

July 3 2017

Dear QPC,

Of relevance to your current Inquiry into service delivery to remote Indigenous communities, I am pleased to submit a copy of a new discussion paper from The University of Queensland on 'Water, sanitation and hygiene in remote Indigenous Australian communities: A scan of priorities' (attached and [here](#)). It was undertaken as a collaboration with WaterAid and in response to our question of whether UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 is yet achieved in Australia. A companion article is published in [theconversation.com](#) today, entitled [Indigenous girls missing school during their periods: the state of hygiene in remote Australia](#). It is released today in recognition of NAIDOC Week and the celebration of Australian Indigenous culture- while acknowledging more action is required to ensure all Australians have access to a high quality of health and life.

This is the fourth SDG discussion paper from UQ in the Water for Equity and Wellbeing Series. This paper was created because, in remote Indigenous communities in Australia, the 'familiar story' of poor water, sanitation and hygiene-related health challenges continues– despite documentation of this situation over the past thirty years. The representatives interviewed for this scan strongly recommended that this story no longer continue:

'This is not new stuff. You know, you can look back and do some research for decades and what I'm telling you today is what was being said 20 years ago, so it's not like any of this is new' ([NGO representative #1](#)).

In parallel, they also called for water, sanitation and health-related hygiene providers to raise their expectations for the standard of these services in all Australian locations– including remote communities:

'Non-indigenous people who go out to communities quickly lower their expectations to what's the prevailing norm ... You're in Australia now, so the benchmark is an urban [clinic] in Darwin or Sydney' ([Research representative #2](#)).

In response, this discussion paper presents a scan of the current status of water, sanitation and hygiene services and challenges in remote Australian Indigenous communities. It was conducted to make explicit the challenges requiring attention and to propose questions to stimulate discussion as to how various stakeholders can respond to these challenges. It was guided by examples of initiatives that have improved WASH services and behaviours.

This paper is provided with the intention of opening a discussion. Please feel free to circulate to your colleagues where relevant. If this topic is of interest to you, I am happy to arrange a meeting with the contributing authors and partners to discuss further actions, collaborations and research.

Yours sincerely,

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