



## TRANSCRIPT

**DATE:** Friday, June 13, 2008  
**TIME:** 10.06AM  
**PROGRAM:** ABC REG – NW Mornings (MILLS)  
**SUBJECT:** MURRAY – Water problems in Bayulu

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VANESSA MILLS

A small Government school in the Kimberley has been without clean, running water for nearly three months. There are 120 children at the Bayulu Remote Community School, south of Fitzroy Crossing. They've been forced to use bottled water to wash their hands and teeth because the school tank is contaminated. Staff are using baby wipes to clean children's hands after activities.

The Bayulu community's been beset with water problems from its bore for some time now. Residents complain of constant low pressure and the aging tank often running dry. This week the problem's been exacerbated by constant power outages in the line from Fitzroy Crossing township, which stops the bore. It then has to be restarted by an electrician.

Bayulu chairman Peter Murray says he's made constant requests to Government departments to have the community's water supply fixed.

PETER MURRAY

Well, we've had a lot of complaints with our houses not...without water pressure and my house, like, it doesn't, it doesn't have any water pressure. I can't even water the lawns properly, you know. And it's hard to even to wash your car, or shower, like it trickles.

We've got a system where it's a slow hot water system and it's...you can only just have it on hot, you can't have any cold in it because there's no pressure anyway on it, you know. And, yeah, it just trickles.

VANESSA MILLS

And Peter what are other families experiencing and how does it affect them?

PETER MURRAY

It's a...yeah, it affects them in a big way, you know, like kids need to go to school, they need to be up on time and some of the families have got a big family, with shower trickling and to get kids on time to go to school, you'll find it hard to try and get everyone to have a shower in the morning. Every kid, everyone for work. I've had a number of complaints from the community... people in the community say, yeah, they don't have any water pressure. Sometimes they don't have any water in the houses, you know.

Once the tank drops some houses miss out on water. We do have a dialysis machine occupied by one occupant here at Bayulu and that machine needs water and without water it doesn't work... without power we don't have water to work.

VANESSA MILLS

And your water problem's been compounded just recently, because the power, which you get from Fitzroy Crossing, from the town power, kept going on and off, didn't it?

PETER MURRAY

We've had numerous blackouts during the week, four nights in a row and that stopped our bore up one morning. On Wednesday morning we had no water because of power cuts and our bores had to be reset back to normal so we could pump more water back in the tanks.

VANESSA MILLS

So the town actually ran dry?

PETER MURRAY

Bayulu ran dry that morning so we didn't have any water. Kids couldn't have breakfast on time. Some parents had to look around for water, see if anybody got spare water, bottles lying around, full bottles. And yeah, to get their kids to school, you know.

VANESSA MILLS

Peter, what do you see as the solution to this ongoing problem and who should fix it?

PETER MURRAY

Well, the Government should maybe have a look at it. Send someone up and maybe give us some funding to put up some... tanks on stilts so we could have better water pressure and our bore down the bottom doesn't have an alarm... where it goes off, so it doesn't have an alarm that can notify people that it's off. The only thing...only time we find out that we don't have any water is when no water is coming through the taps. It's too late.

VANESSA MILLS

Peter Murray, the chairman of Bayulu community to the south of Fitzroy Crossing.

The Department of Housing and Works says that, as of yesterday, it's commissioned a new bore pump that automatically restarts after a power outage.

End...  
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## TRANSCRIPT

**DATE:** Friday, June 13, 2008

**TIME:** 10.11AM

**PROGRAM:** ABC REGIONAL – NW Mornings (MILLS)

**SUBJECT:** **GISBORNE – Water problems at Bayulu School**

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VANESSA MILLS

For the Bayulu Remote Community School, a Government school, the water crisis is much more severe. The school has its own tank connected to the community supply which has been contaminated. Since March staff and students have been forced to use bottled water.

The Department of Education issued a statement to me this morning that says, 'The responsibility of the Department of Education and Training is to provide education to school-aged children. We rely on other agencies to maintain the facilities and services in our schools. We are working with the Department of Housing and Works to find a long-term solution to the issues of supplying water to Bayulu Remote Community School'.

Anne Gisborne is the state president of the School Teachers' Union. [Greetings not transcribed.]

Would this be allowed to happen in a Perth school? Thirteen weeks without potable water?

