



# Case Study

## Water management in Australia

Certification:

**ISO 9001:** Quality  
Management Systems

**AS/NZ 4801:** OH&S  
Management Systems

**ISO 14001:**  
Environmental  
Management Systems

**HACCP:** Hazard Analysis  
Critical Control Point  
Systems

**ISO 22000:** Food Safety  
Management Systems



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# Keeping the Water Running

**“Taste, quality and colour are the key issues for the water industry and our certification program can help to ensure all three are delivered consistently”**

As one of the driest continents on earth it makes sense that Australia takes a proactive approach to managing its water needs. Behind the politics around the Murray Darling Basin and other national water resources, a number of Australian organisations are successfully working to protect one of our most vital resources. While water management is clearly a national issue, most providers are confronted on a daily basis with issues that cross local, regional and state borders. **With the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement on a National Water Initiative (NWI) on 25 June 2004, a new tide in water management in Australia was ushered in. The NWI offered a blueprint for water reform.** Through it, governments across Australia agreed on actions to achieve a more cohesive national approach to the way Australia manages, measures, plans for, prices, and trades water. It is hard to argue with its aims of increasing the efficiency of Australia's water use, leading to greater certainty for investment and productivity, for rural and urban communities, and for the environment. But in practice, for organisations involved in the water industry, it's their skill in complying with state and federal legislation and ensuring continual improvement through the implementation of independently certified management systems and assurance of operational data that keeps Australia's water running.



Over the past 10 years NCS International (NCSI) has been dedicated to helping organisations navigate water regulation and its integration with a range of business processes and management systems. Our portfolio includes organisations such as Wannon Water, East Gippsland Water and Goulburn Valley Water. **A key member of staff Jim Gerrard, one of NCSI's Senior water authority auditors, has developed a specialisation around independently auditing providers in the water services industry.** According to Jim, the most widely implemented standards are ISO 14001-Environmental Management, AS 4801-Occupational Health and Safety, ISO 9001-Quality Management, HACCP and ISO 22000-Food Safety.

**“There has been a lot of interest across the world in this program and the approach taken in Victoria.”**

“The certification schemes are designed to build confidence in the country’s water industry. Taste, quality and colour are the key issues for the water industry and our certification program can help to ensure all three are delivered consistently,” said Jim.

According to Jim, “the challenging thing is that while the NWI provides a broad framework for cooperation, each State and Territory takes a different approach to water regulation. **Recently, Victoria has raised the benchmark with the Department of Human Services mandating the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act 2003 and Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2005 under Victoria’s Drinking Water Quality Regulatory Framework.** This provides a risk management approach to water quality from catchment to tap using HACCP and Codex principles as outlined in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines 2004.

“There has been a lot of interest across the world in this program and the approach undertaken in Victoria. The Department has set a timeframe for the audits under the mandated Act and Regulations and these require compliance.”

“The Department of Human Services, working with RABQSA, has also developed the RABQSA Drinking Water QMS Auditor Certification Scheme. **The idea behind the scheme is to develop a number of water specialist auditors who can audit the water businesses water quality risk management plans and processes.**”

Under the Scheme, NCSI Auditors like Jim are continually examined to assess their competency and capability to deliver services against the Scheme’s requirements.

“Put simply, the new Victorian Scheme is about helping to ensure the safe supply of water to households giving consumers confidence that all metropolitan and country based water businesses, are keeping things flowing.”

The water industry is literally awash with regulation and self-regulation. Another regulatory body is the Australian Bottled Water Institute (ABWI). **Emerging in response to public’s thirst for bottle water, the ABWI is an independent company that developed a Standard for the bottled water industry involving companies such as Coca Cola and Cadbury.** According to Jim: “The ABWI program was also designed to ensure the quality of water from the source to the consumer. As part of the program, companies have to complete land management studies such as hydrogeological mapping to ensure the safe supply of water. Most of the major companies will also have systems in place for ISO 9001:2008, ISO 22000 and HACCP.”

According to Leon de Villiers, Manager Integrated Management Systems at Wannon Water in Victoria: “Independent certification to Standards such as ISO 9001:2008 delivers a range of benefits, it provides confidence to the public that our operations are managed to a recognised standard and assists us in our continuous improvement endeavours.”

**“It has really forced the water authorities to lift their game.”**

“There is little doubt that the Department of Human Services and the RABQSA audit process have strengthened the industry in Victoria. It has really forced the water corporations to lift their game. **In my view, all industries across the country that impact on public health should use a risk based management approach to service provision.**”

“NCS International has provided a regular, independent assessment of our management and operations programmes, resulting in continuous improvement.”

In Queensland, many of the utilities providing water and wastewater services to millions of consumers, take a proactive approach to management systems certification. According to Jim: “Providers under the new water industry system in Queensland must maintain certification under their franchise agreements and as a rule most are independently certified to ISO 9001, ISO 14001, AS 4801 and HACCP. With certification often forming an integral part of the company’s operations. Independent certification delivers clear benefits including improving a utilities standing in the market and a demonstration of efficiency.

**As in Victoria, the Queensland water industry is undergoing a series of reforms. From 2010, it is planned that the Council of Mayors will run the water distribution entity. When faced with these impending changes, certification is providing a vital business tool for many utilities. “As the water industry in Queensland continues with its reforms independent certification is providing a solid foundation for a range of entities seeking to integrate into the new system,” says Jim.**



“Another major benefit of independent certification for water utilities is around planning processes. With many utilities having to undertake a rigorous planning process in a bid for funding, certification assists by demonstrating to the regulator that effective systems and processes in place.

**“it is clear that providers benefit from implementing independently certified management systems.”**

As federal and state regulators continue to reform the water industry in Australia it is clear that providers benefit from implementing independently certified management systems. Over many years, NCS International through audits delivered by Jim Gerrard and his NCSI peers located in other States, has met the needs of its clients in the water industry as they achieve and maintain certification to standards and Codes of Practice such as: the Safe Drinking Water Act and regulations, Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, ISO 14001, AS 4801, ISO 9001, HACCP and ISO 22000. *The overall objective of the National Water Initiative coupled with 3rd party verification of data and reporting ensures reporting consistency and transparency across Australian water utilities. To achieve a nationally compatible market, regulatory and planning based system of managing surface and groundwater resources for rural and urban use that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes.* With the practical support of management systems standards such a bold objective is ever closer to being realised.

**Useful Information:**

To learn more about the audit process and view results of last years audits download:

[www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/downloads/post\\_audit\\_pres.pdf](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/downloads/post_audit_pres.pdf)

For more information on the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines visit:

[www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/eh19syn.htm](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/eh19syn.htm)

Also for more information on the Victorian Department of Human Services drinking water scheme visit:

[www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/water/drinking.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/water/drinking.htm)

To find out how NCS International can assist you with your drinking water scheme regulatory audits visit [www.ncsi.com.au/Drinking\\_water\\_scheme\\_vic](http://www.ncsi.com.au/Drinking_water_scheme_vic) or for any other enquiries visit [www.ncsi.com.au](http://www.ncsi.com.au) or call **1300 856 554**.