



# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AUSTRALIA

## President's Report–

It has been a busy year so far with a lot happening! Every EH professional I speak to is even busier than usual at the moment.

I will start with a brief update from the national EHA level. One of the most important roles the national EHA Board plays is in relation to advocacy. I don't think we promote how much the national board advocates on behalf of EH professionals. We're very fortunate to have Bruce Morton (one of Qld's reps on the national Board) involved in the enHealth committee that deals with workforce issues. Bruce is currently leading a joint enHealth and EHA project regarding the accreditation of university environmental health courses. EHA has accredited university courses for several decades and the current accreditation policy was reviewed within the last few years. The current project aims to align university course accreditation requirements with the enHealth [Environmental Health Officer Skills and Knowledge Matrix](#).

The national EHA President, Joseph Zappavigna, also attends some enHealth committee meetings. It is really important that we continue to have someone like Joe or Bruce representing environmental health professionals at these forums. Without the practical understanding that Joe and Bruce bring to the meetings, decisions could be made that are based on good intentions, but may not be practical.

The national EHA organisation also provides the link between the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) and the state EHA Associations. This ensures we continue as part of the international environmental health community. This creates many information sharing opportunities and creates bonds between professional associations such as EHA and our international equivalents.

EHA is the only Australian association that is a member of IFEH. That is something as EH professionals and members of EHA that we should be proud of.

EHA national are also working on several other projects including the website review (I know it is long overdue) and the Certified Professional Development (CPD) program. So as you can see there is a lot of great work happening at the national level which members will benefit from in the near future.

There is just as much happening at a Queensland level. Over the past few years the Board has developed an extensive professional development program which is outlined in the EHA (QLD) INC [Environmental Health Training Calendar](#). Several new courses have been developed and where possible training has been delivered in regional areas. The Qld Board recently resolved to trial offering six half price places per training event (excluding the disaster management course and the State conference) for EHA members from regional groups outside the region where the course is being held. Obviously this initiative will reduce the overall cost of attending training for some of our regional colleagues, which will hopefully have a positive impact on their ability to attend training based in Brisbane. However, in the future if training events are held in regional areas the SEQ members will also benefit.

A few months ago the Qld Board updated our business plan. We are very fortunate to have a relatively large and a highly committed Board who voluntarily take the lead on various projects/programs. Some of the activities included in the business plan are:

- The development of policy statements (which will support future advocacy work, including the release of media statements).

Once drafted the policy statements will be made available to members for comment before finalisation and distribution to relevant stakeholders.

- Ongoing support for University Awards for accredited EH courses.
- Attendance at career expos and events to promote the career.
- Exploring opportunities to partner with various organisations (e.g. consultants, universities) on joint projects that will benefit EHA members. Guidelines are currently being developed to ensure high levels of accountability and transparency in relation to these types of activities.

The EHA (QLD) INC Board meet by teleconference once a month and has two face-to-face meetings each year to ensure that things keep moving along. As you can see a lot of work is being done.

You should all have received the call for papers for the EHA conference being held at the Gold Coast from 11-14 November 2012. This will be a joint EHA national and EHA Qld state conference. The theme for the conference is 'Advancing Quality of Life'. We've confirmed several high profile and interesting keynote speakers – more information will be available soon.

The Environmental Health Excellence Award recipients will be announced at the conference. These awards are an excellent way of recognising excellent work conducted in 2011 by EHA members. With all the challenges we faced last year I know there are plenty of people to nominate. The [nomination form](#) is available on the EHA website.

While talking about awards, I would like to congratulate Jennifer Haines who is the Service Manager Health and Environment at Redland City Council and an EHA member. Jen was recently awarded the LGMA Young Manager of the Year award. Obviously this is a wonderful personal achievement for Jen and is well deserved. It is also wonderful to see one of our environmental health colleagues receiving this type of recognition. Congratulations Jen!

Finally I would like to thank all of the regional group convenors and secretaries. The success of the regional forums is due to the hard work and

commitment of the regional group convenors, secretaries and other volunteers. The professional development and networking opportunities offered at regional forums are so valuable and it is great to see good attendance and ongoing support for these events.

Sorry for the long report, but as you can see there is a lot happening and I think it is important that members know which projects are in the pipeline.

Regards,  
Bel.

*Regards Belinda Davies*

## Editorial

Grant Steen has been my boss, mentor, colleague and partner in producing the EH Journal for a very long time. His dedication to environmental health and Environmental Health Australia, goes way back....44 years back.

Grant has numerous achievements to his name and he has served on countless committees campaigning for better environmental health outcomes. He has also provided guidance and advice to fellow professionals all over Queensland.

Grant joined Environmental Health Australia (then AIEH) as an Associate Member on 9 August 1973. Application for Advancement to Member status was approved on 27 October 1978. Grant was appointed to State Council in September 2002 and has remained as a State Councillor until the restructure and incorporation of the Queensland Association in March 2010. From that time he has been a Director for the State Association. In 2010 Grant was appointed to the National Board.