ANNE GISBORNE

I think the picture that Peter has created has been a pretty clear picture of unsatisfactory and substandard living conditions for the community generally. And of course our teachers and administrators up there are living in that community. So that's part of their, you know, daily life. But also, he touched upon the impact in school. It's interfering with the attendance of students at school, it's also...appears to be impacting on the capacity of families to have their children ready for school, in...completed breakfast, clean and so on.

I think, you know, this is a disgrace that this should be happening and, yes, certainly I very much doubt that we would see a metropolitan school sitting for 13 weeks with children having to get access to fresh water through bottled water, for teachers to have

to complete various lessons by using baby wipes to clean hands and keep hygiene levels satisfactory.

VANESSA MILLS

Can you elaborate a bit more on some of the problems that this school has had to cope with? How are they managing this?

ANNE GISBORNE

Well, obviously Peter has indicated that there is an impact on attendance, both in terms of children being there at the commencement of school, but also potentially in terms of the hygiene levels when they come to school. And also whether they've had breakfast or not, and we know that there is a connection between good eating and breakfast and being prepared and how you can engage in teaching and learning. So that must be a concern for the parents and also for the teachers.

The fact that teachers obviously have to take a much closer overview of ensuring that the hygiene aspect, such as washing your hands after you've been to the toilet, and so on, have to be followed up is something that then distracts from their capacity to engage the children in teaching and learning.

I would imagine that bottled water and the purchase of hand wipes and so on is costing the school. So that's taking resources that...money that could be spent on other resources are now having to be spent on basic hygiene matters.

The worry, the level of worry for the teachers, I think, is significant in that school and also, of course, they as well are suffering from difficulties in accessing fresh water in their own home in their private lives.

VANESSA MILLS

Working in a remote community can be difficult at the best of times. I wonder what this is doing to staff morale?

ANNE GISBORNE

Well, I would think that the feedback that we've had at the moment the staff morale is being impacted upon. These are a group of people working in a school in conditions... the department is responsible for them and whilst, yes, it might be accurate that the responsibility for keeping these facilities up to speed is with another department, surely, surely the department has a responsibility to make sure that those departments follow through. It is not good enough to say, that's the responsibility of someone else and you let your staff and the students that you're supposed to be providing good quality education for, subject to 13 years...13 weeks of lack of fresh water.

VANESSA MILLS

What's your reaction to the statement that the Department of Education and Training issued this morning?

ANNE GISBORNE

Well I think it's disappointing. I'm certainly hoping that taking this out to the public domain will actually put the pressure on the department to deal with this matter immediately. It...it, they're (inaudible) right, yes, the key role that they have a responsibility is the provision of good quality education for students. But we're already seeing from the comments that Peter made, children aren't coming prepared for school, they haven't had a healthy breakfast, they're late for school and they may well...they've got hygiene problems.

These are impacting on the capacity of these children to fully engage. Once that's occurring then of course they do have a responsibility to follow up. They also have staff that they've got responsibility for and it would appear that their staff are also living in unsatisfactory and substandard living conditions at the moment.

VANESSA MILLS

I believe staff at the school have set a deadline for this problem to be fixed and it's week one of term three and that's in about a month's time, I think. Is that reasonable to set deadlines and possibly affect school operations in that way?

ANNE GISBORNE

Well I think it is. I think what we actually have here is the makings of an occupation, safety and health issue. And it could well be that there are illnesses occurring, being spread amongst the school community as a consequence of the lack of access to running fresh water. I think it's fair for these teachers in terms of making a professional judgement that they cannot get on and provide a good quality education as they would like to, because it's been interfered with by the impact of the lack of access to this fresh running water.

VANESSA MILLS

The Education Minister was unavailable to speak to me this morning and the Department of Education's just issued a written statement. What do you think the Department of Education should be doing?

ANNE GISBORNE

Well, I think the Department of Education should be, as of this moment, back to various agencies that are responsible for ensuring that pumps are working and so on and making sure that tight timelines and deadlines are put in place and they are met. That's the first thing. I think they should also be communicating through the principal to the school community to indicate the ways in which they're ensuring that this problem will be addressed, soon.

VANESSA MILLS

Anne Gisborne, appreciate your time this morning and we'll certainly be following the issue. [Farewell not transcribed.]

Ends...jt