

## 6. Recommendations

### Overall recommendations regarding the future of the program

1. The program should continue its exemplary work, whilst taking opportunities to expand its scope (e.g. to address total water cycle management), service areas outside of SEQ (where costs can be recovered), and improve its effectiveness using the feedback obtained through this evaluation.

### Program objectives, impact and value

2. Place a greater emphasis on supporting the process of converting knowledge about WSUD into positive on-the-ground outcomes. For example, by building the capacity of agencies that deliver public infrastructure, developing mechanisms to monitor and report the progress of WSUD implementation, and using extension officers to help development assessment officers on a one-to-one basis.

### The need for the program and its future scope

3. Continue the program over the next three to five years and progressively expand its scope to address total water cycle management. This will probably require increased human resources.
4. Support the development of a strong, comprehensive capacity building program for erosion and sediment control in SEQ<sup>20</sup>. A decision is needed at an executive and/or political level whether such a program should be an integrated 'sister program' to Water by Design, or just one element of it.
5. Do not limit the program to servicing just SEQ. There is a clear demand for its services outside of SEQ (e.g. in northern Queensland and northern New South Wales), and the program has an impressive National reputation. It is recommended that the program service stakeholder needs wherever costs can be recovered.
6. Ensure the program continues to play an advocacy role for sustainable forms of urban water management in addition to a service delivery role.
7. Knowledge building strategies: Place an increased emphasis on activities that build knowledge of: the performance and cost of WSUD / TWCM; social acceptance of WSUD / TWCM; and effective water governance.
8. Organisational strengthening strategies: Place an increased emphasis on these strategies (see Section 4.8), especially strategies to build executive and political support for WSUD / TWCM.
9. Directive reforms: Continue to increase the emphasis on strategies to regulate the design, construction and maintenance of WSUD assets to assist the on-ground delivery of functioning assets.
10. Facilitative reforms: Place an increased emphasis on these strategies, especially in relation to establishing a comprehensive auditing and public reporting system in SEQ for WSUD implementation. Such a system could also address the implementation of ESC during the construction phase.
11. Regularly (e.g. every two years) undertake "needs analyses" in consultation with stakeholders to identify the high priority products and services that are needed to build aspects of institutional capacity. Ideally, this exercise would be undertaken in a workshop setting so stakeholders could discuss sequencing issues, as there is often a logical sequence to the projects needed to build capacity in a given area.

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<sup>20</sup> The survey data found very strong support for an regional ESC capacity building program in SEQ (89% on the relevant scale), but considerably less support for expanding the scope of the Water by Design program to include ESC in the next 3-5 years (i.e. only 64%). This result highlights that there are several options to deliver such a program.

The management of major products and services

12. Establish procedures in the program to ensure distinct project plans are developed by staff for all major products and services regardless of contractual arrangements with consultants. These plans would clearly define the objectives, tasks, timeframes, budget, and evaluation strategy to determine the project's performance.
13. When developing project and work plans, use performance data from past projects to help develop realistic budgets and timeframes. Internal record-keeping systems that provide current and future staff with access to all project plans and performance reports would assist this process. For major / high risk projects, preliminary scoping studies may also help to clarify the resources needed to fully deliver projects.
14. Continue to strengthen contract management activities for major / high-risk projects. Activities could include: negotiating reasonable deadlines with consultants; using performance data from previous projects to help develop reasonable deadlines and budgets; requiring consultants to prepare contingency plans as part of their proposals; and using penalty clauses as a last resort for extreme delays.
15. Continue the process of reforming the host organisation's financial system so that reports on the financial performance of individual projects (i.e. staff costs, consultancy fees, and other project costs) are provided to project managers on a monthly basis.
16. Establish procedures in the program to monitor the performance of major products and services shortly after they have been delivered (e.g. through stakeholder surveys). These would, at the very least, examine whether the official objectives had been met, levels of stakeholder satisfaction, strengths, weaknesses and perceived value. Ideally, there would be consistency in the approach to such evaluation activities (e.g. surveys templates with some standard questions and rating scales). The longer the time lag between experiencing the product / service and being surveyed, the greater the potential for recall bias.

