



# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AUSTRALIA

## Editorial

As with the editorial in the last QEH edition there is a need to again recognise the efforts of a stalwart supporter of EHA Queensland.

As EHA (QLD) INC enters a new phase of life as an Incorporated Association we give recognition to our long-serving Executive Officer Jo Rolls who retired at the end of March. Jo has been a fixture at EHA Queensland since 1991 and in that time has seen many changes in the faces of the Board, and in the way we do business.

Jo's knowledge, support and dedication will be sorely missed and we wish her happiness and good health in her retirement. Jo has been a constant at our annual state conferences for almost twenty years and it was fitting that Jo agreed to attend the Annual Conference at the Gold Coast in May. Unbeknown to Jo, she was the well-deserved guest-of-honour at the conference dinner. This was a great opportunity for Members to come along and say 'hello and goodbye' to Jo, with a number of past Queensland Presidents and the National President in attendance. A full account of the Conference and Dinner will be published in a Conference Special edition, out soon!

As previously advised the restructure of EHA nationally has reached the stage where all state organisations are now incorporated associations, in their own right. However the Queensland Board recognises the imperative to maintain a high professional profile at the national level and fully supports the national Board in this regard.

Notwithstanding, EHA (QLD) INC is now an autonomous body and we will stand on our own feet - supported only by each other. Please continue to support your professional organisation in any way that you can. *Editor*

## QUT – Faculty of Health 2009 Academic Year Awards Night



*Environmental Health Australia 2009 Academic Year Prize recipient Jacqueline Murray, Professor MaryLou Fleming Head of School, School of Public Health, with EHA (QLD) INC President, Bruce Morton*

Each year EHA (QLD) INC sponsors an Environmental Health Australia Prize for QUT's Faculty of Health's Awards for the Academic Year.

The 2009 Academic Year Awards Ceremony held on 10 February 2010 was well attended and enthusiastically received by students, their families and friends, award sponsors and Faculty staff.

The EHA (QLD) INC award is awarded to the student who has achieved academic excellence in the Graduate Diploma in Environmental Health, and who has also demonstrated outstanding commitment to professional practice.

The University has again expressed its appreciation of EHA (QLD) INC's ongoing support of student excellence and the encouragement this award brings to QUT's Faculty of Health students.

## Behind the Scenes of the Queensland Branch

Since the last edition of QEHA much of the focus of Branch Council has been on working towards incorporation of our new association. The result is that your association was incorporated on 18 March 2010, and is now formally known as Environmental Health Australia (Queensland) Incorporated.

The existing Branch Council is now the Board of EHA (QLD) INC. The former Branch Councillors are now Directors and formed the inaugural Board. A new Constitution was developed as part of the incorporation process and it sets out the mechanism for future elections to the Board.

The Constitution sets out the various classifications of membership, and an obvious anomaly for the qualifications of the Student category was identified at an early stage. As a result at the General Meeting on 24 May (held in conjunction with the Gold Coast conference) an amendment was carried to align the Student Member definition with that of Member.

This quarter saw the retirement of our long-serving Exec Officer Jo Rolls. Jo has been an institution at EHA and will be sorely missed. However EHA (QLD) INC has been fortunate to acquire the services of Margaret Hind to the role of Exec Officer. Members may have met or spoken with Margaret when she previously filled in for Jo on several occasions.

The Board has also been progressing a new Memorandum of Understanding with LGAQ, with President Bruce Morton taking the lead role in negotiations.

Planning and delivery of professional training continues. Already in 2010 we have seen the successful completion of both the Environmental Health Risk Management Workshop and Contemporary Food Safety Training Course. The ever-popular Noise Management Course was again conducted following the 2010 state conference and was fully booked. The Board is grateful for the continuing professional efforts of Member Frank Henry in delivering this course, which we hope to repeat later this calendar year.

Board President Bruce Morton is also continuing negotiations for provision of training in the area of Dangerous Goods (flammable & combustible liquids), as well as an Environment School – both scheduled for the second half of this calendar year.

The future of the dangerous goods course will be dependant on the outcome of rumoured changes to state legislation, and the continuing role EHOs might play. EHA (QLD) INC is also party to continuing discussion on clandestine drug labs and is monitoring associated EHO training requirements.

The Board has been well represented on the Skills Formation Strategy project, and is also providing input to the EH Risk Management matrix project. The Board thanks those Members who directly participate in such projects on behalf of EHA (Qld).

