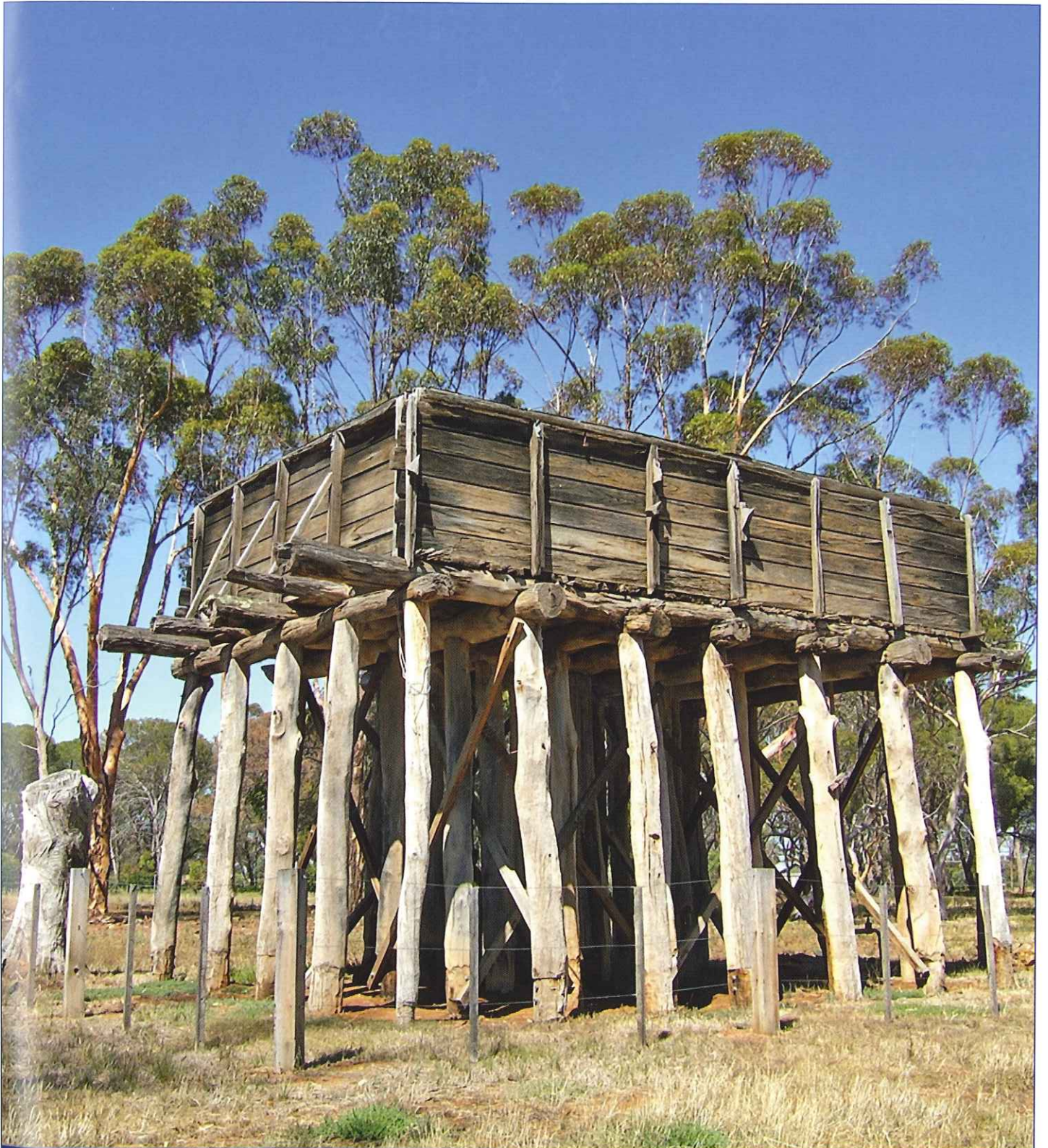


# water



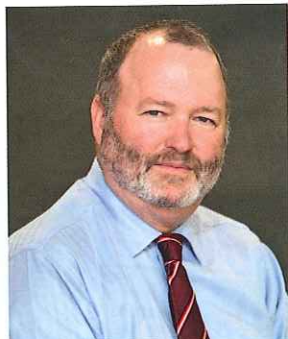
JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN WATER ASSOCIATION



PRINT POST APPROVED PP 225517/00008

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# Sharing Australia's Water Expertise with the World



