

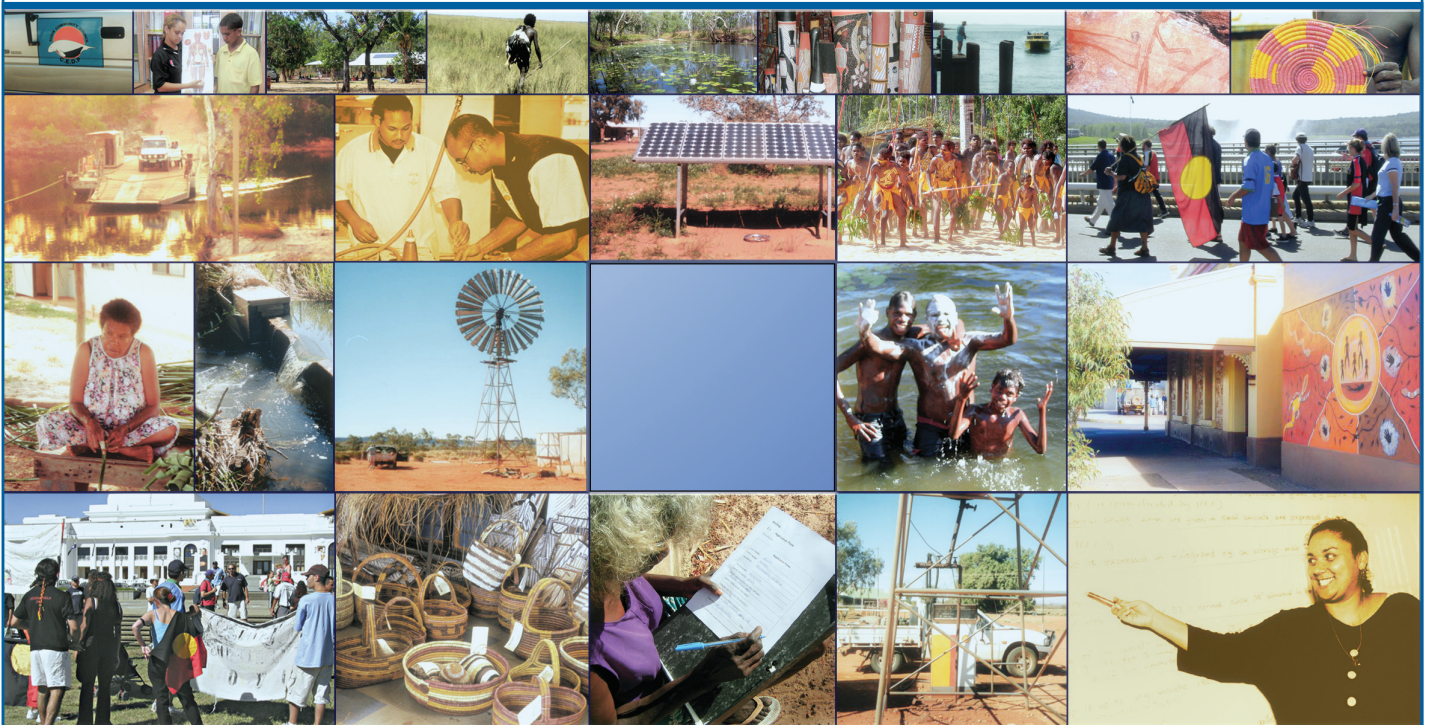
CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC
POLICY RESEARCH



Working Future: A Critique of Policy by Numbers

W. Sanders

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Working Future: A critique of policy by numbers

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses 2006 Census and Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey statistics to critique *Working Future*, a policy initiative of the Northern Territory Government announced in May 2009. It shows that the 20 proposed Territory Growth Towns (TGTs) in *Working Future* are geographically skewed towards the more densely settled, tropical savannah north of the Northern Territory and away from the southern arid zone. By focusing on some of the Northern Territory's more populous discrete Indigenous communities, *Working Future* has also, perhaps inadvertently, focused on the north of the Northern Territory. Indigenous people in the southern arid zone have reason to suggest that this policy does not reflect their interests or existing settlement patterns.

