

SQIDEP Update Overview – 17 May 2021

Stormwater Queensland (SQ) is currently following up on its [submission](#) (dated 12 March 2020) to Stormwater Australia (SNat) on the Stormwater Quality Improvement Device Protocol (SQIDEP) Version 1.3, via three avenues:

- Directly with the SNat Board
- SQIDEP Technical Review Panel (TRP) / Governance Panel (GP)
- SQIDEP Enhancement Group (EG), detailed below.

This document summarises the progress made since our previous update on 16 December 2020. A copy of the previous update is available [here](#).

It is noted that discussion with the SNat Board directly is considered necessary, as some matters appear to be beyond the scope of the two panels.

Although SQ member concerns are currently still largely unresolved, we are encouraged to see some progress. Following recent correspondence with the SNat Board and meetings with the GP and TRP we can advise that:

- SQ has had positive communications with both the GP and TRP. These groups are clearly striving very hard to make progress.
- GP has identified the need for a governance policy and framework with SNat. Until this is resolved, SQIDEP governance remains unclear.
- The process for the management of SQIDEP conflicts of interest is non-existent apart from a brief mention in the [Board and Committee Charters](#).
- The previous two points contradict correspondence received from SNat that it places great importance on the probity and integrity of the SQIDEP process. Of particular interest is how the Board's own conflicts of interest with respect to SQIDEP have been being managed, especially given they do not fall under the direction of the GP and the limited guidance about Col in the Board and Committee Charters. SQ has asked clarification on this point numerous times but is yet to receive a clear response about how such conflicts were actually managed.
- The TRP is preparing a revised version of SQIDEP based on the feedback of many interested parties. that will require SNat approval prior to public release.
- The TRP has also had collaborative discussions with the SNat Board about placing a hold on any further certifications under the current versions of SQIDEP and about better management of conflicts of interest.

It is noted that SNat maintains absolute control over all TRP and GP recommendations.

SQ and EG correspondence details are provided below.

Stormwater Queensland

- 19 January 2021 – SQ held its first meeting with Mr Mark Gibson (MG), TRP Chair. TRP was grateful for SQ's SQIDEP submission and discussion was positive, commencing a constructive and productive relationship between SQ and TRP. Key advice provided at this meeting included:

Administrative and Governance Matters:

- TRP agreed that managing conflicts of interests (Col) is major issue with respect to SQIDEP.
- TRP was preparing a document about what is required to better manage Col, which was scheduled to be submitted to SNat Board in 6-8 weeks from the date of the meeting.
- The scope of document was expected to include guidelines to SNat Board members regarding Col, approvals, promotion of products, etc.
- MG had raised the issue of SNat approving proposed new certifications under the current version of SQIDEP with the SNat Board, including whether to place a hold on further certifications until a new version of SQIDEP is released.
- MG acknowledged that certifications across different versions of SQIDEP is an issue that needs further consideration.

Technical Matters

- TRP is currently prioritising technical issues. The approach is to address the issues expected to be most easily improved (lowest hanging fruit) as well as the more controversial issues.
 - Draft recommendations will be published to the industry to gauge response in collaboration with the SNat Board (Note- that this is yet to occur).
 - TRP is working on lab-based protocols, as presented at the National Conference in April 2021.
 - SQ offered assistance with recommendations. MG agreed to take this offer back to the TRP.
- 5 March 2021 – SQ wrote to SNat for a progress update on a number of matters including two issues related to SQIDEP. SNat responded 10 March 2021 with the following:
 - Governance: *'Stormwater Australia established a governance panel to govern SQIDEP. Therefore all SQIDEP Governance matters have been passed to the SQIDEP Governance Committee, Chaired by Mr Andrew Swindells.'*
 - Col: SNat's did not address how any conflicts of interest regarding SQIDEP have previously being managed by the Stormwater Australia Board. With respect more recent conflicts of interest, response provided was that, *'All SQIDEP Governance matters are overseen by the SQIDEP Governance Committee, Chaired by Mr Andrew Swindells. If you have questions or concerns about conflicts of interest the appropriate person to direct those questions to is Mr Swindells. To be clear, the board places great importance on the probity and integrity of the SQIDEP Process and has established these governance processes specifically to ensure conflicts of interest are managed appropriately.'*
 - SQ contacted Mr Swindells regarding the above points through the EG, as detailed below.

SQIDEP Enhancement Group

EG membership has historically included:

- SQ, Stormwater NSW and Stormwater VIC (representing over 80% of SNat membership);
- Water management agencies (Water NSW, Healthy Land and Water (QLD)); and
- Statutory authorities (Melbourne Water, Blacktown City Council).

More recently, the group has welcomed four new local governments, to be announced in the next update.

- 23 February 2021 – The EG held its first meeting with the GP, including Andrew Swindells (AS), GP Chair, Robert Gale (SNat Board), and Jega Jegatheesan (Secretary GP). Key advice provided at this meeting included:
 - GP formed some time ago but there was a hiatus on work during COVID.
 - GP is governed by the SNat [Board and Committee Charters](#). The charter briefly mentions Col but does not provide any guidance on management.
 - SNat maintains ultimate discretion over GP recommendations.
 - SQIDEP governance policy and procedures are to be developed by the GP and approved by the SNat Board. Until this exists, the GP cannot address matters raised by the EG, which may also require a change to their charter. SNat did not accept AS offer to draft this document, and no information on timeframe or author has been provided. Therefore, it may be sometime before the GP can function as they consider appropriate.
 - The existing GP charter has been prepared by SNat, including:
 - GP meetings 1-5 times per year and only on an as-needs basis.
 - GP is responsible for oversight of the TRP and Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP).
 - The IEP was selected by an administrator to assess certification applications based on managing conflicts. No information was provided on the selected administrator.
 - GP advised that it signs off on evaluations of devices. The process of how this issue is to be managed is to be determined by the TRP, not the GP.