Grant Steen retired from the Townsville City Council on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2012. He will be greatly missed by staff; however his vast accomplishments and innovated programs will live on with the establishment

Grant will continue in his roles with Environmental Health Australia.

*Editor*

## Behind The Scenes – EHA (QLD) INC Board

### Behind The Scenes

- The Board of EHA (QLD) INC has nominated director Vince Stephens to fill a vacancy on the Board of the national body EHA Ltd
- The Board is currently considering the Service Agreement with EHA Ltd which is due to expire shortly
- EHA (QLD) INC is developing a policy on partnerships with consultants
- The Board agreed to provide an award for the EH course at Sunshine Coast University, in line with past practice for Queensland tertiary courses
- The Training Calendar was reviewed to ensure consistent and sustainable service delivery to members
- In accepting latest financial statements (February) the Board expressed collective satisfaction with the current financial position of EHA (QLD) INC.
- In confirming the location of the 2012 Qld and National Conference at Gold Coast the Board expressed its gratitude for support from Gold Coast City Council and EHA members at GCCC
- The nomination of Melissa McKeown was accepted to a vacant director position on the Board of EHA (QLD) INC
- The Board also resolved to again support and participate in the 2012 National Careers and Employment Expo and Skillex in Brisbane (4/5 May)
- At its February 2012 meeting the Board resolved with regret to de-list a small number of unfinancial members, but noted that these were far outweighed by the number of new members this financial year

## 37<sup>th</sup> EHA National Conference

11 TO 14 NOVEMBER 2012

**Hosted by Gold Coast City Council from 11 to 14 November 2012 at the Hilton Surfers Paradise.**

**The theme, “*Environmental Health - Advancing Quality of Life*”, will bring together presenters from a variety of disciplines.**

**Keynote Presenter Tim Costello CEO of World Vision Australia will address delegates** Tim Costello oversees programs to address the most fundamental environmental health needs of disaster and poverty affected people. Conference delegates will have the opportunity to learn from his experiences and how he communicates key messages.

**Dr Phil Jauncey**, a performance psychologist, whose activities include corporate facilitation, education of staff and managers, personal success mentoring, counselling and working as a sports psychologist. Dr Jauncey has been working with EH practitioners for several years and will share his insights with delegates about effective communication .

**Mr John Ravlic, National CEO, Local Government Managers Australia.** One of our lead partners who EHA have been working with since 2006. He will engage delegates on the challenges and future of Local Government across Australia.

**Dr Karl Kruszelnicki** - Dr Karl is currently the Julius Sumner Miller Fellow at Sydney University. His role is to ‘spread the word’ and enthuse the general population about all things science. In September 2003 Dr Karl was named ‘Australian Father of the Year’. Dr Karl Kruszelnicki received the Member of the Order of Australia Award in the 2006 Australia Day Honours list. His enthusiasm for science is totally infectious and no one is better able to convey the excitement and wonder of it all than Dr Karl. He will focus on science as a foundation and links to environmental health.

**Call for Papers** - . Abstracts by Thursday 31 May 2012

<http://www.ehaqld.org.au>

## The Dickey Slicer Update from 2008 to 2012

*Tony Walter  
Environmental Health Officer  
Townsville City Council*

A Townsville City Council routine food inspection of a fast food Asian noodle premises in December 2008 has snowballed into a major investigation involving another State. The inspection identified an odd piece of kitchen equipment whose parts were well concealed and innocent looking for rapidly slicing meat for stirfrys.

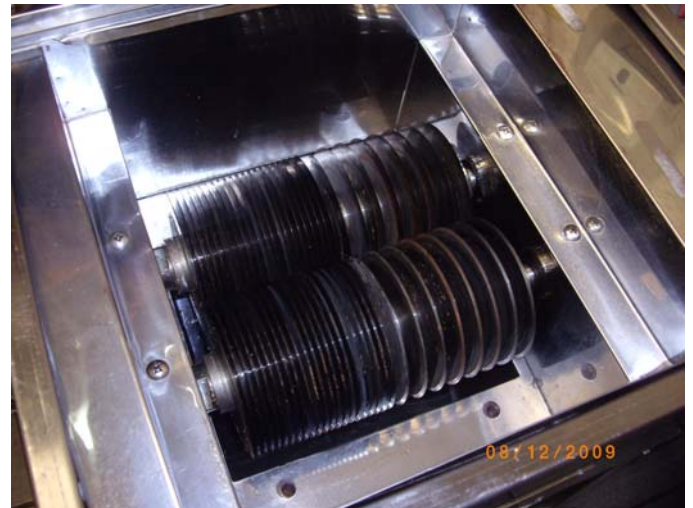


This article is to remind EHOs to be very vigilant out there as this machine could be easily overlooked while conducting inspections. In addition, the article can further provide some guidance for officers and provide some information as to what has occurred over the years. Queensland Health did send out a revised circular in October 2011 but it is

believed that some local governments may not have received this updated circular. This is available from the following password protected area on the Qld Health website

[www.health.qld.gov.au/eholocalgov/](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/eholocalgov/).