The paper also identifies the extent to which there is already a settlement hierarchy among discrete Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, in which 70 or 80 communities act as central-place service hubs for a more widely dispersed remote area population. It also notes that, small 'open towns' sometimes act as service hubs, and asks why many of these have been overlooked as potential TGTs. The final section of the paper suggests that *Working Future* reflects recent policy change in remote Indigenous housing which has been developed through collaborative federalism. This helps us understand and explain the strange maldistribution of TGTs in *Working Future*.

Keywords: remote area development, government policy, Northern Territory, Territory Growth Towns, Indigenous housing.

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CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgments.....	ii
Introduction	1
Population counts 2006: A basis for policy critique.....	2
Geographic mal-distribution of Territory Growth Towns and the 'open town' issue.....	15
CHINS data and the existing settlement hierarchy among discrete Indigenous communities.....	17
<i>Working Future</i> and collaborative federalism in remote Indigenous housing	19
Conclusion	22
Notes	23
References.....	24

FIGURES

Fig. 1. ABS Indigenous Regions of the Northern Territory.....	4
Fig. 2. <i>Working Future</i> map 2009, showing Territory Growth Towns.....	16
Fig. 3. Northern Territory Indigenous communities on and off land held under ALRA.....	21

TABLES

Table 1. Populations of the Northern Territory, 2006.....	3
Table 2. ABS Indigenous Regions, Northern Territory, populations, areas, Indigenous locations and TGTs	4
Table 3. Indigenous Locations in Nhulunbuy Indigenous Region, populations and areas, 2006.....	6
Table 4a. Indigenous Locations in Jabiru Indigenous Region, populations and areas	7
Table 4b. Indigenous Locations in Jabiru Indigenous Region, populations and areas, with adjacent outstations adjustment	8
Table 5a. Indigenous Locations in Katherine Indigenous Region, populations and areas	9
Table 5b. Indigenous Locations in Katherine Indigenous Region, populations and areas, with adjacent outstations adjustment	10
Table 6. Indigenous Locations in Tennant Creek Indigenous Region, populations and areas.....	11
Table 7a. Indigenous Locations in Apatula Indigenous Region, populations and areas.....	13
Table 7b. Indigenous Locations in Apatula Indigenous Region, populations and areas, with adjacent outstations adjustment	14
Table 8a. 'Rural' populations of remote ABS Indigenous Regions and TGTs.....	15
Table 8b. 'Rural' populations of remote ABS Indigenous Regions and TGTs, with adjacent outstations adjustment	15
Table 9. Characteristics of Northern Territory discrete Indigenous communities, 2006 CHINS.....	18

INTRODUCTION

On 20 May 2009 the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Paul Henderson, and his then Minister for Indigenous Policy, Alison Anderson, announced *Working Future*, a 'targeted strategy to improve the lives of Territorians living in remote areas'. This 'visionary six-part plan' would 'focus and coordinate the delivery of infrastructure, services and development in the remote Territory'. It would 'develop 20 large service towns' and 'set a new path for homelands and outstations' (Anderson & Henderson 2009). It would, Minister Anderson emphasised, 'bring Indigenous Territorians into the Territory's broader economic development' by providing 'real jobs and real opportunities' in 'real towns'. It is, she continued, 'about a decent lifestyle, jobs, education for our kids, better health and services that are equal with the rest of country Australia' (Anderson & Henderson 2009).

The six parts of *Working Future* are called:

1. Territory Growth Towns
2. Outstations and Homelands
3. Remote Service Delivery
4. Employment and Economic Development
5. Remote Transport Strategy, and
6. Closing the Gaps and Evaluation.