The Board is also developing a local project through its Environmental Health KPI and Best Practice survey which was recently distributed to Members.

Last year the Board was concerned about the clash of regional group meetings, and the consequent effect on sponsors and other stakeholders. This has now been resolved with Board Member Amanda Hutchings coordinating group meeting dates well in advance.

The other major focus for the Board was the 2010 Annual State Conference and Excellence Awards. A dedicated sub-committee of the Board was highly active in delivering the annual EHA (QLD) INC Excellence Awards which can only continue with support of Members through submission of worthy recipients. Please start giving serious thought now, to appropriate nominees for next year's awards.

Queensland Annual State Conference held on the Gold Coast from 23 – 26 May, was themed '*Turning up the Heat on the Coast - Action Steps to a Better Result*'. The planning for such an event is a substantial undertaking requiring significant contributions from a small Conference Planning group. While the group includes several members of the Board, EHA (QLD) INC also records its gratitude to Gold Coast City Council for hosting this event; and to Gold Coast City Council staff for their key roles in finalising conference arrangements and major contribution to the smooth running of the event.

# Be a leader in environmental health

QUT's flexible study options, including external delivery, online learning, and intensive block attendance, will help you take the next step in your career. Choose from a wide range of course offerings including short courses, graduate certificates, graduate diplomas and master degrees.

Our **Master of Health Science** will advance your knowledge in an area that aligns with your individual career goals. Choose to specialise in environmental health; emergency and disaster management; health promotion; health services management; risk management; plus many others. You can also complete a cross-specialisation.

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## Down at the Local – LGAQ Update June 2010

*Christine Blanchard*  
Environment and Health Policy Advisor  
Owned by, Governed by, Working for: Councils  
[Local Government Association of Queensland](#)

LGAQ is pleased to provide the following information to EHA members on issues that are currently facing Local Government Environmental Health in Queensland.

### **Draft Waste Strategy**

The Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) has released the draft waste strategy for Queensland and association draft waste levy document. These documents can be found at [http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/environmental\\_management/waste/strategy/index.html](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/environmental_management/waste/strategy/index.html).

DERM is currently conducting a number of consultation sessions around the State. Submissions on the draft documents are due by 31 July 2010. LGAQ will be making a submission on behalf of local government – councils are invited to make their own submission or provide information to LGAQ to form part of that submission.

### **Clandestine Laboratories**

Councils will be aware that Queensland Police are sending notices to local government where clandestine laboratories have been found. Information provided in these notices is limited. LGAQ has taken this matter up with Queensland Health and a working group has been established to identify ongoing roles and responsibilities in relation to clan labs.

Until roles and responsibilities are resolved, officers are encouraged to liaise with the police on the type of laboratories conducted on site to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to safeguard public health. The police have shown a willingness to assist local government where possible and the details for QPS head office are shown on the notification forms.

### **Mosquito Management Code of Practice**

This code of practice is being reviewed by LGAQ. It was first produced in 2002 and has not been reviewed since. A technical reference group has been formed to review the document and the review should be completed in the next month or so.

### **Food Safety Auditor Training**

LGAQ has secured funding under the Productivity Places Program to provide food safety auditor training to local government officers. This training will be provided at a cost of \$200 per person and will be 5 days. Confirmed course dates and locations are:

12-16 July – Bundaberg  
9-13 August – Sunshine Coast  
6-10 September – Cairns  
13-17 September – Townsville  
11-15 October – Mackay  
Date TBC – Brisbane

There are positions available in each of these courses so if you are interested in participating, please contact LGAQ.

### **Questions?**

If you have any questions on the above information or on any issue facing Local Government, please contact Christine Blanchard, Environment and Health Policy Advisor, telephone 3000 2243 or email [christine\\_blanchard@lgaq.asn.au](mailto:christine_blanchard@lgaq.asn.au).

*This information is provided for the information of EHA members working in Local Government. All information provided should be read in conjunction with the LGAQ Policy Statement.*

### *Editor's Note:*

*This content is provided by Christine on behalf of LGAQ, and does not necessarily reflect any policy positions of EHA (Qld) Inc with regard to those matters canvassed.*

## Townsville City Council EHO Cadetships in Practice

Townsville City Council has welcomed the appointment of 3 new Cadet Environmental Health Officers (EHO's). Sonia Brennan started in March 2009, followed by Jay Gordon in July 2009, and finally Michael Sheridan in Jan 2010. Based at the Thuringowa Drive offices the new cadets have been mentored, trained, well groomed, fitted-out, stationed, and supervised. The new cadets have been participating in food premises inspections, ERAs, and complaints.

