

Syllabus summary

2021 Program

Program vision

To be the world's best feedback-intensive leadership development program (Guthrie and King, 2004) for emerging leaders in the water industry who want to build skills, knowledge and confidence in exercising influence, driving change and advancing more sustainable forms of water management.

Program objectives

- To help emerging water leaders typically at the project leader to middle management level to be more effective at exercising influence, driving change and advancing more sustainable and integrated forms of water management.
- To help participants to build self-awareness and self-leadership skills as a pre-requisite for effective leadership and accelerated leadership development.
- To identify specific leadership development needs for each participant (e.g. key skills to develop), and to help them build personalised leadership development plans which include activities to be conducted in the workplace.
- To strengthen leadership abilities (e.g. skills, knowledge, networks and power) known to be associated with effective leaders playing different leadership roles in the water sector.
- To help participants to continue to develop as leaders over their careers and to enable other developing leaders to do the same.
- To assist participants to strengthen group-based leadership capacity (e.g. the capacity of a cross-organisational network of leaders to drive positive change in a water utility).
- To facilitate a broad range of developmental experiences that involve new knowledge, diverse perspectives (i.e. from presenters and participants), self-assessments and reflection, discussion, the application of knowledge to one's own work environment, practising new leadership behaviours, feedback on leadership behaviours, and support (e.g. from peers, coaches and mentors).
- To create a peer support network for participants that operates during and after the program.
- To provide an entry point to relevant leadership literature to assist further independent learning.
- To generate a positive 'return on investment' (Phillips, 2007) to the participants and their organisations in less than a year following the program.

Target audience

This program targets non-executive leaders in the water sector. Program participants play a variety of leadership roles (see Taylor et al., 2015), but are all team leaders. Some also lead cross boundary project teams, whilst others lead teams of staff. Some more senior participants are also preparing for executive roles. Participants come from all parts of the water sector, with the majority coming from water utilities, State government departments and local government agencies. The average age is mid 30s, with equal participation by males and females. Since 2011, 173 participants have originated from eight countries, with the majority being Australian.

Design

The program has been designed and is delivered each year in accordance with the following principles:

- The program's design and content (e.g. conceptual models and leadership tools) should be informed by sound research that is relevant to people playing different roles in the water sector.
- The design of the program needs to be consistent with the '10:20:70 rule' of leadership development (Lombardo and Eichinger, 2000) which suggests that approximately 10% of development typically occurs via structured training, 20% comes from receiving feedback and support from others, and 70% originates from on-the-job experience.
- Leadership can be taught and learnt (Avolio, 2005) even though a leader's personality characteristics and context contribute to effective leadership (Northouse, 2016).
- The design, content and evaluation of the program should be transparent (e.g. communicated through conference and journal papers).
- A feedback-intensive leadership development program design is most likely to generate positive behavioural change and a positive return on investment to participants and their organisations (see Guthrie and King, 2004).
- Leadership development is a lifelong, challenging activity (Avolio, 2005). As such, the program must help participants to actively manage their development as leaders over their careers.
- The design of the program should include numerous opportunities for participants to build self-awareness, challenge themselves, get frequent feedback from their colleagues, receive support from colleagues, and deeply reflect (Avolio, 2005; McCauley and Van Velsor, 2004).
- The design should aim to build the individual capacity of water leaders to influence and drive change (i.e. leader development), as well as their capacity to work with other leaders to collectively drive group-based leadership processes (i.e. leadership development).
- The program should prepare emerging leaders for current and future challenges in the water sector, as well as the ability to play different roles in the water sector. These roles include the champion leader, enabling (adaptive) leader, cross-boundary team leader, thought leader, strategic leader and trusted advisor roles (see Taylor et al., 2015).
- Face-to-face training should minimise the use of 'lecture style' presentations and maximise opportunities for interaction, discussion, self-assessment, information sharing and reflection.
- The program should be comprehensively evaluated each time it is run and continuously improved.
- The program's design should include 'accountability mechanisms' to ensure that participants fully commit to the program (Shelton, 2003).