Part 1 talks about some of the Northern Territory's 'biggest remote communities' becoming 'proper towns, with services, buildings and facilities like any other country town in Australia' and of them becoming 'the economic and service delivery centres for their regions' (Northern Territory Government (NTG) 2009: Overview). It identifies 20 communities proposed to become Territory Growth Towns (TGTs) as follows:

Maningrida, Wadeye, Borroloola, Nguiu, Galiwin'ku, Millingimbi, Ngukurr, Angurugu/Umbakumba, Gunbalanya, Yirrkala, Numbulwar, Yuendumu, Hermannsburg, Ramingining, Gapuwiyak, Daguragu/Kalkarindji, Lajamanu, Papunya, Elliot and Ali Curung (NTG 2009: Overview).

Part 2 says that the Northern Territory Government 'will keep helping outstations and homelands with funding for services', but will 'concentrate on helping residents and traditional owners to look after their own houses, bores and generators into the future' and that the 'government will not be building any new outstations' (NTG 2009: Overview).

Part 3 talks about the Australian and Territory governments 'working together', while part 4 talks about the need for private investment, and hence for 'long-term, secure' land leases in both 'towns and communities'. Part 5 talks of the government 'working with local people' in 'smaller communities' to 'help make sure people can get into the larger towns and back home again safely' in order 'to get to jobs, schools, clinics, shops and other services'. Part 6 talks, finally, of linking all this to the 'agreed... targets' of 'all governments in Australia' of reducing 'Indigenous disadvantage, especially in remote areas' (NTG 2009: Overview).

All this sounds positive and almost beyond criticism. Yet in the two weeks following this announcement, criticism of the *Working Future* policy began to be voiced in the media and also within the Northern Territory Labor Party. Former Deputy Chief Minister and member for the remote 'top end' electorate of Arafura, Marion Scrymgour, attempted in a caucus meeting on 3 June 2009 to elicit some stronger support in the policy for outstations and homelands, but a day later resigned from the Party over the issue. This reduced the Territory Labor Government to minority status in the 25-seat Legislative Assembly, reliant on

TGT:
Territory
Growth Town

SIHIP:

Strategic
Indigenous Housing
and Infrastructure
Program

the vote of either Scrymgour or the other cross-bencher, the member for the outer Darwin electorate of Nelson, Gerry Wood, to pass legislation and other motions. Two months later, on 4 August 2009, it was the Minister for Indigenous Policy who had announced the *Working Future* policy back in May, Alison Anderson, who was resigning from the Labor Party. Anderson's resignation was somewhat more emphatic and decisive than Scrymgour's, who now took the opportunity to rejoin Labor as its twelfth member in the Legislative Assembly. Anderson's reasons for resigning were primarily to do with the tardiness, or failure-to-deliver, of the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP), rather than anything to do with *Working Future*. However, she did note in passing, in at least one media appearance, that she had felt somewhat uncomfortable with the *Working Future* announcement back in May and, as we will see later in this paper, SIHIP and *Working Future* do, as policies, have some common origins.

CHINS:

Community
Housing and
Infrastructure
Needs Survey

It is not my intention, in this paper, to delve any further into processes and personalities within the Northern Territory Labor Party and the Henderson Government. Rather my aim is to build a case that *Working Future* is rather poor public policy by looking at different sorts of information. First I look at 2006 Census population counts for the Northern Territory's remote areas and relate these to the list of 20 TGTs. Second I look at the geographic mal-distribution of TGTs, even in regions where there are few of them, and raise the issue of whether 'open towns' can be TGTs as well as discrete Indigenous communities. Third I look at data from the 2006 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) to show that there is already a settlement hierarchy among the Northern Territory's discrete Indigenous communities in which about 70 or 80 localities operate as central-place service hubs. In the fourth section of the paper I suggest that collaborative federalism between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments in remote Indigenous housing may be a deeper cause of the rather poor policy in *Working Future*. So the policy reasons why the two Indigenous former ministers each resigned from the Henderson Labor government in mid 2009 are, eventually, seen to be closely connected.

