

Syllabus Summary

For the IWC Water Leadership Program.

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Introduction

This document provides an overview of the purpose, vision, objectives, target audience, design, content, performance and timing of the International WaterCentre (IWC) Water Leadership Program. This 10 month leadership development program for emerging (non-executive) water leaders is delivered annually by the IWC at Griffith University. For additional details, please review the program's [website](#) and/or contact the International WaterCentre at Griffith University. Contact details are provided at the end of this document.

Program purpose

To help emerging water leaders to strengthen their individual and collective capacity to drive positive change to advance more integrated and sustainable forms of water management in order to improve the health of people, communities and natural areas.

Program vision

To be the world's best feedback-intensive leadership development program (Guthrie and King, 2004) that is research-based and customised for emerging leaders in the water industry who want to build skills, knowledge and confidence in exercising influence, driving change and advancing more integrated and sustainable forms of water management.

Program objectives

The IWC Water Leadership Program aims to:

- Help emerging water leaders typically at the project leader to middle management level to be more effective at exercising influence, driving positive change and advancing more sustainable and integrated forms of water management.
- Help participants to build self-leadership skills (e.g. self-awareness, confidence and a 'leader identity') as a pre-requisite for effective leadership and accelerated leadership development.
- Identify specific leadership development needs for each participant (e.g. key skills to develop), and to help them build personalised leadership development plans which include activities to be conducted in the workplace (e.g. a leadership project).
- Strengthen leadership abilities (e.g. skills, knowledge, networks and power) known to be associated with effective leaders playing different leadership roles in the water sector.
- Help participants to continue to develop as leaders over their careers and to enable other developing leaders to do the same.
- Assist participants to strengthen group-based leadership capacity (e.g. the capacity of a cross-organisational network of leaders to drive positive change in a water utility).

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- Facilitate a broad range of developmental experiences that involve new knowledge, diverse perspectives (i.e. from presenters and participants), self-assessments and reflection, discussion, the application of knowledge to one's own work environment, practising new leadership behaviours, feedback on leadership behaviours, and support (e.g. from peers, coaches and mentors).
- Create a personal network of peer support for participants that operates during and after the program.
- Provide an entry point to leadership literature that is relevant to leaders in the water sector to assist further independent learning.
- Generate a positive 'return on investment' (Phillips, 2007) to the participants and their organisations in less than a year following the program.

Target audience

This program targets non-executive leaders in the water and catchment management sectors. Program participants play a variety of leadership roles¹, and are typically team leaders. Some participants lead cross-boundary project teams, whilst others lead teams of staff. Some more senior participants are also preparing to play executive roles.

Participants come from all parts of the water and catchment management sectors, with the majority coming from water utilities and State government departments. The average age is mid-30s. In typical years, gender balance is 60:40 male:female, and we have a goal of getting this ratio to 50:50 from 2024/25. The program has run annually since 2011 with 20 to 30 participants per year. To date, participants have originated from all Australian states and territories, as well as eight countries.

Many of our participants have already built technical and managerial abilities, and are now choosing to focus on building their leadership abilities (i.e. the capacity to influence). Some participants also use the program as a safe space to deeply reflect on their careers, and explore what steps they should take next to better align their purpose and personal values with their professional work.

Design

The program has been designed and is delivered each year in accordance with the following principles:

- The program's design and content (e.g. conceptual models and leadership tools) should be informed by sound research that is relevant to people playing different roles in the water sector.
- The design of the program needs to be consistent with the '70:20:10 rule' of leadership development (Lombardo and Eichinger, 2000) which suggests that approximately 70% of leadership development occurs through conscious practice, 20% through developmental

¹ See Taylor *et al.* (2015) for a discussion of six leadership roles that we commonly see in case studies of positive change in the water sector. These roles provide a conceptual framework that is frequently used throughout the program. Most participants choose to focus on learning how to play one or two of these roles during the program.

