

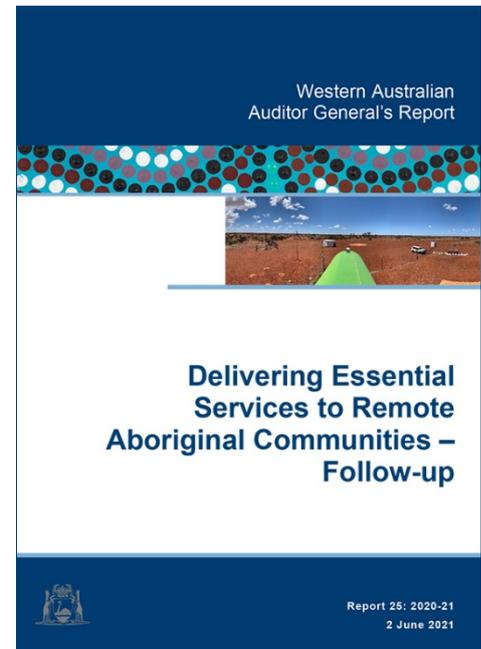
# Snapshot:

## Delivering Essential Services to Remote Aboriginal Communities – Follow-up

2 June 2021

### What we looked at

- Has the Department of Communities improved the delivery of power, water and wastewater services to remote Aboriginal communities, since our last report in 2015?
- The Department is responsible for delivering essential services to around 12,000 people (13% of WA's Aboriginal population) in 140 remote communities and spends around \$80m a year on its delivery program. It has taken over responsibility for around 60 remote communities from the Commonwealth since 2015.
- We focused particularly on drinking water quality because this can represent a critical risk to the health of people in communities and was identified as a significant shortcoming in 2015.



### What we found

- Power and water supplies were more reliable, wastewater services were more consistently monitored, and more communities had consistently safe water supplies.
- But 37 communities we looked at in 2015 still had water that did not meet Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and in 44 of the smallest communities (all formerly-Commonwealth-managed) the water is not being tested for microbes and may pose health risks.
- Better service coordination had begun in 10 communities and contract management had improved but repeated contract extensions had risked poor value for money.
- How the Department decides what services communities receive is not transparent and the performance of essential services is not publicly reported.
- The Department has clarified its roles and responsibilities, focusing on larger communities while smaller communities will be largely self-managed.

### What the Department should do

1. Address public health risks by testing water quality regularly in all REMS communities.
2. Improve transparency and governance of REMS by reporting on performance and eligibility criteria.
3. Ensure sustainability of essential services, based on risk and priority for investment.
4. Ensure value for money for its contracts.