonwealth's Cooperative Research Centres Program, ended on 30 June 2008. Rather than seeking a further round of funding under the CRC Program, the Governing Boards of the CRC and the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) worked together to establish an independent scientific research centre to build on the achievements of the CRC beyond 2008 – Water Quality Research Australia Limited (WQRA).



The formation of WQRA marks the successful transition from a CRC model to an industry-funded company that focuses on the Australian Water industry needs in water quality research through facilitating excellence and collaboration in national R&D projects

Mission and Aims

WQRA's mission is to facilitate collaborative research of national application on behalf of the Australian Water Industry with a focus on drinking water quality, recycled/reuse water and aspects of wastewater management.

The primary aims of WQRA are to:

1. Conduct and advocate for high quality research on priority issues for the Australian Water Industry relating to public health and acceptability aspects of water
2. Adopt a risk-based approach to research to underpin the implementation and further development of relevant Australian guidelines for drinking water and recycled water.
3. Facilitate knowledge transfer and the up-take of the outcomes of the research in the industry.

Board and Advisory Committees

The WQRA Board consists of directors who are elected by the membership at the AGM. The current Board represent a broad cross section of experience and expertise from within the water industry and associated research and regulatory organisations. The Board is chaired by Professor Michael Moore, who has recently retired as head of EnTox at the University of Queensland.

Quick facts

- Water Quality Research Australia Limited (WQRA) was incorporated in October 2007.
- WQRA is wholly owned and funded by its members who include Australian utilities, research organisations and government departments.
- WQRA is a not-for-profit company with an independent Chair and board members nominated and elected from the Company's members.
- WQRA focuses on co-ordinating and managing collaborative research of national application on behalf of Australian water utilities and suppliers to enable them to address issues in drinking water quality from both traditional and new sources including reuse water, utilisation of reuse water for industrial and agricultural applications and aspects of wastewater management.
- WQRA brings together key water research groups and industry members across Australia to conduct targeted, priority research. These relationships place WQRA in a unique position to rapidly address current and emerging issues in public health and water quality.

To provide timely and relevant advice to WQRA on emerging issues and strategic approaches to current issues, two advisory committees, have been established – scientific and regulatory. The members of the Advisory Committees are nationally and internationally recognised and bring a high level of expertise to WQRA and its Members.

Scientific Advisory Committee:

Chair: Professor John McNeil, Monash University
Professor Don Bursill (Chair, WQAC – NHMRC)
Emeritus Professor Ian Falconer (Univ of Adelaide)
Mr Adam Lovell (WSAA)
Emeritus Professor Nancy Millis (Univ of Melbourne)
Dr Frans Schulting (CEO, GWRC)

Regulatory Advisory Committee:

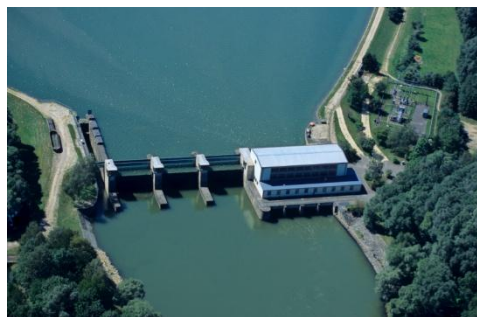
Chair: Ms Jan Bowman, Dept of Health Services, Victoria
Ms Sophie Dwyer, Queensland Health
Ms Vesna Cvjeticanin, NHMRC
Dr David Cunliffe, SA Dept of Health
Dr Paul Byleveld, NSW Dept of Health
Mr David Sheehan, Dept of Human Services, Victoria

Research focus

WQRA's Research Program seeks to build upon the efforts and achievements of the CRC. While the initial funding pool is smaller than the CRC, there will be a key focus on addressing the critical research needs of the urban water industry to achieve research outcomes that address public good.

WQRA's Research priorities are:

- Emerging and current public health challenges in water sources
- Identifying risks and closing critical knowledge gaps
- Identifying and assessing appropriate intervention strategies to address these risks
- The development of targeted management and monitoring systems to support public health outcomes
- To provide the evidence to support and inform development of public health policy and management plans.



The current WQRA portfolio includes 15 CRC projects at final report stage and seven projects committed to by the WQRA interim Board. The total value of these projects is around \$19m.

Benefits to the Australian Water Industry

Benefits that WQRA will deliver to the industry will be in four major areas:

- **Reduced risk of water quality incidents** – An improved understanding and quantification of the health and environmental risks associated with water supply and water reuse will result in both risk reduction and better management of unavoidable risks.
- **Improved levels of customer trust** – The increased knowledge base will allow clearer and more definitive communication with customers and a steady improvement in public trust of water supply authorities.
- **Supporting Australian regulations** – research will focus on improved scientific understanding of emerging risks to drinking water supplies and recycled water. This will contribute scientific rigour and knowledge to the review and formulation of Australian Guidelines and Regulations.
- **Building industry capability and Australian research capacity** – by encouraging capacity building in the Australian research community and enabling research groups to establish and maintain a critical mass for water quality and public health research and education. Also, by supporting the education and training of water professionals to address the looming skills shortage.

International Links

WQRA has strong relationships with the international water research community including the Global Water Research Coalition, the Water Environment Research Foundation and Water Research Foundation (previously AwaarF). These relationships provide critical and timely information on emerging issues of concern and ensure that the best possible knowledge and skills available can be accessed by the Australian water sector when needed.