**By Dr Peter Oliver,  
International WaterCentre**

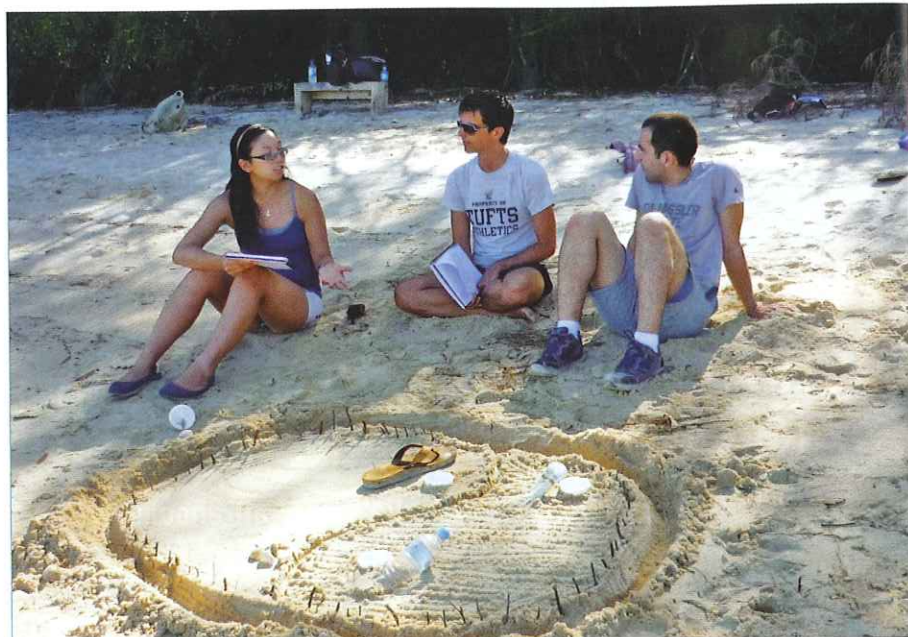
It's a hot February morning on a North Stradbroke Island beach. There are a couple of board riders perfecting their style; young holiday mothers sunbathing and a few retirees enjoying the water between the flags.

Further up the beach and there is a different energy. Fifty young adults are eagerly talking, beach towels and clip boards in hand. They are working in small groups. Some begin to draw and dig in the sand, some grab pieces of driftwood and other jetsam to use in this work. There's constant discussion about groundwater dependent ecosystems, bore fields and effluent.

The discussions continue as eighteen different three-dimensional models of North Stradbroke Island take shape in the sand. There are over twenty different accents. The discussion is enriched with perspectives from Australia, Africa, the United Kingdom, USA, The Pacific, The Middle East, South Asia, South-East Asia and South America.

Concepts and language from engineering, ground water hydrology, aquatic ecology, planning, anthropology, law and economics are seamlessly woven through discussions explaining island water management, and how we need to take a trans-disciplinary, whole-of-island, whole-of-water-cycle view if we are to manage water on North Stradbroke Island as sustainably as possible.

These discussions are part of an orientation field trip for a group of students from the International WaterCentre's Master of Integrated Water Management (MIWM) program at The University of Queensland.



IWC Masters students make three-dimensional conceptual sand models.

These students are taking the first steps in an 18-month Masters program which immerses them in a unique, trans-disciplinary learning environment focusing on developing an integrated, holistic understanding of the management of water, using Australian expertise and Australian and international case studies.

By the time these students finish the MIWM program they will have been on a variety of field trips. These visits range from water infrastructure and other management issues throughout South East Queensland, to a ten-day field trip in Western Australia looking at aquatic ecology and salinity and catchment management, led by the University of Western Australia's Centre for Excellence in Natural Resource Management in Albany.

Current students are doing their third semester research projects throughout Australia and in places as far afield as Nauru, Israel, South Africa and Bangladesh. They have gained water knowledge and honed their water management skills in Australia and are testing them throughout the world, particularly in developing countries.

Programs such as this are sharing Australia's water expertise with the world. The first students graduated in 2009 and are already making a global

mark, with Alumni leading the monitoring and evaluation of wetlands management programs for the World Wildlife Fund in Pakistan and developing trans-boundary river basin plans in Ecuador and Peru.

The high quality of overseas students enrolling in this Masters Program, the diversity of countries from which they come, and the enthusiasm with which they return home to work in water management, are solid indicators that these graduates will make a positive difference to water management internationally.

High-quality Australian graduate students are also entering this program, studying both full and part-time. With student numbers on the increase, we can expect their impact on Australian water management to be felt in the near future.

"As Australians, when we look at ourselves, we tend to look at the water crisis we're in, and feel we haven't been managing the resource in an integrated way," comments Mark Pascoe, CEO of the International WaterCentre.

"We're not perfect. However, we are managing water with our eye on the whole-of-water cycle, in not only the biophysical dimension, but also in the human, social, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions.

## feature article

"Those who know about us tend to see Australia as innovative. They would probably compare us to the Israelis, Swedes and Californians in the way we've embraced water management challenges of today and the future."

Student feedback reinforces this view point. "This IWC Masters Program brings expertise from Australia, but at the same time we learn a lot from lecturers with experience from outside Australia," says current student, Janina Murta from Portugal.

"We are always making the bridge between here and the rest of the world. We have learned from Australia's experience and seen the challenges of implementing best practices. We have looked at them critically from technical, economic, institutional and social perspectives."

Canadian engineer and program graduate, Diane Cousineau observes that Australia is the only country offering such a well-designed and truly integrated curriculum, noting that Australia has some significant water challenges and has come far in changing people's water use habits.



Water practitioners from all over the world come to Australia for IWC's Master of Integrated Water Management.

Learning from students from other cultural contexts is also significant. Diane's experience is that the IWC Masters program can be a good place to test water policy ideas, explaining that "Cultural, political and gender differences can thwart seemingly coherent water policies when it comes to actual implementation."

The beach is a special place for many Australians. It is also part of our special,

national 'outdoor' classroom, from which the International WaterCentre and partner university teaching team are successfully taking integrated water management education to the world.

*IWC Water Leader Scholarships will open on 1 May for the Master of Integrated Water Management program. For more information go to [www.watercentre.org](http://www.watercentre.org).*



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