

Guidance on competencies for operators within drinking water treatment systems

Under *the Water Supply Safety and Reliability Act 2008* (the Act) the regulator can prescribe the minimum qualifications or experience necessary for an operator of a drinking water service.

Currently, the regulator does not mandate competencies for water treatment operators, however the employment of appropriately qualified operators for drinking water treatment systems is considered best practice.

In future we may consider whether to adopt the mandatory framework.

We consider that, at a minimum, all service providers should aim to ensure all of their operators have achieved a Certificate II level qualification from the National Water Training Package. A Certificate III qualification is preferred for operators who are managing conventional treatment systems.

The actions of operators have a direct impact on the quality of drinking water provided to consumers. Operators with appropriate competencies:

- have the skills and knowledge to manage drinking water quality
- can identify and respond to water quality hazards and incidents
- ensure the protection of consumers.

Framework for certification of operators

The Queensland Water Skills Partnership was created in 2011 to address critical skills needs facing the urban water industry in Queensland. The partnership is supported by 36 water industry organisations.

The National Water Commission appointed Government Skills Australia to create a 'framework for the certification of operators in potable water treatment facilities'. A proposal was released in December 2012 following an extensive consultation process and strong industry support, especially in Queensland. The national Water Industry Skills Taskforce has been appointed to lead efforts to see national adoption of this framework.

A Memorandum of Understanding between qldwater, Water Industry Operators Association and the department contains a number of principles. The most relevant to this guidance document is that any operators certified as part of the pilot program (or certified following completion of the program in 2015) will be recognised by the department as 'Certified Operators' for a future fully implemented certification program for a period of five years from initial certification.

The document *Guidance on competencies for Operators within Drinking Water Treatment Systems* in its entirety can be obtained by contacting the water supply regulation team at drinkingwater.reporting@dews.qld.gov.au.