



# Resilient Families; Strong Communities

## Essential and Municipal Services Upgrade Program

---

### Why are changes underway for remote Aboriginal communities?

There is a significant gap between the life outcomes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Western Australia. The gap is most acute in remote areas.

In many remote Aboriginal communities, poor living conditions negatively affect the health of residents, and their participation in school and work.

The State Government's view, outlined in the [Resilient Families; Strong Communities](#) roadmap, is that living conditions in regional and remote areas must improve through mutual accountability between households, communities and government.

Improved living conditions will provide a better foundation of family wellbeing and childhood development.

### What is the Essential and Municipal Services Upgrade Program?

The Essential and Municipal Services Upgrade Program is a major initiative of the State Government's regional services reform and one of 10 priority actions in the [Resilient Families; Strong Communities](#) roadmap.

The State Government will progressively upgrade infrastructure in larger remote Aboriginal communities to enable the delivery of improved power, water and wastewater services, and municipal services such as road maintenance and rubbish collection.

Residents will be required to pay household usage charges, as occurs elsewhere in the State.

### Which communities are participating in the program?

The State Government has identified the first 10 remote Aboriginal communities to participate in the Essential and Municipal Services Upgrade Program.

The communities are in the Kimberley and Pilbara, where the majority of remote Aboriginal residents live. They are:

Kimberley - Ardyaloon, Bayulu, Beagle Bay, Bidyadanga, Djarindjin, Lombadina, Mowanjum, Warmun

Pilbara - Wakathuni, Yandeyarra

Collectively, these 10 communities comprise more than 20 per cent of the total population of remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia.

### **How were the communities identified?**

The first 10 communities to participate in the Essential and Municipal Services Upgrade Program were selected based on principles outlined in the State Government's [Resilient Families; Strong Communities](#) roadmap.

These principles include strong community leadership on education and employment, business or work opportunities, the capacity for the community to be used as a service hub and no natural limitations on growth.

### **Were the communities consulted about their involvement?**

The Regional Services Reform Unit consulted with leaders and council members of each of the communities to discuss the program; what it means for their community; and to confirm their interest in participating.

Each of the 10 communities has agreed to continue discussions with the State Government about its participation in the program.

### **How will the program be funded?**

The State Government has committed an initial \$52 million Royalties for Regions funding to the program for 2017-18 to 2019-20. This comprises \$2 million for planning and scoping and \$50 million for capital works.

Program funding beyond 2019-20 will be determined in future State Government budgets.

### **When will the program begin?**

Planning and scoping of the upgrades for each of the first 10 communities will take place in 2017-18, with capital works to start in 2018-19.

### **Will existing State Government support continue for remote communities?**

The State Government currently provides support for essential and municipal service delivery in 165 remote Aboriginal communities via:

- supply and distribution of electricity to 14 large communities by Horizon Power
- Remote Area Essential Services Program (RAESP) managed by the Housing Authority. RAESP has been operating since 1999 and covers 81 remote communities
- Municipal and Essential Services Program (MUNS) managed by the Housing Authority. MUNS has been operating in 165 communities (including the 81 RAESP communities) since July 2015 following Commonwealth Government transfer of responsibility for MUNS to the State

The existing support for these communities will continue. The State Government has committed RAESP and MUNS funding for 2017-18 and 2018-19.

**What are the next steps?**

The Regional Services Reform Unit will start working with the first 10 communities to develop a plan for each community for the upgrades.

A multi-agency State Government steering committee will be established in 2017 to oversee the program.

**Will other remote Aboriginal communities be able to participate in the program?**

Yes, this is a long-term program that will see the State Government work to meet minimum standards for essential and municipal services in larger communities over time.