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relationships (e.g. coaching, mentoring and feedback), and 10% from structured training which plays an important amplifying effect.

- Leadership can be taught and learnt (Avolio, 2005) even though a leader's personality characteristics and context contribute to effective leadership (Northouse, 2021).
- The design, content and evaluation of the program should be transparent (e.g. communicated through conference and journal papers).
- A feedback-intensive leadership development program design is most likely to generate positive behavioural change and a positive return on investment to participants and their organisations (see Guthrie and King, 2004).
- Leadership development is a lifelong, challenging activity (Avolio, 2005). As such, the program must help participants to actively manage their development as leaders over their careers.
- The design of the program should include numerous opportunities for participants to build self-awareness, challenge themselves, get frequent feedback from their colleagues, receive support from colleagues, and deeply reflect (Avolio, 2005; McCauley and Van Velsor, 2004).
- The design should aim to build the individual capacity of water leaders to influence and drive change (i.e. leader development), as well as their capacity to work with other leaders to collectively drive group-based leadership processes (i.e. leadership development).
- The program should prepare emerging leaders for current and future challenges in the water sector, as well as the ability to play different roles in the water sector. These roles include, but are not limited to, the champion leader, enabling (adaptive) leader, cross-boundary team leader, thought leader, strategic leader and trusted advisor roles (see Taylor *et al.*, 2015).
- Face-to-face training ('intensives') should minimise the use of 'lecture style' presentations and maximise opportunities for interaction, discussion, self-assessment, peer-to-peer information sharing and reflection.
- The program should be comprehensively evaluated each time it is run, continuously improved, and be subject to a major review every 10 years (which was last done in 2021 for the IWC Water Leadership Program).
- The program's design should include 'accountability mechanisms' to ensure that participants fully commit to the program (Shelton, 2003).

The program was first run in 2011 following a trial program that was designed, delivered and evaluated as part of a Ph.D. research project at Monash University (see Taylor, 2010a & b). When the program was first launched it was officially endorsed by the Water Services Association of Australia and the Australian Water Association. The program's design was also peer reviewed by:

- Professor David Day (formally the Winthrop Professor and the Woodside Chair in Leadership and Management at the University of Western Australia's Business School). Professor Day is one of the world's leading leadership development academics and practitioners.
- Members of an Industry Leaders Reference Group. This group included senior representatives from the Queensland State government, City of Canning (WA), Healthy Waterways Limited (QLD), Water Services Association of Australia, Yarra Valley Water, Urban Utilities, Veolia Water, Melbourne Water and the Australian Water Association.

The elements and timing of this ten-month, annual program are shown in Table 1. Note that some minor modifications to this schedule may be made to accommodate unexpected events, venue availability and the needs of participants.