POPULATION COUNTS 2006: A BASIS FOR POLICY CRITIQUE

ABS:

Australian Bureau
of Statistics

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) uses the five-yearly national censuses to produce a range of population counts by a variety of different geographies. First there are place of enumeration and usual residence counts, which, although equal Australia-wide, tend to be rather different for the Northern Territory, as its population at census time in August is somewhat enlarged by visitors.¹ In 2006 the Northern Territory's place of enumeration count was 210,428 while its usual residence count was 192,900, a decrease of over 8 per cent. Among the Northern Territory's Indigenous population, however, there was only a decrease of 0.5 per cent from 53,924 people enumerated to 53,661 usual residents, resulting in the Indigenous proportion of the total Northern Territory population increasing from 25.6 per cent by place of enumeration to 27.8 by place of usual residence (see Table 1). A third population count is the estimated resident population (ERP), in which ABS adjusts the usual residence count up for 'undercount' and, in the case of the Indigenous population, for 'unknown Indigenous status' (ABS 2007a: 10). The Northern Territory's Indigenous ERP for 2006 was 66,582, while its total ERP was 210,700, resulting in Indigenous people in this count being 31.6 per cent of the Northern Territory population (see Table 1).

ERP:

estimated resident
population

The ABS calculates ERPs only for local government geographies and above. So in the following paragraphs, as I focus on smaller geographies, the figures used are the smaller usual residence counts, which are acknowledged as accounting for only 80.6 per cent of the Northern Territory's Indigenous ERP and 91.6 per cent of its total ERP. However, as it is comparisons of populations *between* areas with which I am primarily concerned, rather than the absolute size and accuracy of population numbers, these undercounts in relation to ERPs are of marginal concern and usual residence counts are a reasonable basis on which to proceed.

Table 1. Populations of the Northern Territory, 2006

	Indigenous	Total	Indigenous as % of Total
Place of enumeration count (PEC)	53,924	210,428	25.6
Usual residence count (URC)	53,661	192,900	27.8
URC/PEC (%)	99.5	91.7	
Estimated resident population (ERP)	66,582	210,700	31.6
URC/ERP (%)	80.6	91.6	

Source: ABS 2007a.

PEC:
place of
enumeration count

URC:
usual residence
count

AIGC:
Australian
Indigenous
Geographic
Classification

ATSIC:
Aboriginal
and Torres
Strait Islander
Commission

The geography I use is the ABS Australian Indigenous Geographic Classification (AIGC), which divides Australia into Indigenous Regions, Areas and Locations.² The 37 ABS Indigenous Regions, Australia-wide, are 'largely based on the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) boundaries' (ABS 2007a: 6). The Northern Territory has seven of these Indigenous Regions, ranging from Darwin and Nhulunbuy in the north to Alice Springs and Apatula in the south. Two of these regions, Darwin and Alice Springs, are essentially urban and will not be of great concern in this paper. The other five regions are more remote and it is these which would seem to be of greatest relevance to the *Working Future* policy. My focus will largely, therefore, be on these five Indigenous Regions, named by ABS from north to south as Nhulunbuy, Jabiru, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Apatula (see Fig. 1).

Table 2 shows the distribution of the Indigenous and total usual residence populations counted in the 2006 Census in the seven ABS regions of the Northern Territory. The Indigenous population is reasonably evenly spread across the regions, with five having between 8,000 and 11,000 Indigenous people and the other two having between 3,000 and 5,000. The total population, however, is much more concentrated in the two urban regions of Darwin and Alice Springs and in these regions, as a consequence, Indigenous people constitute small minorities of the population of 10.0 and 18.8 per cent respectively. In the five rural and remote regions, by contrast, as can be seen in column three, Indigenous people are a majority of the usual residence population; in one instance just a bare majority, but in the other four a quite clear and substantial majority. This differential demography of the Northern Territory's urban and rural/remote ABS regions will be nothing new to anyone familiar with north Australia, but it is worth stating clearly as necessary background to what follows.

