

## **DIVISION 66: INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS -**

### *Supplementary Information No 22*

*Question: Hon Murray Criddle asked for information about outcomes in relation environmental health needs surveys.*

*Answer:* In 1997 a Western Australian Environmental Health Needs Survey (EHNS) was commissioned by the Environmental Health Needs Coordinating Committee (EHNCC).

The EHNCC is the peak coordinating body in Aboriginal environmental health in Western Australia. Member agencies consist of the Department of Indigenous Affairs, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Department of Health, the Department of Housing and Infrastructure, the Western Australian Local Government Association and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

The EHNS identifies and compiles data on seven key environmental health indicators, and is the most comprehensive profile ever produced on Western Australia's Aboriginal communities.

It has achieved Australia-wide recognition as the national benchmark in capturing information on environmental health conditions in Aboriginal communities. The survey collected data from 259 discrete Aboriginal communities in the following environmental health areas: water; electricity; housing; sanitation (sewage disposal and ablution/laundry facilities); solid waste disposal; dust; dog control.

The report *Environmental Health Needs of Aboriginal Communities in Western Australia*, was published from the EHNS data in 1998. This report provides, in a single document, data for use by Commonwealth, State and local government agencies.

This single source ensures that existing resources can be used to their maximum benefit and that they are targeted more effectively to help those communities with the highest priority needs.

The report has been circulated widely to Aboriginal and government decision-making bodies at Commonwealth, State and regional levels to assist in their planning processes. For the first time decision makers from various government agencies are using the same data source for planning and priority setting.

### *Program Information*

Complementing the EHNS are numerous State and ATSIC environmental health initiatives and programs aimed at eliminating sub-standard living conditions in Aboriginal communities. These include:

- Development of a *Code of Practice for Housing and Environmental Infrastructure Development in Aboriginal Communities in Western Australia*

- Consolidation and expansion of the Environmental Health Officer network in selected local government districts with high numbers of remote Aboriginal communities

- Production of an Aboriginal Environmental Health Worker promotional video

- Community Town Layout Program

- Aboriginal Communities Strategic Investment Program

- Management Support Program

- National Aboriginal Health Strategy

- The Remote Area Essential Services Program

- Town Reserve Regularisation Program

- Bilateral Negotiations on Aerodromes and Roads

- Energy Efficiency Education Package

Detailed information on these programs can be provided by the Department of Indigenous Affairs on request.

### *Measuring Progress*

The extent to which government has addressed the priority environmental health needs identified through the 1997 EHNS has been documented in two subsequent reviews. The reviews show progress in all seven environmental health indicators.

The graph below shows the number of communities in which identified priority needs have been met.

*The Proposed 2002/03 Survey*

Since the 1997 EHNS, ATSIC has commissioned a national Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS). This survey was conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1999 and 2001. The EHNCC has conducted an analysis of the CHINS to identify whether the survey meets the information requirements of the EHNCC for its role in across-government program coordination and priority setting.

Results of the CHINS analysis indicate this survey does not meet the needs of the EHNCC. Issues surrounding survey methodology and data accuracy have persuaded the EHNCC that another Western Australian EHNS type survey is the best way forward.

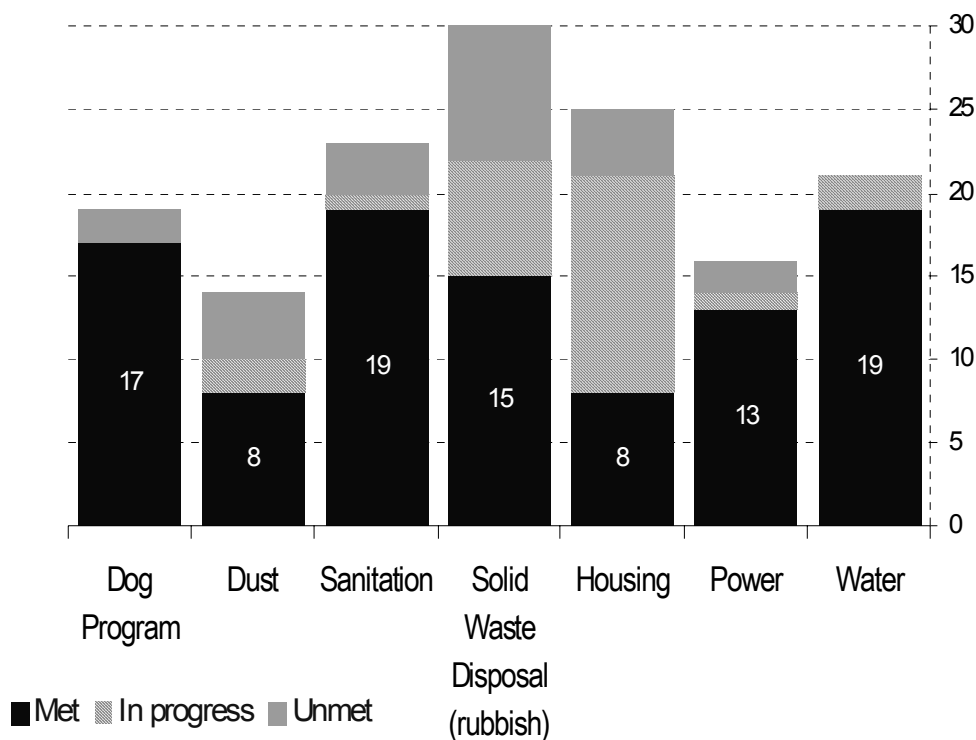
The advantages of conducting another EHNS include:

The survey can be specifically focussed on identifying those communities with priority environmental health needs and informing program coordination and resource allocation;

Surveyors for the EHNS will be environmental health officers (EHO's) working in shires and public health units. These EHO's visit communities regularly and are best placed to gather relevant information with minimal disruption to the community.

The EHNCC will be seeking to conduct the next EHNS in 2002/03. This will be used to: measure progress, identify service delivery gaps, target existing resources, lobby for new resources and improve across-government coordination

*Progress in achieving Commonwealth/State priorities, 1997-2000*



It should be noted that this information also assists agencies to identify areas where progress has been less satisfactory (e.g. solid waste disposal), and to adjust programs accordingly.

*Question: Hon Derrick Tomlinson asked -*

- (1) *How many district offices operated throughout the State in financial year 2001 - 02?*
- (2) *Where were they located?*
- (3) *How many FTE personnel were employed in each of those offices in financial year 2001-02?*
- (4) *Is it anticipated there will be any change in the number of Local Area Coordinators, district offices, of FTE's employed in district offices, in financial year 2002-03?*

*Answer:*

- (1) 22

- (2)-(3) Location of the offices and their budgeted FTEs were: Kalgoorlie, 5; Laverton, 1; Katanning, 1; Albany, 6; Bunbury, 2; Mandurah, 1; Fremantle, 4; Armadale, 4; Midland, 6; Northam, 1; Merredin, 1; Carnarvon, 1; Geraldton, 6; Meekatharra, 3; Fitzroy Crossing, 1; Halls Creek, 2; Broome, 4; Derby, 4; Kununurra, 2; Onslow, 1; South Hedland, 6; and Newman, 1.
- (4) A review of the regional office network is currently being undertaken. A pilot review of the Goldfields regional network is under way and it would be premature to pre-empt the outcomes.