International knowledge sharing brings best practice to Solomon Water

Water treatment processes in the Solomon Islands are about to benefit from a special Seqwater experience.

Seqwater hosted a group of staff from Solomon Water on a tour of Capalaba Water Treatment Plant (WTP) on 12 June 2019. The visit was arranged to take advantage of an additional day in Brisbane with the staff attending the qldwater Asset Management workshop on 13 June.

Ian Gooden, General Manager of Solomon Water said their organisation expected to have two or maybe three small water treatment plants to operate over the next two years and had a lot of experience to gain to be confident in managing the systems.

“We currently have one small set of sand filters and then chlorinate water at about 14 locations across the Solomon Islands; mainly in Honiara,” he said.

The Solomon Water contingent, including COO Scravin Tongi, visited the Capalaba WTP where Seqwater staff showed them...
the water treatment process from catchment to tap as well as laboratory testing, SCADA control and water distribution.

The Capalaba Water Treatment Plant is one of 36 in the Southeast Queensland Water Grid, a network of pipes, dams, treatment plants and reservoirs allowing Seqwater to move treated water around the region and supplement local supply. It uses conventional treatment with gas disinfection with raw water sourced from the Leslie Harrison Dam. The plant services the northern part of the Redland City Council region with a population of around 100,000.

Seqwater Coordinator Supply Operations Southern Region, Ian Cuthbertson, said the group showed a keen interest in chlorine gas disinfection, catchment management and HACCP policy and procedures around water quality control.

“We spoke at length about water catchment management because it is something they have been experiencing difficulties with at home and wanted to learn more about,” Mr Cuthbertson said.

While the Capalaba WTP was larger and more complex than plants planned for the Islands, the fundamental processes are the same and the group appreciated learning about the checks and balances that had been set up.

“The guys kept saying how sophisticated our processes were compared to where they were at, and we had to remind them that we also started out at that level years ago, and that anything was possible given time and commitment.”

One of the key learnings by the Solomon Water team is that proper thought and due diligence around catchment area management can lower the cost of treatment. The Solomon Water Team conveys its heartfelt thank you to Ian and his team at Capalaba and to qldwater for this critical learning opportunity.

Mr Cuthbertson also highlighted how important it was for the operators to be involved in the design stage to ensure they ended up with a fit for purpose plant.

“There is no point getting a Rolls Royce when what you need is a Mini Minor. The guys were really surprised when we talked about the importance of them being consulted right from the start as they were the ones who would have to run the plant,” Mr Cuthbertson said.

“One of the guys said the first thing he was going to talk about when he got home was about how they could get involved in the design process.”

Mr Cuthbertson said the benefit of the visit flowed both ways, with his staff gaining a better understanding of the limited treatment options in remote locations.

“It was good for my blokes to realise that not all treatment plants are like ours, so if they ever needed to support regional and remote operations, they would have a better understanding of limited budgets and more basic treatment processes.”

Seqwater put on a BBQ lunch with the group where they got to mingle and share experiences. Thanks again to Ian and his team from qldwater for being so willing to assist.