

# Championing a new model



A new model of training for Water Industry professionals will have far-reaching benefits for the industry - as Connexis CEO **Helmut Modlik** explains.

Skills requirements in all sectors of the Infrastructure Industry are evolving at a rapid pace. Training delivery methods are also evolving, with a growing consensus among the Water Industry for a change in the way water professionals are trained. While the successful traditional training model (block off-job courses, followed by on-job consolidation of learning and assessment) has been used for many years, a new approach for the future is emerging.

This model centres around three key components: online deployment of theoretical learning; off-job practical workshops; and the continuation of on-job consolidation and assessment.

Innovation and collaboration are keys to success in the water as well as the wider Infrastructure Industry. The new model for Water

Industry training has both of these things in spades, having arisen out of a collaboration between the diverse industry representatives on the Connexis Water Industry Group.

This Group is convinced that the new model will have huge and far-reaching benefits for the industry. Here is why Connexis is also excited to support it.

Firstly, digital content already pervades almost every aspect of our daily lives. Why should learning be any different?

One of the biggest benefits of delivering theoretical learning online is that it can be accessed more flexibly to fit in with the learner's lifestyle. People can progress at their own pace, with a level of independence, yet still benefit from a peer and tutor support network comparable to that on a block course.

Online learning can take place anytime and anywhere, making it more accessible to a wider range of learners. There is no need to take weeks off work to attend a course, or to pay expensive travel and accommodation costs. The digital platform also offers limitless opportunities for innovation, with smart interactive technologies enhancing the user's learning experience and engagement.

Because our industry is a highly practical, hands on environment,

## Watercare women rule at Infrastructure Awards

Female leaders in the Water Industry were in the limelight at the recent Connexis Celebration of Women in Infrastructure event, with Watercare Services dominating the Awards.

Watercare Northern Networks manager Suzanne Naylor was crowned winner of the Inspirational Leader Award, which recognises women who are demonstrating outstanding leadership in their chosen field. Service Delivery Water Supply manager Nolwenn Lagadec was also selected as a finalist in the same category, while Water Supply manager Shannon Palmer was a finalist for the Aspiring Leader Award.

Suzanne says: "Watercare is fortunate to have so many fantastic and talented women working across its operational business units. The existence of the Women in Infrastructure Awards demonstrates the huge changes which the industry is seeing in terms of diversity. Women in our industry are no longer limited to supporting roles. We can take on challenges and responsibility – and hold our own."

The Celebration of Women in Infrastructure event marked the end of Girls with Hi-Vis month – run by Industry Training Organisation Connexis as part of its Ultimit initiative. Despite women making up more than half of the New Zealand population, they account for only four percent of Connexis trainees.

Ultimit aims to address this imbalance by increasing female participation in trade and technical roles in the industries it serves.

Following its successful launch with the Energy Industry in 2015, Girls with Hi-Vis was expanded this year to include the Water, Civil Construction and Telecommunications Industries. The event proved extremely popular, with more than 50 women rolling up their sleeves and 'giving the industry a go'. **WNZ**



### Be a 'Girls with Hi-Vis' host

Girls with Hi-Vis will return to the three waters in 2017.

If your company is interested in hosting an event please email: [ultimit@connexis.org.nz](mailto:ultimit@connexis.org.nz) or call the Connexis team on 0800 486 626.

one of the essential components of the current water training model is the requirement to gain and build skills on the job. The new model continues this, but goes one step further by introducing off-job, practical workshops to augment on-job skills acquisition.

In days gone by, water trainees got to practice a full range of scenarios, including 'breaking' assets to gain experience in dealing with serious failures. Nowadays, the only time people get such experience is when failures actually happen. The new model reintroduces the opportunity for water operators to undertake 'real life' situation simulations. Support from employers has been so significant for this component of the new model that key industry players have offered their facilities and equipment for use in these practical workshops going forward.

Finally, the new model will not only retain but strengthen the current on-job skill building and assessment component. With the introduction of online learning and an increased focus on off-job practical workshoping, trainee on-job skill development should improve. And as a result, the whole process of preparing evidence, as well as the assessment itself, should be less of a burden.

So where do we go from here? Well, actually things are already well

underway. The Connexis Water Industry Group recently completed a successful proof-of-concept project, focused on the digital aspect of the model. The next step will be to prepare a detailed business case to capture the costs and benefits of the new model, and clarify specifically who will be involved in its rollout and what is required to make it a reality.