Townsville had a total of seven premises that were advised through Food Improvement Notices to cease using the dodgy models. There are multiple dodgy models out there. However, they are all related when it comes to removing the blade compartment easily for cleaning for compliance with FSC 3.2.3 Clause 12.



The slicer the council approved back in 2008 which featured in the 2009 EHA newsletter is far superior in design, quality and clean ability than any of the slicers in question. For more information refer to [www.rongyigz.cn.alibaba.com](http://www.rongyigz.cn.alibaba.com) and note the website needs to be translated. The Chinese manufacturer claims on the website after translating that, *'the entire knife is rust-proof stainless steel and other materials. It does not require any tools for the blade unit that can be easily installed and removed.*

*More health, more convenient!* Even after four years in operation this type of unit has maintained the original standard and is still easily and effectively cleaned as all surfaces around the unit motor are of one continuous smooth surface with no chance of blood/meat/residue falling into cervices, joins etc. The machine can be dismantled by hand and the blade compartment can be removed all within 30 seconds. Even the food handler commented to the officer on how much easier this machine is to clean compared to the old dodgy one. The blades are also stainless steel so therefore not prone to rust.



Another approved Double Blade King Meat Slice model appears to be a latest version model to the superseded dodgy machines. However, the blades on this model can now be easily removed within 30 seconds similar to above machine. The blade attachment slides along centre supporting poles and the poles do not have contact with food. The machine is made of a cheaper quality stainless steel as the above slicer but still can be cleaned easily.

These blades must be oiled after cleaning to prevent rust which indicates the blades are not made of a stainless steel finish. This machine comes from the same supplier in Sydney as the previous dodgy machines. The supplier had even contacted a Townsville premise advising them to stop using the old dodgy machine as the blades can't be removed/cleaned effectively and has supplied them with this model as a replacement.



If EHOs are still unsure which machine they are dealing with or whether it is on the updated Queensland Health 2011 Circular, just ask the operator to take the blades out. If the operator reaches for the toolbox or does not know how to, it is easy to say that this is one of the non-compliant models. The food handlers should be able to unscrew a few nuts by hand, dismantle the food contact surfaces easy to clean pieces and present the blades all within 30 seconds. All previous non-compliant businesses in Townsville businesses are using either of the above models and applying hot water and a chemical sanitiser for the cleaning process as per FSC.

Since the 2009 EHA article and original Queensland Health Circular, Townsville City Council has provided assistance to some local governments. The 2010 State Conference provided a discussion topic on the double blade meat slicer facilitated by Gold Coast City Council. Again, after this Conference, Townsville provided further answers to the probing questions from other local governments. It was great to read Bundaberg Regional Council's story of their experience round up in 2011 newsletter. As a result of the great exposure through many outlets about this potentially dangerous machine a number of local governments have taken action in relation to the Chinese meat slicers.

Townsville provided all the information they had on the slicers to Qld Health so that all information could be forwarded to the assist NSW Food Authority investigation. The Food Authority did have some trouble tracking the importer as he was constantly changing trading names and gave them the run around. Finally through an interpreter translating the notices and warnings to not sell the dodgy meat slicers the Food Authority believes the importer has ceased to sell and distribute the models. The importer was also made aware of his responsibility regarding Workcover and possible future investigations. It was discovered that this importer only supplied the machines throughout Queensland and New South Wales. Similar to Qld Health original circular, the NSW Food Authority in 2010 also warned their local councils that the slicer does not comply with the FSC.

NSW Food Authority officers have assessed the latest version meat slicer in 2010 acknowledging the improved design that enabled the blade assembly, guards and other components to be dismantled and cleaned. They are also satisfied like Townsville was that the new machine complies with the FSC.

This article is guidance only and other local governments would need to make their own assessment of all similar equipment found as to whether the machine is in compliance with the FSC. Townsville has educated these offending premises to ensure a food grade sanitiser solution is applied after the cleaning process. This issue has been a good reminder of the how the speed and easy access of goods moving around the world could cause major health implications. However, once again the

environmental health profession has saved the day and prevented possible serious food poisoning incidents occurring.

## Looking for EH staff?

### Need to advertise an employment vacancy?

Take advantage of the wide distribution capabilities 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 here in QEH.

## 37<sup>th</sup> EHA National Conference & 72<sup>nd</sup> EHA (QLD) INC Annual State Conference

Gold Coast –

11 to 14 November 2012  
' Environmental Health-  
Advancing Quality of Life'

Conference specific link:  
[www.ehaqld.org.au](http://www.ehaqld.org.au)

## Paul Endres moves on...



Paul Endres the Story-teller, at a Northern Group Meeting in Chillagoe

Recently EH colleague and former EHA (Qld) Councillor Paul Endres announced with great regret and reluctance that after almost 25 years dedicated to public health in Queensland, he had resigned from Queensland Health. Many of you may be aware that in recent times Paul had been working as a Consultant Health Advisor in PNG for Exxon Mobil Development Company on a 10,000 worker construction site, building an LNG processing plant.