In the right hand columns of Table 2 are the geographic areas of these seven ABS Indigenous Regions, the numbers of ABS Indigenous Locations within them and the average Indigenous population per Indigenous Location. Putting aside Darwin and Alice Springs as distinctive urban regions, the five rural/remote regions form an interesting north/south gradient on this last measure. Nhulunbuy in the north-east has the highest Indigenous population per Indigenous Location at 533 and Apatula in the south has the lowest at 301, with Jabiru, Katherine and Tennant Creek ranged neatly in between. A north/south gradient is also evident in the geographic areas of these regions, measured in thousands of square kilometres ('000 km²), with Nhulunbuy the smallest and Apatula the largest, and only Tennant Creek and Katherine slightly reversing the north/south progression. What these gradients point to is the decreasing density of Indigenous populations as one moves from the tropical savannah north to the desert south of the Northern Territory's rural and remote areas. Indigenous people in the north live at higher densities than those in the south and often, as a consequence, also in larger, more populous settlements.

Fig. 1. ABS Indigenous Regions of the Northern Territory

Source: ABS 2007a.

Table 2. ABS Indigenous Regions, Northern Territory, populations, areas, Indigenous Locations and TGTs

ABS Indigenous Region	Indigenous population	Total population	Indigenous pop. as % of total pop.	Area ('000 km ²)	ABS Indigenous Locations	Indigenous pop. per Indigenous Location	TGTs
Darwin	10,756	107,950	10.0	10.97	38	283	
Nhulunbuy	8,535	13,932	61.3	38.42	16	533	7
Jabiru	9,152	11,860	77.2	104.22	19	482	4
Katherine	8,271	16,464	50.2	346.14	22	376	4
Tennant Creek	3,256	5,389	60.4	304.01	10	326	2
Apatula	9,034	11,417	79.1	548.07	30	301	3
Alice Springs	4,494	23,892	18.8	0.33	10	449	

Source: ABS 2007a; NTG 2007; and data provided by ABS.

This observation takes us back to the words quoted above from Part 1 of the *Working Future* initiative on TGTs. If it is some of the Northern Territory's 'biggest remote communities' that are to become the 'proper towns' under this policy, then it is likely that they will be disproportionately in the north—and this is indeed what can be seen from the final column of Table 2. Whereas the ABS Nhulunbuy Indigenous Region in the north-east, with 8,535 Indigenous usual residents counted in the 2006 Census, is to get seven TGTs, the Apatula Indigenous Region in the south, with 9,034 Indigenous usual residents, is to get three. In the middle Jabiru and Katherine regions each get four TGTs for around 8,000 or 9,000 Indigenous people, and Tennant Creek, bucking the trend slightly, gets two for around 3,000. While this very simple mathematics drawn from Table 2 gives the basic idea of my critique of the *Working Future* policy by numbers, I want in subsequent tables to refine this critique by looking separately at the five rural and remote Indigenous Regions within the Northern Territory and the Indigenous Locations within them.

I should note, at this point, that the Indigenous Locations used by the ABS do not always correspond neatly to a single settlement or community. Often they cover a community and surrounding outstations or a number of small communities together. I should also note that in these five rural and remote Indigenous Regions of the Northern Territory there are already some small urban areas, or 'proper towns' in the language of *Working Future*, based on mining, pastoralism, horticulture and tourism. So in Tables 3–9, detailing the individual Indigenous Regions, I first separate out and put to the bottom of the table the 'urban' Indigenous Locations of these five rural and remote regions, as not particularly relevant to *Working Future*. I then divide the remaining 'rural' populations of these regions into those who are within an Indigenous Location associated with a TGT and those who are not.

