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media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Bourke community's sewerage system in urgent need of repair

Monday, March 22, 2010

State Government agencies were congratulated today for facilitating emergency repairs to the leaking sewerage systems in the tiny Aboriginal Alice Edwards Village community at Bourke – but warned emergency repairs were but a stop-gap measure to an appalling health hazard.

“The community’s sewerage system needs to be upgraded properly. What is happening there at the moment is a disgrace,” said the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council’s North West Region representative, Councillor Steve Gordon today.

“Sewerage is coming up through toilets in some people’s houses,” Councillor Gordon said.

“This has been partially caused by the amount of rain that has fallen in recent times combined with the fact that sewage pipes are in a state of general disrepair”.

Councillor Gordon said he wanted to thank the Bourke Aboriginal Community Working Party had helped the community organise a tradesman to begin carrying out emergency repairs.

The CEO of the community’s Nulla Nulla Local Aboriginal Land Council, Mr George Orcher, said the community totally supported Councillor Gordon’s criticism.

“Yes we welcomed the emergency repairs over the weekend and today, but it just can’t end there.

“We have inherited houses in a general state of disrepair and the township’s water and sewerage systems are in urgent need of upgrade.

“Our community begs the State Government, through the joint NSWALC/State Government Aboriginal Water and Sewerage Program to investigate lifting the community’s profile in terms of bringing forward the date for any planned improvements to our water and sewerage systems”.

Councillor Gordon said he would make urgent representations on the community's behalf by requesting that it be given a higher priority under the program.

"I know this is difficult as 60 discreet Aboriginal communities are to gain improvements under this history-making program.

"I know other communities are in the same boat.

"But things can't go on as they are. Overflowing sewerage in other parts of the community is a direct health hazard. It has been a problem that has existed for many years – a problem that needs to be fixed".

Further information: Peter Windsor 0400 554603 or George Orcher 0438 722351