It is important to note that the incumbent training provider, Opus Environmental Training Centre, is not only aware of the model, but is supportive of the new direction and is keen to participate. The new model will still require a team of experts to develop and deploy the learning, as well as to provide on – and off-job mentoring and support. Opus is keen to continue supporting the industry and to play a key role.

However things progress in the future, one thing is certain – a competent, qualified 3 Waters workforce is essential. The potential and value of the new training model is exciting and so far, there has been unanimous and enthusiastic support from Industry. For our part, we say "bring it on". **WNZ**

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For further information, go to [www.connexis.org.nz](http://www.connexis.org.nz) or call 0800 486 626.



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# Students sample the water industry

A group of secondary school students enjoyed a behind the scenes taste of the water industry recently experiencing what it takes to provide Auckland with clean, safe drinking water.

The students were taking part in a five-day "Water Taster" programme – an initiative of Industry Training Organisation Connexis. The programme was designed to show young people how the industry works and to encourage them to take up a career in Water, and was supported by host networks Watercare, Downer, City Care and Safety 'n Action.

Connexis Water Industry Manager Annie Yeates says: "It was a joy and a privilege to introduce the group to the teams behind providing Auckland with clean safe water to drink, and treating the wastewater before it is discharged back into the environment, and those that look after the maze of pipe networks in-between."

She adds: "The programme was a real highlight for me, getting young people enthused about a vital industry that offers amazing careers that the vast majority of the population never think about – until something goes wrong!"



**Water Taster – Keith Barnett, Technical Manager at Safety 'n Action talks to school students at the Connexis Water Taster course.**

The 'Water Taster' programme forms part of a wider careers initiative by Connexis, which aims to attract more school leavers and career changers to all of the Infrastructure Industries it serves – the Three Waters, Civil Infrastructure, Energy and Telecommunications. Connexis Chief Executive Helmut Modlik explains: "We have some large skill shortages looming in the Water Industry, particularly in the area of water reticulation, where there are presently more

than 50 vacancies in this area in Auckland alone. It is vital to attract more staff and these open days are a perfect gateway." **WNZ**

## How you can get involved

Connexis is seeking host companies for further 'Water Taster' programmes in 2017. To find out more please email: [careersandevents@connexis.org.nz](mailto:careersandevents@connexis.org.nz) or call Connexis on 0800 486 626.



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# Expiry information for Water Qualifications

A number of Water Industry qualifications are expiring and will be replaced with new versions. The current qualifications below will continue to be offered in 2017 for completion by December 2018.

## Current Water Reticulation qualifications

- Open for enrolment until 31 December 2016; Last date for assessment 31 December 2018
- National Certificate in Water Reticulation (Planned and Reactive Maintenance Technician) with strands in Water and Wastewater – Level 3
- National Certificate in Water Reticulation (Supervisor) with strands in Water and Wastewater – Level 4

## Current Water Treatment qualifications

- Open for enrolment until 30 June 2017; last date for assessment 31 December 2018
- National Certificate in Water Treatment – Level 4
- National Diploma in Water Treatment with strands in Drinking Water Assessment and Water Treatment – Level 5
- National Certificate in Waste Water Treatment – Level 4
- National Diploma in Waste Water Treatment – Level 5

## What this means for current candidates

Current candidates working through their qualification have ample time to complete before it expires at the end of 2018. Candidates wishing to enrol in the existing qualifications in 2017 will also have the time to complete before the expiry date.

Opus Environmental Training Centre will continue with delivery of Water Treatment qualification off-job courses as usual during 2017. Book now at: [www.opusetc.co.nz](http://www.opusetc.co.nz) or contact Janet Bengree direct on 0800 678 738.

## Replacement Water Reticulation qualifications

The expiring Water Reticulation qualifications are being replaced by:

- New Zealand Certificate in Utilities Maintenance (with strands in Water, Wastewater and Stormwater) – Level 4 (Civil Trades qualification)
- New Zealand Certificate in Pipe Installations (with strands in Trenched and Trenchless) – Level 4 (Civil Trades qualification)

The Recognition of Current Competence (RCC) pathway is open for enrolment for both qualifications. The sector qualifications and NZ Apprenticeship pathways will be available shortly.

New Treatment qualifications will be open for enrolment by late 2017. **WNZ**

• For further information please contact Annie Yeates at Connexis on 0800 486 626 or email [anniey@connexis.org.nz](mailto:anniey@connexis.org.nz)

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