Starting in the north-east, Table 3 gives the usual residence populations from the 2006 Census for the Indigenous Locations within the Nhulunbuy Indigenous Region. The mining towns of Nhulunbuy on the Gove Peninsula and Alyangula on Groote Eylandt are put to the bottom of the table as existing 'urban' areas; readily recognisable by the low proportion of their population that is Indigenous. However, in Alyangula's case this separation is slightly complicated by this Indigenous Location also covering the 'remainder' of Groote Eylandt beyond the two other Indigenous Locations on the island. These two other Indigenous Locations on Groote Eylandt are in the top panel of Table 3, as both contain places that are identified in *Working Future* as together constituting a single TGT, Angurugu and Umbakumba. In the ABS geography these settlements or communities are in two Indigenous Locations named Angurugu (CGC) and Umbakumba and Outstations.³ Also in the top of Table 3 are six other Indigenous Locations whose names correspond to those in the list of 20 proposed TGTs. So these eight Indigenous Locations in the top of Table 3 correspond roughly to seven proposed TGTs, plus in three instances (as their names suggest), nearby outstations.

In the middle panel of Table 3 are six Indigenous Locations in the Nhulunbuy Indigenous Region that are not urban and do not correspond to a TGT. Interestingly five of these have 'homeland' or 'outstation' in the name they are given by ABS, and two cover large areas of over 5,000 square kilometres. Below this middle panel of Table 3, I have calculated a summary statistic which compares the 'rural' population of the Nhulunbuy Region which is within the Indigenous Locations corresponding with the seven TGTs with the total 'rural' population of the region. This is roughly a measure of what proportion of this region's 'rural' population will have reasonable access to a proposed TGT from where they were counted as usual residents in the 2006 Census. I say 'reasonable' access here as some of these people were residents of outstations in the area surrounding a proposed TGT, rather than in the community or settlement itself. However, if Part 5 of *Working Future*, on developing a Remote Transport Strategy, is of value, these people will at least have a TGT within their daily or weekly mobility region and will be given some government policy support in accessing it. As can be seen from this summary statistic, close to 80 per cent of both the Indigenous and total 'rural' populations of the ABS Nhulunbuy Indigenous Region will be either living in or have such reasonable access to a proposed TGT. This seems a pretty good figure, one might even say a

Table 3. Indigenous Locations in Nhulunbuy Indigenous Region, populations and areas, 2006

ABS Indigenous Location	Indigenous population	Total population	Indigenous pop. as % of total pop.	Area (km ²)
1. Galiwinku	1,573	1,698	92.6	4.4
2. Milingimbi and Outstations	942	998	94.4	127.7
3. Gapuwiyak	838	885	94.7	11.3
4. Angurugu (CGC) ^a	780	813	95.9	11.7
5. Ramingining and Outstations	751	811	92.6	5,117.9
6. Numbulwar Numburindi (CGC)	618	678	91.2	4,427.4
7. Yirrkala	576	687	83.8	1.6
8. Umbakumba and Outstations ^a	360	385	93.5	530.2
<i>'Rural' population in TGT Indigenous Locations</i>	<i>6,438</i>	<i>6,955</i>	<i>92.6</i>	
9. Laynhapuy Homelands	655	752	87.1	6,606.1
10. Marthakal Homelands	300	305	98.4	2,714.2
11. Marngarr (CGC)	242	275	88.0	2.6
12. Gapuwiyak Outstation	212	212	100.0	16,709.2
13. Gumatj Outstation	159	159	100.0	6.3
14. Milyakburra and Outstations	99	110	90.0	226.5
<i>'Rural' population of Indigenous Region</i>	<i>8,105</i>	<i>8,768</i>	<i>92.4</i>	
<i>TGT Indigenous Locations population/ Regional 'Rural' population (%)</i>	<i>79.4</i>	<i>79.3</i>		
15. Nhulunbuy (T)	234	4112	5.7	6.9
16. Alyangula and Groote Eylandt—Rem	198	1049	18.9	1,918.6
<i>Nhulunbuy Indigenous Region</i>	<i>8,535</i>	<i>13,932</i>	<i>61.3</i>	<i>38,422.9</i>
Notes:	a. The ABS geography for Groote Eylandt includes two settlements and communities at Angurugu, and Umbakumba and Outstations. In <i>Working Future</i> these are identified as a single TGT.			
Source:	ABS 2007a; NTG 2007; and data provided by ABS.			

measure of policy achievement in relation to the declared policy goal of making these TGTs the 'economic and service delivery centres for their regions' (NTG 2009: Overview).