The program was first run in 2011 following a trial program that was designed, delivered and evaluated as part of a Ph.D. research project at Monash University (Taylor, 2010a & b). The design was peer reviewed by:

- Professor David Day (formally the Winthrop Professor and the Woodside Chair in Leadership and Management at the University of Western Australia's Business School). Professor Day is one of the world's leading leadership development academics and practitioners.
- Members of an Industry Leaders Reference Group. This group included senior representatives from the Queensland State government, City of Canning (WA), Healthy Waterways Limited (QLD), Water Services Association of Australia, Yarra Valley Water, Queensland Urban Utilities, Veolia Water, Melbourne Water and the Australian Water Association.

The elements and timing of this nine-month, annual program are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: An overview of the program's elements, their timing and time commitment for participants*

Month	Program elements	Approximate time commitment for fully committed participants*
December.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductory module that provides details of the program's syllabus, background reading, reflection activities and guidance on how participants can fully prepare for the first face-to-face intensive. Customised 360-degree feedback process (completion of an online questionnaire) to help assess leadership performance, strengths and weaknesses, self-awareness and opportunities to improve. Access to an online classroom and an introductory activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading / exercises (Dec - Jan): ~1 day. 360-degree feedback: ~2 hours. Online activities: ~1 hour.
January.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-training exercises and reading (continued). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above.
February.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five-day face-to-face training session in Brisbane (mid-February). This intensive includes interactive training modules on a variety of leadership topics (with a wide variety of activities), case studies, guest presentations from distinguished executive and emerging leaders, group mentor workshops, analysis of 360-degree feedback, participant presentations, and four social events. Development of individual leadership development plans, including leadership projects. An IWC leadership coach provides comments on draft plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training: 5 days. Drafting the leadership plan and getting input from supervisors, mentors and coaches: ~4 hours.
March.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual leadership development plans (review, finalisation and initial implementation). One-to-one coaching session (no. 1). The program includes 3 of these sessions with 2 IWC leadership coaches who also work in the water sector. Monthly on-line discussion forum (no. 1) - focussing on self-leadership. The program includes 5 facilitated monthly online discussion activities using a private online learning management system. Local mentoring conversations (initiated by the participant). The program includes 3 local mentoring sessions which occur back at the workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership plans: Allow ~2 hours a week for implementation from March to August. Coaching (including preparation and follow-up activities): ~2 hours. Monthly on-line discussion activity: ~3 hours (most of which will need to occur in the first 2 weeks of the month). Local mentoring conversations: ~2 hours.
April.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual leadership development plans (ongoing implementation, reflection and plan maintenance). Monthly on-line discussion forum (no. 2) - focussing on team and transformational leadership. Local mentoring conversations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership plans: Allow ~2 hours a week for implementation. Monthly on-line discussion activity: ~3 hours. Local mentoring conversations: ~2 hours.
May.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual leadership development plans (ongoing implementation). One-to-one coaching session (no. 2). Monthly on-line discussion forum (no. 3) focussing on leadership pitfalls and the correct execution of strategy. Local mentoring conversations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership plans: Allow ~2 hours a week for implementation. Coaching: ~2 hours. Monthly on-line discussion activity: ~3 hours. Local mentoring conversations: ~2 hours.
June.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual leadership development plans (ongoing implementation). Monthly on-line discussion forum (no. 4) - focussing on influence tactics, emergent and transformational leadership. A follow-up feedback process to gather feedback from the participants' colleagues to assess whether behavioural change is occurring, and to identify further opportunities for improvement. This process uses short anonymous, online surveys that have been customised for each participant so that feedback is aligned to the content of each person's developmental plan. Local mentoring conversations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership plans: Allow ~2 hours a week for implementation. Monthly on-line discussion activity: ~3 hours. Follow-up feedback: ~2 hours. Local mentoring conversations: ~2 hours.