Paul graduated from QUT in 1987 and subsequently undertook post-graduate management studies (GDM) from the University of Central Queensland. Paul became a student member of (then) AIHS in 1987 and served on the State Branch Council from 1995 until the time of the new incorporated association in 2010. Paul's EH contribution was recognised by the grant of EHA Fellow status in 2009.

In reflecting on his career in a message to colleagues, Paul advised that he was extremely grateful for his time in Environmental Health and acknowledged that it has been a wonderful profession in which to be involved. Paul's Health Practitioner position was recognised by Queensland Health as a HP6 clinical/management expert in many areas, including Indigenous Public Health, Disaster/Incident Management, Environmental Health and Leadership. This recognition extended from peers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Leaders, and University Professors to commendations from the Premier of Queensland and Prime Minister of Australia for services in public health management. Paul was also honoured with Public Service and several Environmental

Health Australia Awards - including the 2004 Excellence Award for Queensland. Paul sees one of his career highlights as being awarded Fellowship status by Environmental Health Australia for his services to the profession. Paul lamented that while these accolades are occasionally awarded to environmental health professionals, unfortunately the work of many EH professionals often goes unnoticed as the majority of our work is preventative. Or, in Paul's words - *'the curse of being in a role where you are noticed less by being more effective!'* Interestingly, Paul notes that from his recent experience the high value of EHOs is more widely recognised in the corporate world.

Paul was also renowned for his enthusiastic support and leadership in social networking activities associated with EHA Northern Group conferences and as convenor of the EHA (QLD) INC Disaster Management Course. It is legend around the Northern Group that Paul need not bother booking accommodation for weekend conferences - the close of his Saturday night social networking (without the aid of Facebook or Twitter!) usually coincided with the opening of the Group's Sunday morning meeting proceedings.

Paul recounted fond memories of the many characters he had the pleasure of working with over the years, and that he will sincerely miss colleagues he was privileged to work with during his career. From helping publicans put out house fires in far north western Queensland during a spirit testing inspection; driving through floodwater in March 2006 to meet the Premier for a cyclone briefing near a crocodile farm where the crocs had floated out over the fence; being taught by 'legends' on how to take meat samples and talk down irate butchers bearing sharp meat cleavers; and of course the practical jokes (best not committed to print). These are all priceless moments he remembers fondly. In recalling the unique camaraderie that Paul experienced from the first day he started in this field was unparalleled, he remains *'certain this bond in a tough profession will prevail, even in the current climate of uncertainty'*.

In encouraging EHOs to promote and be proud of the strengths of the EH profession, Paul assures us that there are no better placed professionals to manage incidents, prevent disease, and solve difficult health problems when others give up. Paul

notes that after being involved in training over 600 EHOs and other health professionals in Disaster Management and watching them in action, he sees EHOs as '*an amazing resource*'. On a real positive note Paul has committed to assisting in any way he can with this year's Disaster Management Course, which is good news for both EHA and for his wide circle of friends.

Paul's parting comment was that he will greatly miss his friends and colleagues and asks that we keep in touch. For those who do wish to keep in contact with Paul his best email address is [peznetw@bigpond.com](mailto:peznetw@bigpond.com)

**EHA (QLD) INC**  
**MEMBERSHIP APPROVALS**  
**October 2011 – February 2012**

**Member:**

Alisha Norris, Paul Jackson, Preeti Prayaga, Eleanor Reed, Jeff Lang, James Hallett, Dirk ten Bohmer, Wolfgang Zadavec, Stephen Wgnall

**Transfer (from WA)**

Rojyar Ahmadi

**Member (Grad) Upgrade:**

Penelope Springham, David Quin.

**Member (Grad):**

Brendin Bloye, Sharlene Rees, Mitchell Bright.

**Associate:**

Shane Noon.

**Member (Rejoining)**

Jalaludin Rowshan, Eddie Stevens, Sian Ashton, Marcus Moloney, Allan Caulfield.

**Student:**

Gemma Parker, Sean Bourke, Lachlan Cawcutt, Ryan Daniel, Bradley Wightman, Glen Hunt, Ashley Morris,

## Environmental Health Excellence Awards 2011

**Nomination forms on the website at**

**<http://www.eh.org.au/branches/qld/index.php>**

**Environmental Health Professional of the Year**  
**Young Environmental Health Professional of the Year**

**President's Award**

Nominate yourself or a colleague based on achievements during 2011. There will be plenty to choose from with 2011 being one of the most challenging years ever for Queenslanders.

Awards will be presented at the Conference Dinner on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November.

## TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

**Registration and other forms for all Workshops are at**  
**<http://www.eh.org.au/branches/qld/index.php>**



## Caneland Redevelopment

*Carmel Moran, Shane Parker and AnneMarie Farrelly  
Environmental Health Officers  
Mackay Regional Council*



In the past, Mackay and shopping were not two words that were used in the same sentence. For the residents of the rapidly growing Mackay, a mining hub located on the northern Queensland Coast, retail therapy was sought by means of boarding a short internal flight, credit card in tow, to Brisbane.