Moving west and slightly south to the ABS Jabiru Indigenous Region, detailed in Table 4a, we see a somewhat different picture. At the top of the table are four ABS Indigenous Locations which correspond to proposed TGTs, the four individual large communities of Maningrida, Wadeye, Nguiu and Kunbarllanjja (Gunbalanya). In the middle of Table 4a are 14 less populous Indigenous Locations which constitute the rest of the 'rural' population of this ABS Indigenous Region. Separated out at the bottom of the table is the population of the mining and tourism town of Jabiru as already living in a small urban area. In this Jabiru Region my summary statistic of the proportion of the 'rural' population that is within the Indigenous Locations associated with the TGTs as a proportion of the total 'rural' population falls away somewhat to around 60 or 55 per cent—depending on whether we focus on the Indigenous or total population. So in

Table 4a. Indigenous Locations in Jabiru Indigenous Region, populations and areas

ABS Indigenous Location	Indigenous population	Total population	Indigenous pop. as % of total pop.	Area (km ²)
1. Maningrida	1,904	2,068	92.1	3.1
2. Wadeye	1,489	1,627	91.5	5.6
3. Nguiu	1,188	1,265	93.9	5.1
4. Kunbarlanjnja (CGC)	799	881	90.7	516.8
<i>'Rural' population in TGT Indigenous Location</i>	<i>5,380</i>	<i>5,841</i>	<i>92.1</i>	
5. Warruwi and Outstations	371	391	94.9	1,654.0
6. Maningrida Outstation	355	367	96.7	9,774.1
7. Milikapiti	354	383	92.4	27.8
8. Nauiyu Nambiyu (CGC)	352	395	89.1	42.9
9. Pirlangimpi	316	368	85.9	20.7
10. Palumpa (Nganmariyanga)	312	342	91.2	3.9
11. Thamarrurr (CGC)—Rem	302	302	100.0	3,381.0
12. Minjilang and Outstations	281	334	84.1	4,384.6
13. Kakadu/Marrakai—Rem	208	644	32.3	25,415.2
14. Douglas/Daly—Rem	203	526	38.6	33,838.3
15. Demed Homelands	185	191	96.9	17,291.9
16. Peppimenarti	160	184	87.0	3.8
17. Pine Creek (CGC)	127	345	36.8	403.5
18. Tiwi Islands (CGC)—Rem	87	115	75.7	7,438.5
<i>'Rural' population of Indigenous Region</i>	<i>8,993</i>	<i>10,728</i>	<i>83.8</i>	
<i>TGT Indigenous Locations population/ Regional 'Rural' population (%)</i>	<i>59.8</i>	<i>54.4</i>		
19. Jabiru	156	1,135	13.7	13.5
<i>Jabiru Indigenous Region</i>	<i>9,152</i>	<i>11,860</i>	<i>77.2</i>	<i>104,223.2</i>

Source: ABS 2007a; NTG 2007; and data provided by ABS.

this instance the policy achievement seems somewhat less, as a lesser proportion of the 'rural' population would seem likely to have reasonable access to a TGT from their usual place of residence in 2006.

It could be argued that moving from Table 3 to Table 4a does not compare like with like, as three of the TGT Indigenous Locations in the Nhulunbuy region also include outstations and have quite large geographic areas, whereas the four TGT Indigenous Locations in the Jabiru region are all single settlements, three of which have very small geographic areas. In response to this argument, I produce another table for the Jabiru region (Table 4b) in which two Indigenous Locations which cover outstations adjacent to the TGTs of Maningrida and Wadeye are brought up into the top panel of the table; on the basis that being adjacent to geographically small TGT Indigenous Locations, usual residents in these Indigenous Locations also may have reasonable access to a TGT. I have not made any similar adjustment on the Tiwi Islands, as the non-TGT Indigenous Locations there—Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti,—are on Melville Island rather than Bathurst Island and there is, to my knowledge, no great sense of daily or even weekly mobility between

