



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 257

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Water Resources, Hon Joshua Burgoyne MLA:

Remote Drinking Water

1. The measure “proportion of days safe drinking water is supplied across the 72 Indigenous essential services communities” is reported in Budget Paper No. 3 under the Indigenous essential services output of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development (DHLGCD). Which agency is responsible for the quality of drinking water supplied to those communities, and which for its supply?

The quality and supply of water are joint responsibilities of the DHLGCD and Power and Water Corporation (PWC). The Department of Health (DoH) regulates drinking water quality.

2. Budget Paper No. 3 for 2026-27 reports, under the Indigenous essential services output of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development, the measure “proportion of days safe drinking water is supplied across the 72 Indigenous essential services communities” at an estimate of 99 percent for 2025-26 against a target of at least 95 percent.
 - a. Does that measure record whether the water supplied met the health-based guideline values in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, or only whether a supply was maintained?
 - b. In how many of the 72 communities did drinking water exceed a health-based guideline value in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines at any point in 2025-26? Please provide by community and by parameter or, if a per-community figure cannot be provided, the number of communities and the parameters concerned.
 - c. Is a day on which the water supplied exceeded a health-based guideline value counted as a day on which safe drinking water was supplied?

- d. Which agency holds the water quality monitoring results for those communities, in which system, and are they published?
- e. What is the current number of communities in which drinking water does not meet the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, and how does that compare with each of the three preceding years?

This is a question for DHLGCD.

- 3. **When will a Safe Drinking Water Act be introduced and implemented?**

This is a question for DoH.

- 4. **What immediate steps is the Government taking to improve access to safe drinking water in remote communities?**
 - a. For each community in which drinking water does not currently meet the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, what remedial work is funded in 2026-27, and by what date is it expected to be complete?
 - b. If remedial work is not programmed community by community, at what level is it programmed?

This is a question for DoH, DHLGCD and PWC.

- 5. **Budget Paper No. 3 for 2026-27 records the water resources output at \$18.884 million revised for 2025-26 and \$13.585 million budgeted for 2026-27 and states at note 7 that the decrease “is mostly due to timing of Commonwealth milestone payments and finalisation of the Territory Water Plan”.**
 - a. **What amount of the 2026-27 water resources output is allocated to implementing the Territory Water Plan and what implementation activities does it fund?**

The Territory Water Plan received funding of \$13.5 million over three years commencing in 2023-24 and ceasing in 2025-26. This was spread across water, health and housing portfolios providing a boost in resourcing needed to kickstart water security initiatives.

No specific allocation within the 2026-27 water resources output is allocated to implementation of the Territory Water Plan. NT Government agencies and PWC will continue to deliver water security projects in line with core business activities.

b. How does finalisation of the Plan reduce the funding required to implement it?

There is no new funding allocated for implementing the Plan. The Plan kick-started water security initiatives for delivery over three years, and further implementation of initiatives under the Plan have now concluded.

c. Note 5 records that “The former water resources and water security outputs have been combined, and figures have been backcast”. What was the water security output in each of the three years to 2025-26 as originally reported?

The water security output reported for 2025-26 was \$2.308 million, in 2024-25 was \$3.521 million and in 2023-24 was \$1.565 million.

The water security output previously reported was being delivered by the Office of Water Security (OWS), within DLPE which stood up to develop and implement the Territory Water Plan. The OWS has now been wound up and key activities including strategic water policy are being delivered by the Water Resources Division, DLPE.