Table 1: An overview of the program’s key elements and their typical timing

Month	Key program elements
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory document and post pack. This includes the program instructions, readings, self-assessment and reflection exercises, a preparation checklist, an overview of the program elements, a leadership plan template, etc. • Online workshop [Core]: Program welcome and induction. Early December. • Customised 360-degree feedback process. Gathering rater information. • Gaining access to our online classroom and file storage area.
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing with the pre-intensive exercises and reading. • 360-degree feedback process: Participants will do a self-assessment as part of the survey. • Online workshop [Optional]: Self-leadership: Strengthening one’s time management ability. • Optional informal online ‘drop in’ discussion session.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First face-to-face intensive in Brisbane in late February: 3 days. Topics include self-leadership (e.g. purpose, values, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, avoiding common self-leadership traps, and identifying leadership roles that suit us), fundamental leadership concepts, transformational leadership, authentic leadership, introducing six water leadership roles, power, influence, social networking, building shared visions, communication skills, and building a leadership plan. The intensive also includes sessions involving guest speakers / group mentors. • Continuing with the pre-intensive exercises and reading. • Continuing the 360-degree feedback process. • Online workshop [Core]: Introduction to leadership in the water sector, fundamental leadership concepts, ethics and ethical leadership. • Online workshop [Core]: Introduction to leadership development including principles and methods of leadership development, building a leadership plan, and using leadership projects. • Optional informal online ‘drop in’ discussion session.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual leadership development plans are drafted by participants and feedback is provided by an IWC coach. • Online workshop [Optional]: Self-leadership: Building resilience. • Online workshop [Core]: Communication skills: Active listening, giving feedback and presenting. • Online workshop [Optional]: Self-leadership: Building confidence and overcoming the imposter syndrome.
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership plan finalisation, implementation, local mentoring discussions and peer to peer support. • One-to-one coaching session (no. 1) - early to mid April. • Online workshop [Optional]: Leadership roles: Playing the team leader role. • Online workshop [Core]: Strategies to lead / influence with little authority and build trust. • Online workshop [Optional]: Leadership roles: Playing the champion leader role.
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership plan implementation, local mentoring discussions and peer to peer support. • Online workshop [Core]: Communication: Coaching as a leadership style and communication skill. • Online workshop [Optional]: Leadership roles: Playing the thought leader and trusted advisor leader roles. • Online workshop [Core]: Leadership roles: Playing the adaptive / enabling leader role.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership plan implementation, local mentoring discussions and peer to peer support.

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Month	Key program elements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one coaching session (no. 2) - early to mid-June. • Online workshop [Core]: Situational leadership. • Online workshop [Optional]: Leading in a crisis. • Online workshop [Core]: Strategic leadership and playing the strategic leader role.
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership plan implementation, local mentoring discussions and peer to peer support. • Conducting a 'follow-up feedback process' using surveys that are customised for each participant. • Interviewing a senior leader in one's organisation. • Online workshop [Optional]: Communication skills: Building confidence and skill at facilitating meetings and events. • Online workshop [Optional]: A film-based case study discussion exploring influence, power, transformational leadership, communication skills, followership, authentic leadership, situational leadership and ethics. • Online workshop [Optional]: Innovation leadership to address complex challenges.
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership plan implementation, local mentoring discussions and peer to peer support. • Completion of the follow-up feedback process. • Second face-to-face intensive in Brisbane in early-August: 2 days. Sessions will address conflict management and navigating difficult conversations, exploring several water leadership case studies, using tools from the program and updating leadership plans. The intensive will also use the data from the follow-up feedback process to help refocus individual leadership development plans. Unlike the first intensive that focusses primarily on key leadership concepts, tips and tools, this final intensive focuses more on consolidating learning, reflection sessions, case study discussions and sessions involving guest speakers / group mentors. • Updating, refocusing and simplifying individual leadership development plans (for use following the program). • One-to-one coaching session (no. 3) - late August to mid-September. • Online workshop [Optional]: Introduction to systems thinking to address complex challenges. • Online workshop [Optional]: Navigating role transitions as a leader.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to update and simplify individual leadership development plans. • Online workshop [Optional]: Strategies to enable other leaders and build distributed leadership capacity. • Online workshop [Core]: A final integrating activity to apply concepts, guidelines and tools from the program to address three water leadership challenges. • Preparation of a final Reflection Report. • [The program also includes a short, online, optional celebration event in early October. Digital badges/ credentials are also issued in October.]

Notes:

- For participants to earn the Certificate of Water Leadership - Excellence (digital credential/badge) they need to complete all of the program activities marked in Table 1 as "core" and complete at least five of the workshops marked in Table 1 as "optional".
- To fully commit to the program and earn a Certificate of Water Leadership - Excellence (digital badge) would require a total time commitment of approximately 19 days over 10 months. This is considered to be an 'upper estimate' of the time required, and assumes that participants will do additional reading, etc.
- Please contact the IWC for the exact dates of the two face-to-face intensives in the next round of the program, as these vary from year to year.