Month	Program elements	Approximate time commitment for fully committed participants*
July.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ILDP Implementation Progress Reports (a short report that provides the IWC and the participant's supervisor with an update on the implementation of all actions in their ILDP). Two-day 'follow-up training' session in Brisbane (late July). An on-line option is provided for participants who cannot attend in person. This intensive includes additional training sessions, guest presentations, analysis of follow-up feedback, participant presentations, a group mentoring workshop, and a celebration dinner. Revised / updated individual leadership development plans (revision for on-going use). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership plans: Allow ~2 hours a week for implementation. ILDP Implementation Progress Reports: ~1 hour. Training: 2 days. Updating leadership plans: ~3 hours.
August.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing use of revised individual leadership development plans. One-to-one coaching session (no. 3). Monthly online discussion forum (no. 5) - this final online activity uses several realistic water leadership challenges / scenarios to bring together elements of the program and help participants to share leadership lessons. A multiple-choice quiz to assess whether key messages have been understood during the program. End of program Reflection Reports. These reports help participants to reflect on what they have learnt during the program, to identify future developmental activities, and communicate key outcomes to stakeholders (e.g. supervisors, mentors and the IWC). Guidance on self-directed learning opportunities following the program (video). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership plans: Allow ~2 hours a week for implementation. Coaching: ~2 hours. Monthly on-line discussion activity: ~3 hours. Quiz: ~1 hour. Reflection report: ~3 hours. Self-directed learning video: ~1/2 an hour.
September (after the program has officially closed).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anonymous on-line evaluation survey to identify ways to improve the program in future - optional. Audit of participation by the IWC and provision of certificates in hard copy and PDF form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final evaluation (optional): ~1/2 an hour.

~ The total time commitment is estimated at 14 days over nine months.

*Please note this schedule is pending COVID-19 barriers/travel restrictions. Program schedule, mode and timing may be altered to accommodate circumstances affected by COVID-19.

Content

The program's design and content are refined each year following a comprehensive evaluation process. Nevertheless, the following topics are typically addressed during the program's face-to-face intensives and online training activities:

- An introduction to leadership in the water sector.
- Self-leadership (Neck & Manz, 1996): the clarification and communication of personal values, building self-awareness and self-regulating one's behaviour, managing one's development as a leader, identifying the most suitable leadership roles in the water sector to bring out one's best, time management, building resilience and managing stress, avoiding common self-leadership traps, reflection techniques, etc.
- Learning how to play six common and/or important leadership roles in the water sector (i.e. the champion leader, enabling [adaptive] leader, cross-boundary team leader, thought leader, strategic leader and trusted advisor roles; see Taylor et al., 2015). The program focuses primarily on learning how to play the first three of these roles.
- Transformational leadership (see Avolio, 2005; Northouse, 2016).
- Team leadership, including leading cross-boundary teams (e.g. multi-disciplinary project teams) and the boundary spanning leadership model (see Lee et al., 2014).
- Ethics, ethical leadership and authentic leadership (see Northouse, 2016).

- Using several well researched water leadership case studies to explore how leaders playing different leadership roles can work together to advance more sustainable forms of urban water management and integrated river basin management.
- Key communication skills for leaders, including active listening, conflict management, giving and receiving feedback, and building and communicating shared visions.
- Techniques to ethically build different forms of power.
- How to design and execute an influence strategy.
- Different forms of social networking (see Ibarra & Hunter, 2007).
- The situational leadership model (Blanchard et al., 1985).
- The relationship between leadership and culture.
- Principles and methods of leader and leadership development (e.g. mentoring, reflection, challenging job assignments, methods to get frequent feedback from colleagues). Including the use of individual leadership development plans, and avoiding common developmental traps.
- Practical systems thinking techniques that can be used as part of the enabling / adaptive leadership role when working with complex / wicked problems.
- Fostering distributed leadership capacity in teams.
- Tools for strategic planning and thinking.

