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media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Long wait for decent water nearly over, says Land Councillor

6 May, 2010

The long wait by three small New South Wales North Coast communities to get a decent water supply was almost over – and not before time, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council’s North Coast representative, Councillor Patricia Laurie, said today.

“I’m told a long awaited new water treatment plant that will service the community will be opening in the next month or so,” Councillor Laurie said.

“One of the main beneficiaries will be the 160-strong Aboriginal community of Muli Muli but the nearby villages of Urbenville and Woodenbong will also get improved water supplies.

“The Muli Muli community –and the other communities – have put up with a water supply with unacceptable bacteria levels and high sediment levels for far too long,” Councillor Laurie said.

“Until the new water plant comes on line there is the ongoing public health risk because of the non-potable water supply with the Health Department having to regularly work with the community to minimize that risk.”

Councillor Laurie said everyone knew that because of the water content community members had to regularly buy new electric appliances such as kettles or water jugs.

“Community member said the elements burned out every two years or so”.

Muli Muli Local Aboriginal Land Council CEO, Matthew Green, said the community and nearby villages had been working with both Kyogle and Tenterfield Shire Councils for several years to finally see the point where the new water treatment plant was almost ready to open.

“When this happens it will overcome our problems,” Mr Green said.

“We have now formally handed over operational responsibility of our water and sewerage systems to Kyogle Shire Council. I think we are one of the first LALC ‘s in the State to do so.

“We now have a solid working relationship with the Kyogle Shire Council. Our community can’t wait to get a decent water supply,” he said.

Direct State Government grant assistance had helped to fund the building of the new water treatment plant through the Aboriginal Communities Development Program. The State Government, in conjunction with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, have also introduced a jointly funded Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program to ensure that improved water and sewerage services are extended to Muli Muli and other discrete Aboriginal communities across the State.

Councillor Laurie said the scheme, now in its second year, would see water and sewerage systems improved in 60 discrete Aboriginal communities as a result of the more than \$200 million dollar, 25 year-long program.

A number of these communities are in her North Coast Region.

“It should be remembered that the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council is contributing half of the \$200 million cost from its own funds to make this program possible,” Councillor Laurie said.

“However, thousands of Aboriginal people will benefit from this initiative”.

Further information: Peter Windsor 0400 554603 or Matthew Green on 66351487.