The Environmental Health Officer Cadetship consists of willing participants who are required to study Environmental Health at a recognised University. This enables them to gain membership to the Environmental Health Association of Australian, upon graduation. The three new cadets are all studying via distance, part-time, two years Graduate Diploma of Environmental Health (Grad DipEnvHth) at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). The cadetship includes being paid to work three days per week with Council. The EHO Course Co-ordinator is Dr Thomas Tenkate. Upon graduation the new cadets will be appointed as full-time EHOs under the terms of their cadetships.

*Sonia Brennan*



Another Townsville local, Sonia is currently completing a Graduate Diploma of Environmental Health at QUT. Sonia was inspired to begin a career in environmental health due to her condition mysophobia. In life before Townsville City Council, Sonia studied marine biology, aquaculture and microbiology at James Cook University. Sonia worked at an aquaculture facility south of Townsville as a water quality technician during her time at JCU.

Sonia's interests include astronomy, herpetology, percussion and medical history.

*Jay Gordon*



Born and bred here in Townsville, Jay is the youngest of the three cadets. She has completed a Science degree in Microbiology.

Before joining the Townsville City Council she worked as a Scientist for the Australian Red Cross Blood Bank for 18 months. Her interests include broomball, movies, current events and learning to live away from her family. Currently Jay spends all her time between university and helping to organise weddings for 3 of her friends.

*Michael Sheridan*



Michael grew up in Sydney and has since lived in Newcastle, Tasmania, and Brisbane. Michael has been married for four years and with his Brazilian wife, re-located to Townsville two years ago for a better lifestyle. His studies include BSc., BEd., MBIotech, DipFinPl which have seen Michael work primarily as a scientist at QIMR and ARCBS – (Microbiology, Pharmaceuticals, Cellular Therapies, Blood Bank). Michael has also worked as a High School Science Teacher, and had a stint as a Real Estate Agent. His interests include travelling, ancient history, property investing, and scientific investigations into the big Q's such as 'what is gravity'?

## Nuisance Noise, Some of the Challenges

*Environmental Health Officers  
James Masselos and Eric Wang  
Cairns Regional Council*

Following changes to the noise provisions in the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* Cairns Regional Council has been receiving an increasing number of complaints requiring noise monitoring, which has resulted in new challenges for the Environmental Health team. These include seasonal conditions, unforeseen consequences of building residential towers in commercial areas and even tropical wildlife!

The major issue that affects Cairns Regional Council's ability to assess validity of complaints by noise monitoring is the weather, particularly during the wet season which generally runs from January to May. This makes it very difficult to plan suitable times to investigate noise complaints. When planning noise monitoring the Environmental Health Officer has to constantly check long range weather forecasts and any strong wind warnings on various web sites (one site gives up to a ten day forecast). On many occasions the officer has had to cancel at the last minute because of unexpected weather changes. For example, it took at least ten attempts before Council officers were able to eventually take noise measurements at one location.

With reference to the above example the great majority of the postponements were due to the weather (rain and/or wind). On one occasion the weather was perfect for late night noise monitoring, however, when the EHOs arrived they found flying foxes in a tree full of flowers or fruit in the complainant's yard. You could hear the flying foxes, but not the noise in question.

When the wet season ends most people stop using air conditioners at night and sleep with their windows open. This results in people hearing the extra noises that used to be masked by air conditioners and closed windows. As a result Council receives more noise complaints.

Cairns Regional Council EHOs have recently encountered an issue that would also affect many other urban areas. This issue occurs when high rise residential towers are built adjacent to existing two or three story commercial buildings. These lower buildings may have been there for many years and had had no noise issues until the residential towers were built. There is no provision under the planning system to force the owner, occupier and/or body corporate of the newer residential tower to contribute to the cost of rectifying the issue if a problem arises.

Noise is one of the most emotive issues that EHOs have to deal with. Experience has taught us that a small noise can quickly become unbearable for some complainants, who will then expect urgent and effective action from the Council. This can make it difficult for the EHOs who have to explain to angry complainants why their expectations of easy solutions to noise complaints are not met.

Living in the tropics has many lifestyle advantages but, because of extreme heat and humidity, air conditioners are a part of life in areas such as Cairns, and dealing with noise complaints generated by this and other prescribed noise nuisances poses an ongoing challenge for our EHOs.



