

Trusted water management

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WATER is critical to Australia's future.

Given the press that surrounds this particular natural resource, not to mention the fundamental demands of life on this planet, this should not come as a surprise to any semi-rational person.

And yet, it is not an uncommon occurrence to encounter surprise and confusion when it comes to the many ways that water permeates both natural and industrial environments, often connecting the two directly.

Drinking water needs to meet the right safe drinking water quality standards before it can be supplied for human consumption.

Wastewater (effluent) needs to meet good environmental water quality standards (documented in environmental licensing), to minimise environmental impacts when it is released back into the environment.

Alternately it has to meet strict water quality criteria to be reused by industry and/or the community for industrial process water, or irrigation on to the land (occasionally it is also used for domestic water supply replacement such as toilet flushing, and wash water).

Doing these things right is no easy task.

For large organisations whose core front of house business has little to do with water or sewage/wastewater, water and wastewater treatment plants can feel like foreign territory or simply an overhead.

Too often, negative outcomes can be traced back to the same root cause; lack of expertise or application.

Water and wastewater treatment plants require specific training to operate properly.

Just as a car mechanic might recognise



some familiar parts and principles when confronted with a jet engine, so might the ins and outs of a treatment plant feel 'vaguely

familiar' to a plumber or electrician who has worked on something similar.

Indeed, plumbing and electrical skills are

often valuable skill sets (and backgrounds to have) called upon by certified water and wastewater operators.

However, just as a dentist would be hard-pressed to remove a burst appendix, unqualified or untrained operators can do real damage if given free reign to operate a water or wastewater treatment plant.

Using only certified operators (or old-hands with many years of specific water or wastewater experience), provides you with someone who understands the ins and outs of a treatment plant – and the risks, to people, communities, the environment and the business if the plant is not managed correctly.

This can be achieved by hiring plant operators with experience, hiring inexperienced operators and getting them proper training through a registered training organisation, or by sub-contracting out the management of the treatment plant to a firm which supplies qualified plant operators.

There is no 'one right way' to operate a successful treatment plant.

But when things start to go wrong, having the right people in place to manage problems can be critical.

That might mean knowing the right sampling and monitoring procedures to use to make sure that drinking water is safe.

It might also mean knowing how to operate a plant within the environmental license, even during major weather events.

Or, it might mean having expert engineering and scientific advice no more than a phone call away.

Ultimately, that respect for the qualified water and wastewater plant operator can be translated into a respect for an important natural resource, one we all rely on.

There wouldn't seem to be much to argue with about that.