

## **‘The tyranny of distance’ - challenges of infrastructure delivery in remote Indigenous communities**

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There are 72 remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory (NT) with populations ranging from 100 to 2,700 people that are serviced by NT Government infrastructure, including power and water supply and waste and sewer disposal under the Indigenous Essential Services Agreement. In 2017 the NT Government committed to \$1.1b funding for remote indigenous housing (over 10 years) which has also been matched by the Federal Government. With the construction of new housing, new and upgraded services and infrastructure is also required as communities grow. Some remote Local Councils in the NT manage infrastructure in an area larger than Tasmania, with very small populations.

Design and delivery of Infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities is a very different process to delivery of urban infrastructure and has unique challenges due to community ‘remoteness’, availability of project resources, materials and plant and the project environment and climate.

Some remote communities get cut off via road annually in the NT’s wet season, reducing access to via air only (or sea if the community is on the coast) and severely limiting the possibility for development, construction and maintenance of infrastructure. Access limitations can also result in large costs to a project for contract management, inspections and testing (requiring charter flights), and with limited or no accommodation available for project staff, longer visits require significant forward planning.

Tonkin has been involved in the design and management of remote community infrastructure through our local Darwin office for the past ten years. This paper will give a background to infrastructure delivery in remote indigenous communities and discuss some of the unique challenges using real Tonkin project examples and the innovative ways that challenges have been overcome.

### References:

NT Department of Housing and Community Development (2017) Indigenous Community Engineering Guidelines for Remote Communities in the NT, Darwin, NT.