

# Case Study

## Australasian Organisation of the Year

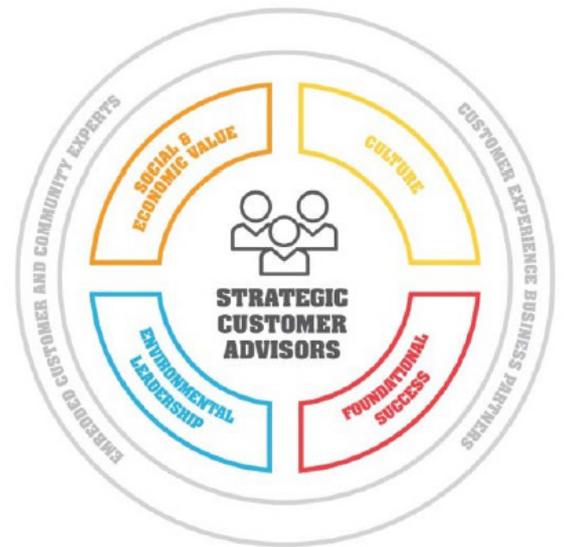
### Queensland Urban Utilities | Doing it with us, not for us - a whole of business approach to customer-centric engagement

Established in 2010, QUU is a statutory body delivering drinking water, recycled water and sewerage services to over 1.4 million customers in South East Queensland.

QUU's purpose is to 'enrich quality of life' and its vision is to 'play a valued role in enhancing the liveability of [its] communities'. To achieve its purpose and uphold its organisational values of 'Participation' and 'Customers and Community', QUU has enshrined IAP2 Core Values in its Customer and Community Engagement Policy (2016) and online Community Engagement Manual (developed by a working group in 2016 and updated in 2019).

QUU's commitment to the IAP2 Core Values of Public Participation is also embedded in its 2023 Corporate Plan, which states: 'Our strategic direction is underpinned by our commitment to customer-centricity; every decision we make is considered through the lens of our customer' (July 2018).

### CUSTOMER CENTRICITY MODEL



### Describe how internal/staff participation has set the tone for public participation.

Customer-centric engagement is now core-business at QUU and, as such, is fully integrated into business planning, customer service and project management. The corporate business model is depicted in the diagram above.

This achievement represents a transformative journey embraced by internal staff and a paradigm shift from informing customers to a readiness to collaborate on design feasibility, policy initiatives and construction methodology. The internal public participation journey has unfolded thus:

- IAP2 Certificate of Engagement training for 12 Community Engagement specialists, eight of whom are now embedded as Customer and Community experts across key business areas.
- Internal Community Engagement training based on IAP2 Core Values was completed by 70 Infrastructure Delivery Project Managers in September 2016 and 40 Network Management Field Services crew members in October 2018. The scenario-based training highlights the need for proactive issue, risk and reputation management through experiential learning, including a panel discussion facilitated by the General Manager.
- The value of the training program is now widely recognised and a customised version is incorporated in all startup meetings with project contractors whenever a works package is awarded, including a pre-start community engagement toolbox for crews working on high-impact projects.
- CECC stewardship, which is centre-led and locally deployed, is a governance and reporting framework that upholds the IAP2 Core Values of Public Participation. It was formally launched at the CEO Road Show in October 2018.
- Under the CECC 'umbrella', QUU established a Community of Practice in 2017 for all external contractor engagement teams working on the high impact water main replacement and sewer rehabilitation programs.
- The Community of Practice is coordinated by the Community Engagement Team and each meeting involves a 'deep dive' that encourages shared knowledge and learnings. It has achieved tangible outcomes, such as adoption of the Customer Home Plan – an initiative shared by one contractor and readily adopted by all – that has significantly reduced customer complaints about high impact works on private property through early and transparent engagement.

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Provide evidence that the leader/s in the organisation have a good understanding and have integrated Public Participation into the way they work.

Public Participation is endorsed at the highest level of QUU, and practised by leaders across the business - from Network Operations and Field Services to Infrastructure Delivery and Customer Advocacy.

As a provider of essential water and sewer services, there are many elements of the business which interest the community and also significantly impact them, particularly during essential infrastructure project delivery and maintenance works.

Back in 2015, when QUU embarked on its IAP2 journey, its engagement relied on effective communication with customers about upcoming work that would affect them. It was seen as the 'comms role' and, in many instances, was an 'after thought', reliant on the project manager's buy-in or availability to inform a member of the Community Engagement Team about the need for customer notification.

Over the past four years, QUU has progressively moved from 'inform' to 'collaborate' on the IAP2 Spectrum, as the organisation acquired the necessary skills to confidently 'open the window of vulnerability'. In doing so, QUU has come to appreciate the value-add provided by proactive issue, risk and reputation management and has embraced and integrated customer-centricity as a core business value.

The success of its journey to date would not have been possible without the support of QUU's Board and Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Senior Managers, who have championed public participation in the following ways:

- IAP2 Core Values were endorsed as best-practice and enshrined in QUU's Customer and Community Engagement Policy (the policy) in 2016 by QUU's Board. The policy applies to all QUU employees and contractors. It is reviewed bi-annually and was re-endorsed in 2018.
- The policy is underpinned by QUU's Community Engagement Framework and its internal community engagement training program that is mandatory for all staff and contractors.
- In February 2016, QUU's Senior Leadership Team (13 Managers) completed customised IAP2 training, facilitated by an IAP2 trainer. In the words of a Developer Services Manager, "understanding IAP2 has inspired me to approach customer engagement differently, being more proactive and clear upfront, and being able to build stronger relationships because of it." (25 February 2016)
- In August 2016, QUU's CEO recognised the work being done to embed the IAP2 values and best-practice engagement across the business when she awarded the Community Engagement Lead (now the Manager) the Urban Inspiration Award for "driving staff to act for positive outcomes for customers and the business. [She] has inspired teams across the business to take a more coordinated, strategic approach to community engagement by her example of collaboration internally to seek win-win solutions for the business and for customers and taking a lead in seeking out IAP2 training. She has encouraged teams to work differently and more collaboratively. As a result, we're achieving better outcomes for our customers and community, and our business."
- Eight IAP2 specialists have been embedded across key business areas since 1 July 2018. The new organisational structure required the approval of the Chief Executive Officer and deployment was approved by the General Managers of five business divisions.
- QUU's annual Community Engagement Strategy is submitted to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the Board for discussion and approval (2016-2018; next scheduled July 2019). This process is the highest level of review and approval and is recorded in Board Minutes, with the decision publicised in the Board Update.
- On 1 July 2017, the business case to establish the Community Engagement Division as a stand-alone business area, including a new role for a Community Engagement Manager and the appointment of three additional Community Engagement Officers (total eight), was approved by the Board.
- QUU's Community Engagement Governance and Reporting Framework was approved by the ELT and subsequently, the Board, in July 2018, including the establishment of the Community Engagement Capability Centre (CECC).
- Let's Talk Water customer forums held in 2017 involved its customers in the development of QUU's first Customer Engagement Strategy. Launched by the CEO in 2018, the strategy commits QUU to 'involving our customers and communities in our decisions'.
- The 2023 Corporate Plan states: 'Our strategic direction is underpinned by our commitment to customercentricity; every decision we make is considered through the lens of our customer' (July 2018). This commitment epitomises the cultural shift that now informs the way the organisation engages with its customers and community.