

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES, WATER SUPPLIES

2243. Hon TOM STEPHENS to the Minister for Transport representing the Minister for Water Resources:

A federal parliamentary inquiry has called for all indigenous communities to be provided with drinkable water by 2003 and a separate study released on June 7 2000 found Aboriginal women were 11 times more likely to be hospitalised for kidney failure than non-indigenous women.

- (1) Can a table be provided of –
 - (a) the number of Aboriginal communities which regularly do not have access to potable water; and
 - (b) the number of days they regularly do not have access?
- (2) What steps are in place to address this situation – including what liaison is occurring with the Federal Government?
- (3) What is the cost of providing a continuous supply of potable water to each of these communities?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE replied:

- (1) Aboriginal communities are identified by the Aboriginal Affairs Department as those that meet minimum criteria:

Population – a usual population of at least 50 people.

Permanency of residency – 75 per cent of the population should be in residence for 9 months of the year.

Level and standard of infrastructure – at least 5 domestic dwellings should be established with power, water and waste water systems connected and to a standard acceptable to State energy and water regulatory bodies.

Land tenure – secure land tenure – or agreed to be granted.

Special circumstances – communities that do not meet the above but can demonstrate good reason why they should receive maintenance funding may be considered for addition to the maintenance funding may be considered for addition to the maintenance schedule eg demonstrated environmental health risk; proximity to other serviced communities or special needs of residents, such as aged population.

Through the Remote Area Essential Services Program 62 Aboriginal communities currently receive repairs and maintenance from the State.

- (a) Remote Aboriginal communities are identified as those meeting the above criteria, they receive potable water under either the State RAESP or through support provided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.
 - (b) ATSIC provide 15 smaller groups who do not yet have permanent infrastructure in place with repair and maintenance to essential services.
- (2) The Commonwealth, ATSIC and AAD are currently negotiating a State/Commonwealth agreement for the transfer of these smaller communities to the State program once the infrastructure of essential services has been brought up to meet minimum criteria.
- (3) The RAESP combined contracts for water and electrical maintenance to achieve efficiencies in service. This contract was put out to tender and costs cannot be separated to attribute proportions to either water or power.

See paper No 122 for communities funded by the State and the Commonwealth under ATSIC.