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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

One started, four to go, says Land Councillor

24 February 2010

The New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council's (NSWALC) Western Region representative, Councillor William Murray, said today he was delighted that work had begun in one of the five Western Region communities to benefit under the joint NSWALC/State Government Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program.

"This is a 25 year long, \$200 million initiative with NSWALC committing \$100 million dollars of its own money to make sure it happened," Councillor Murray stressed.

"Overall, 60 discrete Aboriginal communities will benefit – five of them in my Region".

They are:

Balranald Reserve, Balranald
Malee and Warrali Mission, Wilcannia
Namtjira Avenue and
New Merinee, Dareton

Councillor Murray said the first community to benefit was Warrali Mission, near Wilcannia.

"The community's septic tanks are in urgent need of desludging," Councillor Murray said. "The worst affected has now been cleared and other basic maintenance work completed," he said.

A proposal for the desludging of the remaining septic tanks was now under consideration.

Councillor Murray said the joint, \$200 million program was a history-making initiative.

"It was also one of the most courageous decisions NSWALC's elected arm has taken," he said.

"But it was an easy decision to make.

“It will improve health outcomes for thousands of Aboriginal people across the State.

“Already, 21 communities have had improvements carried out to their water and sewerage systems.

“It’s simple. To ‘Close the Gap’, the water and sewerage infrastructure our communities had to be brought up to acceptable levels for the sake of our families

“It is an investment in our future”.

Councillor Murray said over time, the 60 discreet Aboriginal communities to benefit under the program would enjoy water and sewerage systems at the same standard as those enjoyed by the rest of the community.

“And not before time,” he concluded.

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