Importantly, participants choose which aspects of leadership to address in their individual leadership development plans. This choice is based on their 360-degree feedback, discussions with mentors, supervisors and coaches, the results of numerous self-assessment activities, and the participants' own intuition following exposure to a range of concepts and tools. These plans are 'living documents'. At the end of the program it is common for participants to be on version 4 or 5 of their plan. Most plans have 3-4 developmental objectives that focus on specific aspects of leadership (e.g. playing the champion role, the transformational leadership style, or time management). The provision of feedback on draft plans and the three one-to-one coaching sessions provides an opportunity for IWC coaches to work closely with each participant to improve aspects of leadership that are most relevant to them and their organisation.

The one-to-one coaching sessions also provide an opportunity for the IWC's leadership coaches to provide program participants with personalised packages of information and guidance to help them address their unique leadership challenges. For example, some participants may use the guidance of an IWC leadership coach to work on aspects of leadership that are not specifically address in the program's core training modules (e.g. aspects of strategic leadership or servant leadership).

Delivery team

Dr André Taylor (BSc Hons, MEM, PhD) is the IWC's Leadership Specialist and leads the delivery of the program. Each year, the delivery team comprises 10–15 researchers, educators and experienced industry practitioners who act as group mentors, specialist trainers, coaches and guest speakers.

Our specialist trainers are experts in the topics being addressed. Our guest speakers are a mix of emerging and executive level leaders. We also engage former program participants to be guest speakers as we have found that they are particularly good at presenting concepts in ways that strongly resonate with the participants. Our group mentors are distinguished water leaders who have experience working in a variety of leadership roles including roles at the CEO / board chair level.

The program’s coordinator and leadership coaches are also experienced water practitioners. We believe that the impact of the program is enhanced by having a core delivery team with a deep understanding of the context in which the participants work.

Evaluation results

The program has been evaluated each year from 2011 so it can be progressively improved. Examples of typical evaluation results include:

- Strongly positive participant feedback. For example, in 2017:
 - The extent to which program met all of its objectives: The average rating from participants on a 1-9 Likert-type scale was 96% (anonymous feedback).
 - The extent to which the program achieved its objective of working with participants to strengthen leadership skills known to be associated with effective water leaders and organisational leaders in general: The average rating was 93%.
 - The extent to which the participants’ ability to successfully undertake leadership has improved as a result of participating in this program. The average rating was 89%.
 - The extent to which the participants’ confidence to take on leadership roles and activities has increased as a result of participating in this program. The average rating was 89%.
- Strong evidence of behavioural change during the program. For example, Figure 1 shows anonymous feedback data from the colleagues of participants in 2017. It indicates that the average level of behaviour change with respect to behaviours that were included in individual leadership development plans after 4 months was better than “moderate” (i.e. 5.3 on the 1-7 scale). The average rating for each of the 27 participants was also positive, meaning that positive behavioural change had been observed. These data are particularly valuable as they relate to the aspects of leadership that each participant has been working on, do not rely upon self-reporting, and are reported directly from the participants’ colleagues to the IWC.