Caneland Central Shopping Centre provided the basics to tide one over so we did not go without! Then there were whispers about a glorious extension that was to take place of the shopping centre, one that was set to include all the most popular stores to cater for every need and desire. Once the initial excitement had subsided, the words Food Court jumped out and caught the attention of the Environmental Health Team at Mackay Regional Council. It was apparent from an early stage that a new and exciting challenge was awaiting us, however, details were sketchy and rumours were rampant.

It was not until July 2011, when a meeting that was attended by Environmental Health Officers, Trade Waste Inspectors and a representative from the project management group (a person that was soon to make it to the top of our speed dial list) that was responsible for the development that the sheer enormity of the project came to light. Lists and information began to flow in to our inboxes. From the word go we knew that this development would require great organisation and was going to consume a great deal of our time.

Step by step advice was given on how to submit an application; approximately 20 new premises (with one skin penetration premises thrown in to the mix) were set to occupy the new food court and river front strip. An information session was held by some of the EHOs to ensure that the application process through to the approval stage went as smoothly as possible.

So we waited and waited, with Council plan approval stamp ready to go, for the new applications to flood in but as with any large project, delays began to occur. We had received an official opening date of 13th of October 2011. It was August time and we were still waiting. Our dreams of having enough time to approve plans were diminishing rapidly. Although time was running short, we remembered to keep our cool and remain patient.

At the same time some staffing changes were taking place in our little team. The Coordinator's position was being covered by one of the other Officers as maternity leave, leaving an Officers position temporarily vacant. Another permanent position had been vacant since February 2011. The saying, 'It doesn't rain but it pours' comes to mind as both positions were filled within days of each other in mid-August, after months of searching.

This recruitment success came just in time and the new Officers first tasks involved getting stuck in to the applications for the various new premises that were set to become part of the now eagerly anticipated Caneland Development. To complicate matters further one of the Officers was taking leave from mid September, returning just days before the October 13th Official opening. The three remaining Officers ploughed through the applications and by mid September, final inspections began. Still a

building site, the Officers would enter the Food Court area, donning hard hats and steel capped boots, and conducted visits on the numerous food premises, with those responsible working frantically to have their place ready in time. Further delays were encountered by the soon to be licence holders as shopfitters were not readily available and subsequently there was a similar issue with cleaners that were set to come in once the shopfitters had left.



The project management company, were always welcoming and co-operative and remained by our side at all times which was good for all parties involved at times where tensions were running high mainly because of time running short.

Environmental Health visits to each premise were frequent as each applicant was keen to do things right. Approval of the Food Business Licence became a two stage process. The first stage involved giving approval to accept deliveries of package food only, with no food preparation to occur. This took the pressure off; as many businesses had food deliveries scheduled for the days leading up to the opening coming from far flung distributions centres – mainly Brisbane. After another visit, if all was in order, approval was given and the Food Business Licence issued.



In the days leading up to and the morning of the 13th of October, a date that is still etched in our memories, long hours were spent at the centre and we slowly saw it transform from a construction site to a beautiful food court. In the end, with a lot of team work both within our own team of 4 Environmental Health Officers and with the project management company and the food business operators themselves, it all came together. Shopping in Mackay is now a truly pleasurable experience as we can now boast the largest shopping facility in Regional Queensland. Shoppers can take a break for anything from an expertly made coffee to real Italian food to Yum Cha to recharge the batteries before indulging in that item that we once had to travel so far to purchase.



## Back to Basics 'LEADERSHIP 101 – Value of Coaching Staff

*Melinda Buker,  
Coordinator Directorate Projects,  
Gold Coast City Council and  
Jon Gibbons,  
Director Corporate Services/ Deputy CEO,  
Whitsunday Regional Council.*

This paper is another 'Leadership 101' article and focuses on the value of coaching staff; especially through complex change environments.

Many of us have been through a great deal of change in recent years, through amalgamation processes; the modernisation of IT systems and the introduction of shared services.

'Change' is now part of our normal business operating environment and hence it is critical that we support staff in working through change and accepting the challenges and opportunities that change can deliver.

Previously; supporting staff through change usually meant that external teams were established to manage the change and 'change newsletters' were issued to staff focusing on compliance and addressing staff concerns and fear.

With minimal internal staff involvement this method of managing change often resulted in confusion and a complete lack of ownership by staff to anything connected to the change.

Modern approaches to managing change include:

- The development of change strategies that include input from and decision making by the teams impacted by change
- The identification of change leaders / agents / champions in impacted areas
- The assignment of operational staff to work on change issues to identify business impacts and development of 'future states', and critically,
- Constant and informative communication!

In addition, the role of coaching and mentoring staff should form a key part of the change process.

Coaching can be used to assist staff to meet their goals based on their own skills and performance. Leaders need to assess how they can use change to improve the skill base and thus the work performance of their team members.

Mentoring is about providing career development, general guidance and goal setting on both a professional and personal basis.

Both coaching and mentoring rely on effective communication and your direct involvement with the staff members.

