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Being announced as the 2016 NSW Operator of the Year at the WOIA conference in Newcastle was a great honour and special thanks goes to the NSW Water Directorate for sponsoring this annual award.

I would also like to thank my fellow three water operators who make up our team and our supervisor who has confidence in our abilities and allows us to demonstrate improved treatment and efficiency of our treatment processes.

The award allowed the winner to join a WIOA tour of New Zealand water and sewer treatment facilities and to attend the WOIA New Zealand conference, as well as receiving a perpetual and personal trophy.

My tour commenced on Friday 29 April, arriving in Auckland and meeting seven other operators, George Wall, WIOA Executive Officer and Damian Lawson our New Zealand tour guide. For the next five days, every day was "full on" visiting various water and sewer treatment plants, and some of the knowledge I acquired will be put in place at my own plant including WHS and work procedures. Treatment plants visited included the Ardmore Water Treatment Plant capable of producing 350ML a day and supplying two thirds of Auckland's water and the Rosedale Wastewater Treatment Plant which provides up to 80% of the plant's energy requirements.



*Rosedale Waste Water Treatment Plant*

The tour group also visited the Whangarei Waste Water Treatment Plant and Water Treatment Plants, the Paihia Water Treatment Plant, the Nui Water Treatment Plant, and we caught a ferry across to Russell Island to visit the Russell Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Of personal interest was our cultural experience in Waipoua which has some of the best examples of kauri forest remaining in New Zealand. Our Maori hosts introduced us to their culture and invited us into their family. They took us to a sacred beach fishing location and barbecue and cooked us up a hangi for dinner one night. What a great experience. I will never forget my time with them!!!



*WIOA tour group at Tane Mahuta, Waipoua*

The NZ tour culminated with the WIOA conference in Auckland; a chance to network with fellow water industry operators and trade delegates and to listen to papers presented by fellow operators, and to acknowledge award winners in the NZ water industry.

Finally, I would like to again thank the NSW Water Directorate for sponsoring this award and George Wall from WIOA and Damian Lawson our tour guide for organising such a well planned and enjoyable tour.

I would also like to thank our hosts WIOA and our fellow NZ operators who took time out to show us around their plants.

I had a great time, learnt a lot; let's do it again.

Thank you

Mark Gogala