Content

The program's design and content are refined each year following an evaluation process. Nevertheless, the following topics are typically addressed during the program's face-to-face intensives and online learning activities:

- An introduction to leadership in the water sector.
- Principles and methods of leader and leadership development (e.g. mentoring, coaching, reflection, challenging job assignments and methods to get frequent feedback from colleagues). Including the use of individual leadership development plans, leadership projects, and avoiding common developmental traps (e.g. those discussed in Taylor, 2017).
- Self-leadership (Neck & Manz, 1996): The clarification and communication of personal purpose and values, building self-awareness and self-regulating one's behaviour, emotional intelligence, managing one's development as a leader, identifying the most suitable leadership roles in the water sector to bring out one's best, time management, building resilience and managing stress, avoiding common self-leadership traps, reflection techniques, building confidence, overcoming the imposter syndrome etc.
- Learning how to play six common and/or important leadership roles in the water sector (i.e. the champion leader, enabling [adaptive] leader, cross-boundary team leader, thought leader, strategic leader and trusted advisor roles; see Taylor *et al.*, 2015). The program provides guidance and resources on how to play all of these roles, although most participants choose to focus on learning how to play one or two of them during the program.
- Key communication skills for leaders, including active listening, conflict management and having difficult conversations, giving and receiving feedback, building and communicating shared visions, storytelling, using social media, facilitation skills, coaching, presentation skills, and facilitating meetings and workshops.
- Techniques to build different forms of personal and position power.
- Guidance on how to design and execute an influence strategy, including 'influencing up' and influencing politicians.
- Different forms of social networking (see Ibarra & Hunter, 2007).
- Situational leadership, including how to play different leadership styles at different times (see Goleman, 2000). In particular, we explore how to use the transformational leadership style (e.g. when seeking to influence without much authority), the adaptive leadership style to address complex challenges, and styles of leadership that are needed to lead in a crisis (e.g. the commanding leadership style), and the coaching style.
- Leading/influencing with little authority, and strategies to build trust.
- Team leadership, including leading cross-boundary teams (e.g. multi-disciplinary project teams), virtual teams and hybrid teams.
- Strategic leadership (see Leitch *et al.*, 2016).
- Ethics, ethical leadership, authentic leadership and servant leadership (see Northouse, 2021).
- Innovation leadership (see De Couter & Horth, 2016), including leading creative teams.
- Using several well researched water leadership case studies to explore how leaders playing different leadership roles can work together to advance more sustainable forms of water management.
- Practical systems thinking techniques that can be used as part of the enabling / adaptive leadership role when working with complex problems.
- Navigating role transitions as a leader.

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Importantly, participants choose which aspects of leadership to address in their individual leadership development plans. This choice is based on their 360-degree feedback, discussions with local mentors, supervisors and IWC coaches, the results of numerous self-assessment activities, the participants' purpose and career plans, and the participants' own intuition following exposure to a range of leadership concepts and tools. These plans are 'living documents'. At the end of the program it is common for high performing participants to be on version 4 or 5 of their plan. Most plans have three developmental objectives that focus on specific aspects of leadership (e.g. learning how to play the champion role or improving an aspect of communication). The provision of feedback on draft plans by an IWC coach and the three one-to-one coaching sessions provide opportunities for IWC coaches to work closely with each participant to improve aspects of leadership that are most relevant to them and their organisation.

The one-to-one coaching sessions also provide an opportunity for the IWC's leadership coaches to provide program participants with personalised packages of information and guidance to help them address their unique leadership challenges. For example, some participants may use the guidance of an IWC leadership coach to work on aspects of leadership that are not specifically addressed in the program's core training modules (e.g. becoming more assertive).

Delivery team

[Dr André Taylor](#) (BSc Hons, MEM, PhD) is the IWC's Leadership Specialist and leads the delivery of the program. Each year, the program's delivery team comprises of approximately 10 industry leaders, educators and coaches who act as executive group mentors, specialist trainers/facilitators, coaches and guest speakers.