As a leader, staff need your attention. Just like the coach of a football team, players become much more confident in their own abilities if their leader shows that they are interested, available, understand their challenges and support their goals. Staff are people not just numbers or 'resources' who click on at 8am and off at 5pm. Treating staff as humans builds organisations.

You need to be the 'coach' to form a partnership to get the job done. So understand your team and ensure you have the basics covered:

- Have your staff identified their professional and personal goals?
- Are their goals being effectively managed via personal development plans?
- What have they identified as major challenges and opportunities?
- Are they being appropriately involved in change issues?
- Critically, what training and development are they receiving?

Training is needed to refresh and expand people's skill bases. For example technical experts can be assisted to learn 'soft' people based skills which are linked to basic human behaviours, conflict resolution and team building. They can also be allowed time out to review how they communicate and the way they work on solutions.

Your leadership is about understanding, empathy, supporting and valuing the skills, knowledge and attributes of others.

Effective leaders retain staff and achieve an enviable productive and satisfied workforce where change is accepted and its associated benefits are understood and welcomed.

## Exercise “Recon” at Tully Heads

*Ben Ryan,  
Acting Senior Environmental Health Officer  
Cairns Public Health Unit, Queensland Health*

Recent natural disasters in Far North Queensland have highlighted the need for a systematic approach to assessing environmental health issues and priorities that arise following a disaster. One of the key lessons identified has been the lack of access environmental health officers (EHO) have to evidence-based and objective tools that allow systematic community-level environmental health rapid assessments to be completed. This often results in insufficient information being collected and collated for decision-makers to make evidence-based decisions about priority areas and the required interventions to address public health risks.

In response, Queensland Health’s Cairns Public Health Unit worked with local governments to form the Far North Queensland Public Health Disaster Management Working Group (Working Group) in mid 2011. The Working Group provides an avenue for local government public health teams and disaster coordinators in Far North Queensland, and Queensland Health, to work together in identifying and managing public health risks, within existing disaster management arrangements, after a disaster. The group has representatives from a range of local governments including Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cook, Pormpuraaw, Tablelands, Yarrabah, and Weipa. There is also active participation from Emergency Management Queensland and representatives from Queensland Police and the Australian Red Cross have attended meetings.

To address the need for an evidence-based and objective tool for EHOs to utilise in the field after a disaster, the Working Group has developed an environmental health rapid assessment tool (rapid assessment tool). This provides a systematic approach to gathering information about environment health issues and priorities after a disaster (e.g. drinking water, sewage, sanitation, waste, asbestos, etc). The information gathered can then be used to inform decision makers about the environmental health priorities after a disaster.

Exercise “Recon” was held at Tully Heads on 9 November 2011 to test the rapid assessment tool. The exercise was a scenario based on the situation at Tully Heads two days after cyclone Yasi, which was severely impacted by a tidal surge. There is no clear evidence of the tidal surge height, however, anecdotal evidence from responding officers and residents indicates it was 1.5-2 meters high and travelled 300-500 meters in-land. All residents were invited to attend, including briefings, through two rounds of community consultation prior to the exercise.

A pre-exercise briefing ([Figure 1](#)) was held before deploying assessment teams. This also provided an opportunity for residents to discuss the key issues after cyclone Yasi and the effectiveness of the response. Overall, 12 community members and 23 state and local government representatives from across North Queensland participated. A research team from Griffith University observed the exercise and local ABC radio provided media coverage.

Four teams conducted environmental health assessments of the area ([Figure 2](#)). Two groups were allocated to each area and conducted separate assessments using the rapid assessment tool. The duplication of areas allowed the accuracy and consistency of the rapid assessment tool in capturing information to be effectively measured. Each team was accompanied by community representatives who described the situation two days after cyclone Yasi. The teams were tasked with undertaking the assessments within 1.5 hours ([Figure 3](#)).

Each group reported their findings and provided feedback at the post-exercise brief ([Figure 4](#)). There was consistency in the issues and priorities identified, which included asbestos, sewage and waste. Overall feedback about the rapid assessment tool was positive, however, a common theme was the need to modify it to ensure quantifiable information could be gathered. In response, two forms have been developed (housing and community).

This exercise demonstrated that such a rapid assessment tool would allow for timely and accurate information to be gathered and provided to decision makers about environmental health priorities after a disaster. Participants indicated this exercise was worthwhile and recommended similar exercises be

undertaken annually as part of disaster preparedness activities.