One of the natural hazards encountered when doing noise monitoring



Example of noise-emitting equipment on a roof near residential units in the CBD



Taking a background reading late at night. The head mounted torch makes it much easier to see and record data in low light conditions.

## Employment Vacancies

Need to advertise an employment vacancy? Take advantage of the wide distribution abilities of the EHA website and place your advertisement in an environmental health dedicated website. Advertise your employment vacancy on the EHA website at very low cost – contact Margaret at the office phone 07 3000 2299 for details. An additional avenue is to advertise in QEHA.

## Advertising Rates for QEHA Journal

Full page - \$430.00

Half (1/2) page - \$315.00

Quarter (1/4) page - \$200.00

(All rates quoted above are Inclusive of GST)

Please contact Executive Officer Margaret Hind for any further details and conditions - Phone (07) 3000 2299 or email [qld@eh.org.au](mailto:qld@eh.org.au)

### MEMBERSHIP APPROVALS January - May 2010

#### **Associate Member:**

Dianne Francisco, Paul Lofts, Amelia Johnson

#### **Member:**

Ian Marshall, Paula Ingerson, Jacqueline Murray, Lisa Bricknell, Joshua Smalley, Dr Valeriya Melville, Peter Hingst

#### **Student:**

Ernest Kolly, Hannah Davis, Cheryl Evans, Corinna Bullock, Gemma Rayner, Melissa Boswood, Lorena Fuenzalida, Luke Cantwell, Musarrat Shah

#### **Member Upgrades:**

John Cohen - Member to Fellow  
Jo Rolls - Membership as Honorary Fellow

## Congratulations to New EHOs Merle O'Donnell and Frank Mills

Congratulations from EHA (QLD) Inc go to Merle O'Donnell and Frank Mills, who graduated on 3rd June 2010 (Mabo Day) with their environmental health officer degree from the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (Northern Territory). Merle, who currently works with Central Queensland Public Health Unit as the Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinator, and Frank with the Townsville Public Health Unit as Public Health Officer (and now EHO one day a week), both started the EHA accredited EHO degree back in 2006. It was a long path for the graduands, who both first completed the Certificate IV in Primary Health Care and then went on to complete the Diploma in Primary Health Care (Environmental Health), which gave them the pathway to commence the degree and qualifications to become an EHO. Merle and Frank are of a few Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander People to become EHO qualified in Queensland. We hope more Indigenous Peoples are able to complete an EHO degree and work in Queensland.

The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education's Bachelor of Applied Science (Environmental Health) is a three year full-time or part-time equivalent undergraduate degree resulting in an environmental health degree recognised by Environmental Health Australia. Graduates are able to work as an environmental health officer throughout Australia in both organisational and community settings, with the qualification recognised nationally and internationally. The course includes units that consider environmental health issues relating to infrastructure, risk management, community capacity building, sustainable development, housing and construction, project planning and legislative requirements for professional practice.

*Pictured(Left to Right) at the Batchelor Institute Graduation Day are Dr Peter Stevenson - first Environmental Health Coordinator at Batchelor, Tait Farren – EHO Bega Valley Shire Council, Dr Kirstin Ross – Current EHC at Batchelor, Merle O'Donnell – Indigenous Environmental Health Coordinator Central Regional Services, Frank Mills – Public Health Officer/Environmental Health Officer Townsville Public Health Unit, and Dr Emma Young (who took over the role from Dr Stevenson).*



## EVENTS CALENDAR

### Disaster Management for Public Health – Cairns: 22-27 August 2010

This course will provide an opportunity for Public Health professionals to gain a comprehensive and practical insight into the challenging, but immensely rewarding, area of disaster management.

This popular Course will be held again this year and as places fill very quickly, please register early or register an expression of interest by emailing the Executive Officer Margaret Hind at [qld@eh.org.au](mailto:qld@eh.org.au)



## DISASTER MANAGEMENT

CAIRNS 22-27 AUGUST 2010

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP CONVENORS

### Environment and Waste Management:

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[Ian.Kuhl@townsville.qld.gov.au](mailto:Ian.Kuhl@townsville.qld.gov.au)  
Ph: 07 – 4773 8346

### Disaster Management:

Paul Endres  
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### Indigenous Environmental Health:

TBA  
  
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/Immunisation:**  
Paul Clancy  
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