Typically modules within the program are facilitated by our Leadership Specialist with support from guest speakers and other IWC leadership coaches. Our guest speakers are a mix of emerging and executive level leaders. We also engage former program participants (Program Fellows) to be guest speakers as we have found that they are particularly good at presenting concepts and sharing their 'leadership development story' in ways that strongly resonate with our participants. Our group mentors are distinguished executive water leaders who have experience working in a variety of leadership roles including roles at the CEO and board chair levels.

The program's coordinator and leadership coaches are also experienced water practitioners and leaders. We firmly believe that the impact of the program is enhanced by having a core delivery team with a deep understanding of the context in which the participants work. This reflects the belief that leadership is acutely sensitive to context, and leadership development programs need to be focused on those topics and capacities that are most relevant to their target audience.

Evaluation results

The program has been evaluated each year from 2011 so it can be progressively improved. In addition, rigorous evaluation occurred in the first few years to estimate its Return on Investment (RoI) to participants and sponsoring organisations. Examples of typical annual evaluation results include:

- Strongly positive participant feedback. For example, in 2017:

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- The extent to which program met all of its objectives: The average rating from participants on a 1-9 Likert-type scale was 96% (anonymous feedback).
- The extent to which the program achieved its objective of working with participants to strengthen leadership skills known to be associated with effective water leaders and organisational leaders in general: The average rating was 93%.
- The extent to which the participants' ability to successfully undertake leadership has improved as a result of participating in this program. The average rating was 89%.
- The extent to which the participants' confidence to take on leadership roles and activities has increased as a result of participating in this program. The average rating was 89%.
- Strong evidence of behavioural change during the program. For example, Figure 1 shows anonymous feedback data from the colleagues of participants in 2022, which is similar to other years. It indicates that the average level of behaviour change with respect to behaviours that were included in individual leadership development plans after 4 months was better than "moderate" (i.e. 5.6 on the 1-7 scale). The average rating for each of the 30 participants was also positive, meaning that positive behavioural change had been observed by their peers. These data are particularly valuable as they relate to the aspects of leadership that each participant has been working on, do not rely upon self-reporting, and are reported directly and anonymously from the participants' colleagues to the IWC.

