



# Poor housing, too many dogs a health hazard for communities

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Poor housing and overcrowding are the main health concerns of almost 70 per cent of the remote Aboriginal communities surveyed as part of a major new Government report.

The report, released yesterday, found substandard living conditions continued in many of the 232 remote WA communities surveyed over 2007 and 2008.

It reveals 80 per cent of the communities rely on bores for their drinking water, while 77 per cent rely on generators for power.

Seventy-five of the communities had experienced periods when their rubbish had not been collected and in some communities there were an estimated 200 car bodies.

The report found 29 per cent of communities had inadequate fencing around sewage lagoons.

The report raises concerns about the health risks for residents living in communities with many dogs. It reveals that in one community with a population of 800, there were an estimated 600 dogs.

The East Pilbara region recorded the highest number of dogs, with an average of 92 in each of its six communities. But the 280-page report identifies a number of communities in other regions that had between 100 and 180 dogs. A number of communities did not have a dog management program.

The Environmental Health Needs Survey report was compiled by



Substandard: Housing in many of WA's remote Aboriginal communities is substandard, according to a new report.

bureaucrats from service delivery agencies in all three tiers of government.

Communities in the Broome and Goldfields-Esperance regions had the highest level of residents reporting that their housing was unsatisfactory.

The report found 83 communities had a regular population of 50 or more residents, while the other 149 surveyed were smaller. Thirty-five per

cent of communities reported unsatisfactory water supplies, while 62 per cent raised diabetes as a serious concern. According to the report, substance abuse was the highest risk factor, recorded in 36 per cent of communities. About 30 per cent of communities indicated that their sewerage system did not meet their needs.

Indigenous Affairs Minister Kim Hames said he was pleased to see that

efforts to improve living conditions in communities were having an effect, but acknowledged much more remained to be done.

"The programs put in place to improve services city dwellers take for granted, like access to potable water and reliable electricity supply, need to continue and it is only through sustained co-operation we will achieve the desired results," he said.

## REPORT CARD

80 per cent of communities rely on bores for their drinking water

35 per cent reported unsatisfactory water supplies

77 per cent are not connected to town electricity supply and rely on generators

69 per cent reported poor housing and overcrowding as their main health concerns

36 per cent said substance abuse was the highest risk factor in their community

33 per cent had experienced a time where rubbish was not collected

29 per cent had inadequate fencing around sewage lagoons

SOURCE: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEEDS SURVEY



Risk: One community has 600 dogs.