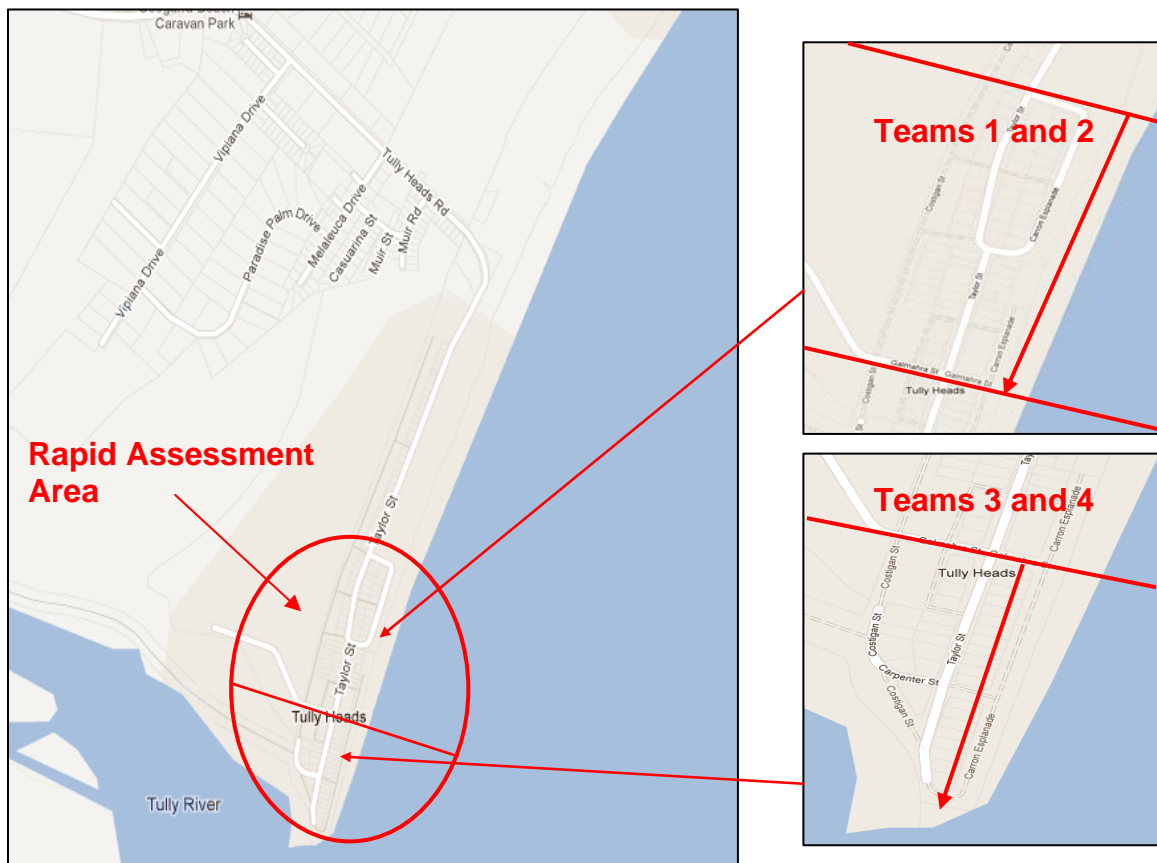
Throughout the exercise, the emotions of residents were still raw with a range of issues expressed about the overall disaster response. The impact of cyclone Yasi was also evident by the number of damaged houses and the destruction to vegetation.

This not only provided an opportunity for residents to express their concerns and frustrations to government representatives but allowed participants to appreciate the impact of disasters and the need to work effectively with distressed people during a response.

**Figure 1 – Pre-Exercise Briefing**



**Figure 2 – Rapid Assessment Area**



**Figure 3 – Rapid Assessment Teams in the Field**



**Exercise “Recon” Dinner**



## Project Hetura National Capital District Commission and Townsville City Council

*Gavin Hammond  
Executive Manager  
Environmental Health  
Townsville City Council*

Project Hetura is a capacity building project between Townsville City Council (TCC) and the National Capital District Commission (NCDC) in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. The goal of Project Hetura is to promote effective, accountable delivery of local government services by the National Capital District Commission through a partnership between the organisations. TCC provides support for the project through the contribution of staff time while the rest of the costs associated with the project are fully funded by AusAid through the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. Project Hetura, which means “mateship” in the moto language native to Port Moresby, has been operational since 2002.

In the early days, the project concentrated on setting up Planning Schemes and ensuring the Port Moresby area was being developed along defined planning pathways. The project has achieved great success with these plans and is now using this as a platform for moving into other local government governance areas.

As an Environmental Health Officer, with a few years of experience in regulation and compliance and a couple of years in management, I figured I had something that I could offer this project and was taken within the management fold of the program to coordinate the “Regulatory Services” component of the project and to act as one third of the management team leading this program.

My first visit to Port Moresby in September 2010 was a truly learning experience.

I had to integrate into a new culture, a new city, new friends and a new focus of reviewing and value adding to the regulatory and compliance functions of the NCDC.

This trip coincided with the Papua New Guinea Independence Day and the start of the Hiri Moale festival. Our group were invited to the flag raising ceremony on Capital Hill and breakfast with the Prime Minister at Parliament House, which was certainly an eye opener and an experience that will live with me for a considerable time to come. The Hiri Moale festival takes place on Ela Beach and celebrates the ocean voyages of ancient days where the Motu Koitabu people travelled west with the trade winds in huge dug out canoes to trade with the Erema people. The celebration coincides with the returning of the Motu Koitabu people on the prevailing winds.