Program governance, staff and funding

17. Place the highest priority on developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy to build a more diverse and sustainable funding base to the program. It is noted that the program currently plans to develop a "long term funding model".
18. Increase the rigour, detail and transparency of performance reporting for major projects by incorporating all of the information specified in Section 4.4 into regular performance reports<sup>21</sup>. It is recommended that this level of information be included in reports to the Chief Executive Officer (Healthy Waterways Limited), the steering committee and major funding bodies. The intent here is to provide people with an oversight role with a better set of objective data which they can use to determine which projects require careful monitoring.
19. Provide the chair of the steering committee with the information that he/she needs to do their role well before each meeting, and continue to minimise the frequency that the role is rotated amongst members (e.g. no more than once every 12 months).
20. Continue the process of cautiously implementing the user pays principle in association with the program's products (e.g. charging a reasonable fee to access major guidelines).
21. Assuming the scope of the program continues to evolve to comprehensively address TWCM, the steering committee should continue to monitor the adequacy of the program's hosting arrangements.
22. Ensure program employees have professional development plans that use feedback from colleagues to identify the skills they need to strengthen in order to successfully deliver the program over the next five years.
23. Encourage the steering committee to be the forum where all major decisions regarding the strategic direction of the program occur. Activities could include: encouraging funding organisations to negotiate with the program on future projects *via* the steering committee;

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<sup>21</sup> In particular, it is recommended that these reports provide more detailed and objective data relating to: initial project timeframes / milestones and progress against these; and the initial budget, actual costs, and predicted total cost.

requiring all work plans to be officially endorsed by the committee; and in the longer term, building a more diverse funding base so that the potential to influence the program's strategic direction is more dispersed amongst organisations represented on the steering committee.

24. Seek to retain and develop the program's staff as they have been a major contributor to the program's success. Also ensure a plan exists to manage their succession if they decide to leave the program.
25. Recognise that surveyed steering committee members, on average, believed the program was understaffed in August 2010 given the projects it was planning to deliver. It is recommended that future decisions relating to staff numbers in the program be made with an understanding that the quality and quantity of its human resources have been major factors in its track record of high performance.

#### Opportunities for improvement (including better engagement of stakeholders)

26. In preparing future business, work and project plans, seek to address the opportunities for improvement highlighted in this report (see Sections 4.7 and 4.8). Some of these should prompt new projects (e.g. new online learning options and initiatives to better engage executives and politicians) whilst others can be accommodated in existing projects (e.g. ensuring all large complex documents have plain English summaries). Also recognise that even if a suggestion was made by only one survey respondent, it may still have the potential to greatly assist the program.
27. To better engage stakeholders currently in the Outsider group, use eNewsletters as the primary communication tool to frequently reiterate the program's primary aim and the nature of the products and services it delivers. Also use the eNewsletters to direct stakeholders to on-line case studies so they can learn about aspects of WSUD that interests them without having to invest large amounts of their time.
28. Place an emphasis on broad and simple awareness raising activities to slowly build a mandate for WSUD / TWCM in the community (i.e. the professional and non-professional community).

#### Possible future products and services

29. Use the many possible projects, ideas and opportunities for improvement in this report (see Sections 4.7 and 4.8, as well as Appendix D) to generate a short list of major projects to be delivered over the next three to five years. Potential projects on the shortlist could then be refined, prioritised and synchronised in a workshop involving steering committee members and other strategic thinkers who are familiar with the program. It could then be converted to a work plan once funding was secured.

#### Distribution and use of this report

30. Make this report available to all of the program's stakeholders (via the website), as per the recommendation in the program's Evaluation Plan.
31. Discuss the actions needed to respond to the recommendations in this report at future steering committee meetings.