Please help me respond to Qld's discussion paper on water/sewage

Posted by RowanBarber - 31 Jan 2013 22:37

I am writing a submission in response to a discussion paper on water and sewage treatment and transport in my own community in the state of Queensland, Australia.

I am interested in your thoughts on how my community can address issues of water and sewage in a first world context, with a view to also addressing the issues facing developing communities.

In November 2012, the State Water Supply Minister Mark McArdle launched a discussion paper to guide the development of a 30 Year Water Sector Strategy to ensure affordable, secure, sustainable and high quality water and sewerage services across Queensland, Australia.

The Queensland Water Sector Discussion Paper is designed to facilitate active discussion and participation in creating a new path for Queensland’s water future in urban, rural, regional and remote communities.

The Discussion Paper focuses on what Queensland’s future water needs may look like and discusses and identifies the opportunities and challenges Queenslanders are likely to face over the next 30 years.

The water vision for Queensland cannot be achieved by government alone, and this discussion paper needs input and innovative ideas and solutions to help realise Queensland's water future.

All aspects of the water industry will be examined, including how water is supplied and delivered to the myriad of end users, operation of infrastructure and how to improve the integration of water and sewerage management.

The consultation period for the discussion paper closes on 29 March 2013.

An animated video detailing the challenges faced by Queensland’s water sector has also been released to encourage householders, businesses and industry to participate in the discussion.

Further information is available at www.dews.qld.gov.au/policies/water-secto...-year-water-strategy or

on Twitter @WaterQld

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Re: Please help me respond to Qld's discussion paper on water/sewage
Posted by RowanBarber - 04 Feb 2013 12:08

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How can Australians lead by example to ensure affordable, secure, sustainable water and sewerage services in our own communities and developing communities?

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Re: Please help me respond to Qld's discussion paper on water/sewage
Posted by cecile - 05 Feb 2013 09:46

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Hi Rowan,

I like SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) approach. Less sewage, more infiltration as close as possible from the water use point. The ojective is ground water recharge, rather than transporting to treatment plants and discharging into water bodies.

It is not really innovative, it is not high tech and it tends to lessen the use of sewers but it is a sustainable approach.

A couple of years ago we used in a project the guidance manual for SUDS in Wales. It has old fashionned drawings but very simple and practical.

I would like to mention that sustainable sanitation people in France admire Australia because we always hear that in your country reuse of grey water is encouraged in gardens, that dry toilets are quite developped in national parks, golf courses and secondary houses. I would be interested to know your "insider"'s opinion.

Kind regards,

Cecile

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Re: Please help me respond to Qld's discussion paper on water/sewage
Posted by RowanBarber - 05 Feb 2013 12:34

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cecile wrote:

I would like to mention that sustainable sanitation people in France admire Australia because we always hear that in your country reuse of grey water is encouraged in gardens, that dry toilets are quite developed in national parks, golf courses and secondary houses. I would be interested to know your "insider"'s opinion.

Cecile,

Thanks for your response. From 2001 to 2009, Queensland (and the greater part of Eastern Australia) faced what is now called the Millennium drought.

During that time, the South East corner of Queensland came under mandatory water restrictions and residents and businesses worked very hard to conserve water.

Residents were permitted to reuse grey water in urban areas. Businesses were required to submit to "Water Efficiency Management Plans".

The State Government at the time spent $US7b on water infrastructure, including a desalination plant, miles of pipelines and a few advanced water treatment plants capable of purifying and recycling sewage effluent.

In 2011 and again 2013, Brisbane was inundated by floods and the advanced water treatment plants are hardly being used.

regards,

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Re: Please help me respond to Qld's discussion paper on water/sewage

Posted by muench - 06 Feb 2013 00:38

OK, but in "defence" of Australia (and in support of what Cecilia said), I have to say that I really enjoyed the experience of countless composting toilets that I have used while bushwalking or camping in any of the beautiful national parks while I lived in Brisbane! (and sometimes roadside stops as well) Composting toilets are totally the norm in national parks in Australia, I would say.

My experience back then (up to 2003) was that in the urban setup, people were very wasteful with water (this has changed now due to the long drought which Rowan mentioned). But in the country side or in the national parks, it was a different story. Rainwater was collected and used for drinking, and the toilets were dry (composting toilets) as I mentioned. (Mind you, people on remote or large properties usually had flush toilets and septic tanks.)

Speaking of camping toilets: I was very surprised the other day when I was on a camping trip in northern Natal in South Africa (close to the border with Mozambique): we were at a deserted camp site at a beach, and then walked up further the beach, and there was a public toilet (nice) but it was a flush toilet, which I found very odd. I mean we are out in nature, miles from nowhere, who would expect a flush toilet and why? A composting toilet would have been much better.

While speaking of touristic experiences: Rahul Ingle told me that in Uganda, he kept finding UDDTs in the lodges and guest houses where he stayed at without even searching for them. I thought that was interesting, too. He uploaded some interesting photos of these here (click on the link to see more):

Indoor UDDT in hotel rooms by Sustainable sanitation , on Flickr

But I am digressing from the original topic, sorry.

Cheers,

Elisabeth

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Re: Please help me respond to Qld's discussion paper on water/sewage

Posted by RowanBarber - 07 Feb 2013 13:52

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Thanks Elisabeth and Cecile,

In considering a strategy for provision of water supplies and sewage treatment services across the State of Queensland, It is important to consider what we are doing well, as well as consider what we could do better.

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