The significance that the tribal upbringing has on the culture of PNG is certainly on full display during this festival and this has cemented my understanding of the varied needs of the 800 of so cultures that make up PNG and how they need to be considered when making decisions for the good of the community.

This trip also coincided with a trade delegation from Townsville which was fronted by our Mayor. This opened up other opportunities to mix with the Governor and senior government officials who govern Port Moresby. This was another opportunity to understand the complex web that is PNG.

Our work for the first two visits revolved around identifying opportunities and how those opportunities could be sourced and delivered. It did involve a substantial amount of networking, and discussions which showed the true value and commitment of the NCDC staff. I have found them to be highly professional in the way they carry on their work and are open to ideas and suggestions that may assist them in their governance role. Our planning has built on a solid foundation that has been set and is now considering branching out into such diverse fields as “customer service improvement”, “GIS considerations”, “Workforce training analysis”, “IT solutions to better management”, “Disaster Management considerations”, “Enhanced regulation and compliance” to name just a few.

The third trip to Port Moresby built on those friendships and networks established in the first two trips and enabled some traction to develop around

the outcomes of Project Hetura. In particular, I could see capacity development occurring.

I saw senior staff who had never had the opportunity to present to a large group of their peers “shine” under the pressure of presentation, I have seen senior staff speak up about how they think their organisation can run and for those thoughts to be actively considered, I saw consistency in decision making around planning applications based on previous process mapping and review projects, I saw enforcement training that was having a positive effect in consistent application of law and even more positive effect on the matters that were being won in the court system due to the level of evidence collected and presented. I’ve seen the effects of the beginning of “culture coaching” and communication etiquette and how that is positively affecting the operations of NCDC. I’ve seen the beginning of an avalanche of questions on a diversity of issues that are now being actively and openly discussed. The outcomes are leading to an organisation that will be seen as a model for governance in the Pacific region.

My involvement includes not only an advocacy role for regulatory and compliance within the NCDC jurisdiction but now includes a mentoring role; building relationships and networks to actively promote and encourage development of the governance aspect in this area. In this space, we are looking at developing a forum in the Townsville region to gather like minded government and non government organisations who have linkages in the Port Moresby area. I have no doubt we could all value add on the services offered from the collective to the benefit of our own programs, but also to the people of Port Moresby. We are stimulating a similar forum in the Port Moresby area to seek like minded people within PNG to gather and discuss the benefits our cities could achieve by a collective of like minded people and how they could go about making it all happen.

I have seen the capacity of the staff we deal with in Port Moresby develop exponentially, I can see that they are open to change and are out there advocating for that change, I can see them considering their future and that of their city and actively moving their circle of influence to align and achieve that outcome. The reason I can see this happening, is that it is also happening to me and my circle of influence.

Project Hetura is certainly a plan that is living and breathing in all that become a part of it. Its effects can be seen on the cities that are involved, the organisations that are a part of it and the people that are a part of those organisations. This project is truly a reflection of its name and what it represents – “Mateship”



L to R; Alex (Training Officer – NCDC), Pinio Kalus (Deputy City Manager – Corporate Affairs, NCDC) Gavin Hammond (Executive Manager, TCC), Simon Vai (Deputy City Manager – Engineering, NCDC), Simeon Terima (Senior EHO, NCDC), Matthew McCarthy (Manager Waste Services – TCC), Honk Kiap (Deputy City Manager – Community and Social Services, NCDC)



## EVENTS CALENDAR

### EHA (QLD) INC Pest Management Course

Register early to avoid disappointment as maximum numbers apply

**Monday 18 and Tuesday 19 June 2012**

'Gibson Suite', Queensland Rugby Club Ballymore, 91 Clyde Rd, Herston.

#### OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

This inaugural course is designed to provide updated information on topics such as :-

Biology and Control of:-Mosquito, Sandfly/Biting Midge; Flies and Cockroaches;  
Bedbugs and Fleas; Rodents.

Pesticide Usage; Pest Management Legislation;  
Development Control.

The objectives are to cater for both the regulator and the operator sharing experiences and case studies, and to provide an open learning environment for all participants.

Register early to avoid disappointment as maximum numbers apply

### EHA (QLD) INC Meeting

**EHA (QLD) INC Directors** will be meeting Face to Face on Friday/Saturday 3/4<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

### Northern Group Meeting

**Hosted by Cairns Regional Council.**

WHEN: Saturday 19th May 2012  
Sunday 20th May 2012

WHERE: Cairns Regional Council

### SEQ Regional Group - Forum

**Hosted by Redland City Council**

WHEN: Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> June  
WHERE: Redland City Council

### DD / SW Regional Group

**Hosted by Darling Downs Public Health Unit  
Toowoomba**

WHEN: Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July  
WHERE: TBA

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP CONVENORS

**Environment and Waste Management:**

Ian Kuhl  
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**Disaster Management:**  
 TBA

**Indigenous Environmental Health:**  
 TBA

**QEH Editor:**

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## EHA (QLD) INC BOARD 2011/2012

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**EHA (QLD) INC new Guide to Membership Classes available online**

**<http://www.eh.org.au/branches/qld/>**

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