



Thursday, 7 June 2012

NSW Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program wins twice at the NSW Aboriginal Health Awards

The NSW Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program was announced a winner in the Healthy Lifestyles category at the 2012 Aboriginal Health Awards as well as receiving the prestigious Minister's Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Health recently in Sydney.

NSW Water Commissioner, David Harriss, said that the program is a state-wide whole-of-government initiative with Aboriginal communities, to address systemic problems faced with the operation and maintenance of drinking water supplies and wastewater disposal.

"While many people in NSW take the provision of clean water and sewerage services for granted, many remote communities, especially Aboriginal communities do not have that experience," Mr Harriss said.

The NSW Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program is a unique partnership between the NSW Government, and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and represents an investment of \$200 million.

The program is managed by the NSW Office of Water and provides support to communities and Local Aboriginal Land Councils in the treatment and distribution of drinking water and the collection, treatment and disposal of sewage.

"Significantly, the program involves three way agreements between NSW government, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and water utilities, most of who are local councils, and who traditionally supply these services to the rest of rural NSW."

"The provision of safe drinking water and the appropriate disposal of wastewater are among the most effective strategies for reducing communicable diseases."

"This program ensures that remote Aboriginal communities receive quality water supply and sewerage services, similar to those in the wider rural community."

Mr Harriss said that 2012/13 funding would be directed to capital upgrades, backlog works, emergency works and routine operation and maintenance at up to 62 discrete Aboriginal communities across NSW.

Major capital projects will be water and sewerage upgrades at Namoi Village and Gingie Reserve at Walgett and Mallee and Warrali Mission at Wilcannia.

"I'm delighted that this worthwhile program has received such recognition," said Mr Harriss.

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