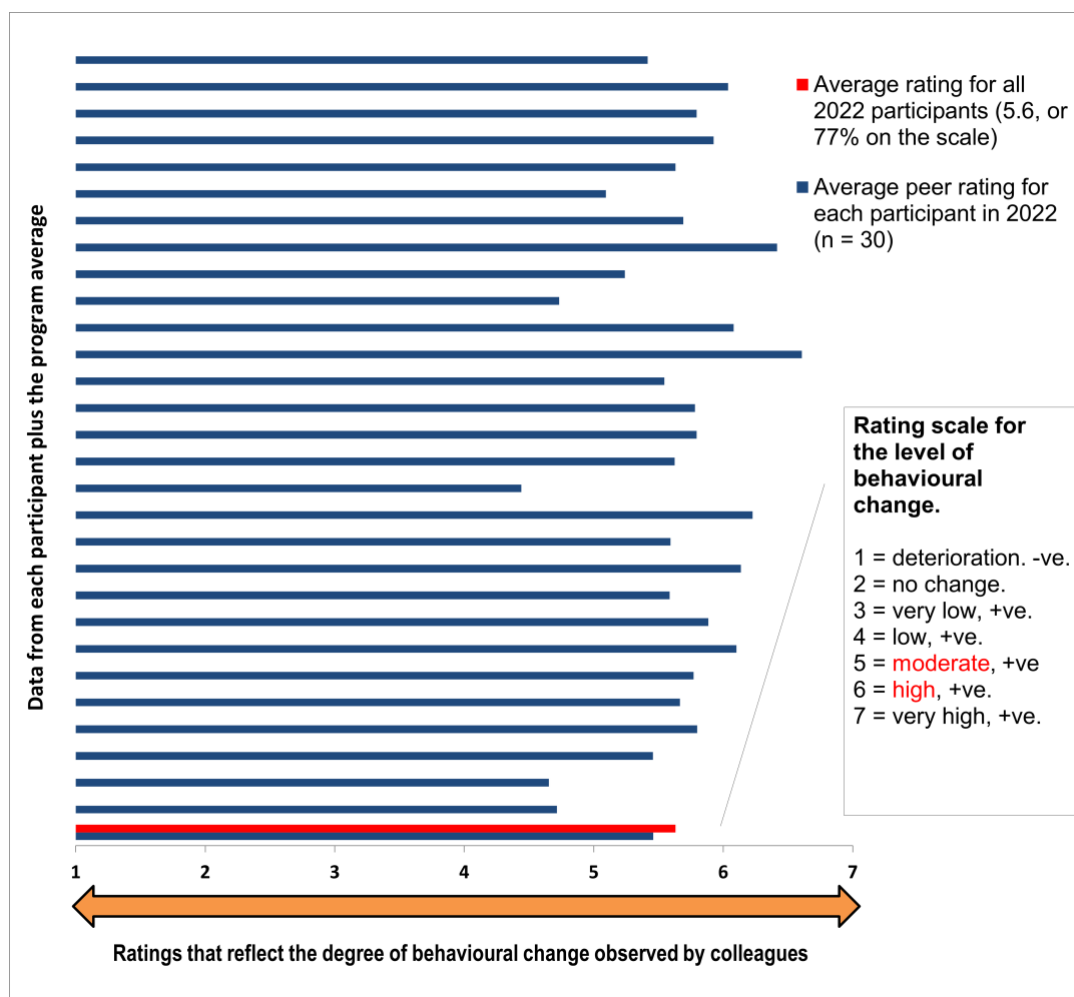


Figure 1: The extent of behavioural change after 4 months of implementing individual leadership plans, as assessed by the colleagues of 30 participants in 2022

- Strong evidence that a positive RoI can be expected in less than a year following the program assuming participants fully to commit to the program. For example, in 2012 the conservatively

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estimated average RoI estimate for the program was 3.4 or 340%. This was estimated using methodology from Phillips (2007) and Phillips & Phillips (2002, 2003). An RoI of 3.4 means that a participant should expect to return the full cost of participating the program to be repaid three times over after one full year following the program. Given the average participant is in their 30s and most would retire in their 60s, we would expect the total RoI over the span of their careers to be approximately 100 fold.

Assessment and certificates

Participants in the program may achieve one of two Griffith University digitally badged micro-credentials - a Certificate of Water Leadership or a Certificate of Water Leadership (Excellence). In short, a Certificate of Excellence micro-credential is awarded when participants complete all compulsory (core) elements of the program and at least five of the optional online workshops (see Table 1). A standard Certificate micro-credential is awarded when participants just complete the most basic elements of the program (e.g. the face-to-face intensives, the individual leadership development plan, two of the one-to-one coaching sessions, the core online workshops, and the final Reflection Report). In most years, all of the program participants earn the higher level of certificate (digital badge). These certificates are issued in the form of digital badges granted through Credly, which can be connected to a person's LinkedIn page. A PDF version of the certificate can also be provided on request.



Timing and key dates

The IWC Water Leadership Program runs for 10 months each year, from 1 December to 30 September. Applications can be made [online](#) any time before 31 October for programs that begin on 1 December. We sometimes have more applicants than places, so interested participants are encouraged to apply as early as possible. Please check the IWC website for up-to-date information.

Time commitment for participants

We estimate that it would take approximately 19 days of time over 10 months to do all of the things necessary to earn a Certificate of Water Leadership - Excellence (digital credential / badge). This 'upper estimate' includes activities such as doing some additional reading after online workshops. As a 'rule of thumb' we therefore recommend that participants who wish to earn this level of certificate, fully commit to the program and maximise their value from the program plan their time to:

- be available to attend the first and second face-to-face intensives in late February - early March and mid August respectively (5 full days); and
- spend approximately 2.5 to 3 hours a week on program activities during the 10 month program.

