

Stormwater Industry Association Submission on QWC Water Strategy

The residents of South-East Queensland (SEQ) have suffered water restrictions due to a lack of water caused by a combination of the Millennium drought and higher water demands associated with additional development within the region. To combat this, the Queensland Water Commission (QWC) has drafted a water strategy that aims to guarantee a responsible level of water supply to support the requirements of the region. The strategy provides a range of demand management and alternative water sources that are expected to meet water supply requirements for the next 50 years. QWC has requested public comment on the draft strategy prior to its finalisation in mid 2008.

The Stormwater Industry Association of Queensland (SIA) is the leading stormwater industry organisation in Australia which actively promotes innovative and sustainable practice technologies, standards and policies. As such, it is appropriate that the SIA provide a response to QWC highlighting how stormwater can assist in protecting the region's water supply.

The SIA believes the strategy is a positive step forward in securing water for SEQ and the QWC should be congratulated on its development. However, the SIA feels there are still significant improvements to be made in the areas of stormwater and rainwater harvesting and provided the following suggestions for inclusion in the final document:

- The Strategy was developed with a lack of consultation. Many government and industry bodies such as the SIA have substantial experience and understanding of water needs in the community, which could greatly assist in preparing and delivering the objectives of the strategy.
- The Strategy needs to fully embrace the key principles of Total Water Cycle Management (TWCM) and focus on the social and environmental impacts and benefits of potential water supplies. Options have been compared on an economic scale however the ecological and environmental health impacts and benefits do not appear to have been fully considered when selecting water supply options. The Strategy should reflect a greater commitment from the Queensland Government to Total Water Cycle Management and the impact on the environment of potential water supply options.
- The Strategy should recognise the existing contribution of rainwater and stormwater harvesting systems in the context of water supply for SEQ. Stormwater harvesting is a viable and cost effective alternative water supply and should be valued as a resource by the Strategy. There are numerous examples across SEQ highlighting that stormwater harvesting is becoming common practice in projects that have adopted TWCM. The Strategy should embrace the role of stormwater and the potential benefits of stormwater harvesting to water supply, ecological health and the environment.
- Queensland Government incentives for alternative supply sources should be encouraged to promote take up of discretionary initiatives such as rainwater tanks. These initiatives should be seen as long term commitments not just short term solutions to the current drought.
- Queensland Government funding should consider the allocation of subsidy dollars on a 'best for catchment' basis, regardless of other schemes such as the Western Corridor Recycling Project.
- The Strategy should highlight the need for a significant investment in water quality infrastructure due to the anticipated increase in urban development. The Strategy

should discuss what role the Queensland Government will have in relation to this issue and why the collection, treatment and reuse of stormwater is unviable.

- The SIA are fully supportive of Research and Development initiatives discussed in the Strategy in respect to analysing demonstration projects for alternative options including stormwater harvesting.

The SIA are keen to discuss these issues with QWC in more detail and assist wherever possible to meet the challenge of supplying water to the region in an economic yet sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.