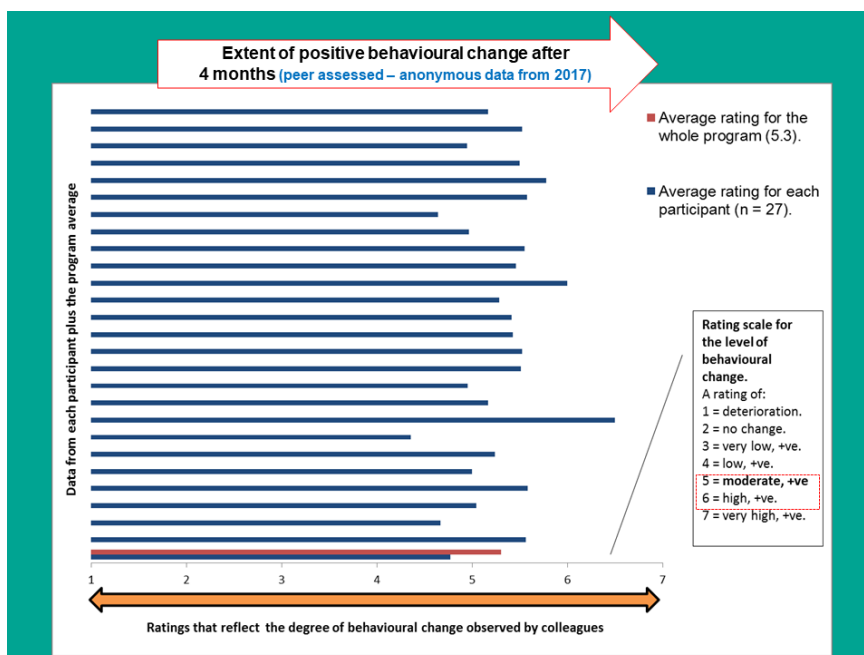


Figure 1: The extent of behavioural change after 4 months of implementing individual leadership plans, as assessed by the colleagues of participants

- Strong evidence that a positive return on investment can be expected in less than a year following the program assuming participants fully to commit to the program and gain a Certificate of Excellence. For example, in 2012 the conservatively estimated average Return on Investment estimate for the program was 3.4 or 340%. This was estimated using methodology from Phillips (2007) and Phillips & Phillips (2002, 2003).

Assessment and certificates

Participants in the program may achieve one of two Griffith University digitally badged micro-credential - a Certificate of Water Leadership or a Certificate of Water Leadership (Excellence). In short, a Certificate of Excellence micro-credential is awarded when participants complete all elements of the program (see Table 1). A standard Certificate micro-credential is awarded when participants just complete the core elements of the program (e.g. the training, 360-degree feedback, an individual leadership development plan, etc.).

Micro-credential certificates are issued in the form of digital badges granted through Credly. The Certificate of Excellence provides 20 Credit Points of advanced standing entry towards the Graduate Certificate in Water Leadership offered by Griffith University.

Timing and key dates

The program runs for nine months each year, from 1 December to 31 August. Applications can be made online between 1 September and 9 November. The program is filled on a 'first-come first-served' basis, so interested participants are encouraged to apply early. Please check the IWC website for up-to-date information.

Time commitment for participants

The amount of time needed to fully participate in the program and when this time needs to be spent is shown in Table 1. It is recommended that participants allow approximately 14 days, spread over nine months (1 December to 31 August) to fully commit to the program and therefore maximise the return on investment.

Testimonials



Caitlin Davis

Team Leader Portfolio Management, Victorian Environmental Water Holder

What a fantastic opportunity for water and catchment management industry professionals! I can't speak highly enough of this results-driven, practical, researched-based and enjoyable course. It has had a positive effect on me and my workplace, and will continue to deliver outcomes into the future.



Dr Rebekah Kenna

Erosion and Sediment Control Officer, Redland City Council

It is an outstanding program that had and will continue to have a positive impact on my leadership abilities, along with the leadership abilities of those around me. I found the program partially relevant to those of us from specialist backgrounds, as the program has a focus on skills to transition from being a technical expert towards being able to strategically influence and effectively drive change. I am particularly grateful for my increased abilities to exert influence especially across organisational boundaries.



Lisa Mazzella

Senior Policy Officer, Strategic Policy and Programs – Water, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, WA

I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity to join the IWC leadership program. I feel like I've learned a new language and this is the beginning of a lifetime of learning. ... The program is excellent. It is very well designed, based on high-quality research, and I would highly recommend it to anyone who wants to build leadership skills.

More information

For up-to-date information:

- Visit our website: <https://watercentre.org/courses/water-leadership-program/>
- Or contact the program coordinator:

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