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The peak workload corresponds with the first face-to-face intensive in late February - early March and the creation of the leadership development plans shortly after this intensive. Note that:

- Most elements of the program are compulsory if a participant wishes to gain a Certificate of Water Leadership - Excellence (digital badge).
- Some elements of the program are optional (e.g. many online workshops) which provides participants with the choice of participating in everything and maximising the program's value, or being selective about what learning activities they engage with.
- With the exception of the first face-to-face intensive in late February/early March, there is flexibility as to when participants can undertake the learning activities (e.g. one-to-one coaching sessions can be rescheduled, and participants can do 'catch up activities' if they are not able to attend the core online workshops).
- The second face-to-face workshop in mid-August can be done virtually (e.g. by watching videos, reviewing the workshop handouts and responding to a set of reflection questions). However, the vast majority of participants choose to return to Brisbane for the final intensive as they recognise the event is more valuable and enjoyable face-to-face.

Testimonials from some Program Follows



Caitlin Davis

Team Leader Portfolio Management, Victorian Environmental Water Holder

What a fantastic opportunity for water and catchment management industry professionals! I can't speak highly enough of this results-driven, practical, researched-based and enjoyable course. It has had a positive effect on me and my workplace, and will continue to deliver outcomes into the future.



Steven Crick

Senior Team Leader - Planning, Biodiversity and Conservation Division, NSW Dept of Planning, Industry and Environment

This IWC program is great! it really helped me understand what it takes to be a good leader and I would recommend it to anyone who's in or is interested in a leadership role, no matter what stage of their career.



Dr Rebekah Kenna

Erosion and Sediment Control Officer, Redland City Council

It is an outstanding program that had and will continue to have a positive impact on my leadership abilities, along with the leadership abilities of those around me. I found the program partially relevant to those of us from specialist backgrounds, as the program has a focus on skills to transition from being a technical expert towards being able to strategically influence and effectively drive change. I am particularly grateful for my increased abilities to exert influence especially across organisational boundaries.



Lisa Mazzella

Senior Policy Officer, Strategic Policy and Programs – Water, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, WA

I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity to join the IWC leadership program. I feel like I've learned a new language, and this is the beginning of a lifetime of learning. ... The program is excellent. It is very well designed, based on high-quality research, and I would highly recommend it to anyone who wants to build leadership skills.

More information

For up-to-date information:

- Visit the program's website: <https://watercentre.org/courses/water-leadership-program/>
- Or contact the following IWC staff:
 - **Program coordination, content and delivery:** Dr André Taylor, Leadership Specialist and Program Coordinator, IWC, ph. 0438 182 709, e. andre.taylor@griffith.edu.au, LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/andre-taylor-leadership/, based in Port Macquarie, New South Wales. [André is responsible for the design, construction and delivery of the program, communicating with participants, facilitating intensives and workshops, and leading the delivery team.]
 - **Program support and administration:** Peter Wegener, Senior Project Manager, IWC, ph. 0400 962 030, e. p.wegener@griffith.edu.au, LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/peter-wegener-australia/>, based in Brisbane, Queensland. [Peter is responsible for administrative support, including managing enrolments, invoicing, access to our online classroom, intensive logistics, and helping to facilitate intensives and online workshops.]
 - **Program overview:** Associate Professor Brian McIntosh, Education Director, IWC, ph. 0458 855 945, e. b.mcintosh@griffith.edu.au, LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/brian-mcintosh-1415b41/>, based in Brisbane, Queensland. [Brian is responsible for the overall management of the program as part of the IWC's suite of educational products, including management of its connection to Griffith University, budget, communications, and scholarship administration.]

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