Table 4b. Indigenous Locations in Jabiru Indigenous Region, populations and areas, with adjacent outstations adjustment

ABS Indigenous Location	Indigenous population	Total population	Indigenous pop. as % of total pop	Area (km ²)
1. Maningrida	1,904	2,068	92.1	3.1
2. Wadeye	1,489	1,627	91.5	5.6
3. Nguiu	1,188	1,265	93.9	5.1
4. Kunbarllanjja (CGC)	799	881	90.7	516.8
5. Maningrida Outstation	355	367	96.7	9,774.1
6. Thamarrurr (CGC)—Rem	302	302	100.0	3,381.0
<i>'Rural' population in TGT Indigenous Locations and adjacent outstations Indigenous Locations</i>	<i>6,037</i>	<i>6,510</i>	<i>92.7</i>	
7. Warruwi and Outstations	371	391	94.9	1,654.0
8. Milikapiti	354	383	92.4	27.8
9. Nauiyu Nambiyu (CGC)	352	395	89.1	42.9
10. Pirlangimpi	316	368	85.9	20.7
11. Palumpa (Nganmarriyanga)	312	342	91.2	3.9
12. Minjilang and Outstations	281	334	84.1	4,384.6
13. Kakadu/Marrakai—Rem	208	644	32.3	25,415.2
14. Douglas/Daly—Rem	203	526	38.6	33,838.3
15. Demed Homelands	185	191	96.9	17,291.9
16. Peppimenarti	160	184	87.0	3.8
17. Pine Creek (CGC)	127	345	36.8	403.5
18. Tiwi Islands (CGC)—Rem	87	115	75.7	7,438.5
<i>'Rural' population of Indigenous Region</i>	<i>8,993</i>	<i>10,728</i>	<i>83.8</i>	
<i>TGT Indigenous Locations and adjacent outstations Indigenous Locations population/Regional 'Rural' Population (%)</i>	<i>67.1</i>	<i>60.7</i>		
19. Jabiru	156	1,135	13.7	13.5
<i>Jabiru Indigenous Region</i>	<i>9,152</i>	<i>11,860</i>	<i>77.2</i>	<i>104,223.2</i>
<i>Source: ABS 2007a; NTG 2007; and data provided by ABS.</i>				

these places and Nguiu.⁴ With these very rough 'adjacent-outstations-adjustments', the summary statistic for the Jabiru Region now rises to 67.1 per cent of the 'rural' Indigenous population and 60.7 per cent of the total 'rural' population of the region having reasonable access to a TGT. This is still some way short of the approximately 80 per cent of the 'rural' population who achieved such access in the calculations for the Nhulunbuy Region.

Moving south to the ABS Katherine Indigenous Region, we see a further falling away of this summary statistic. In the top of Table 5a are five Indigenous Locations corresponding to four proposed TGTs. The two least populous of these Indigenous Locations—Kalkarindji, and Daguragu and Outstations—are combined in the Northern Territory Government *Working Future* policy as one proposed TGT. In the middle of Table

Table 5a. Indigenous Locations in Katherine Indigenous Region, populations and areas

ABS Indigenous Location	Indigenous population	Total population	Indigenous pop. as % of total pop.	Area (km ²)
1. Ngukurr	862	916	94.1	11.2
2. Lajamanu (CGC)	612	669	91.5	7,278.3
3. Borroloola (CGC)	577	773	74.6	12.6
4. Kalkarindji ^a	267	326	81.9	6.2
5. Daguragu and Outstations ^a	209	218	95.9	44.1
<i>'Rural' Population in TGT Indigenous Locations</i>	<i>2,527</i>	<i>2,902</i>	<i>87.1</i>	
6. Minyeri	425	446	95.3	2.1
7. Beswick (Wugularr)	379	390	97.2	0.9
8. Jilkminggan (CGC)	269	272	98.9	6.1
9. Barunga	260	283	91.9	7.5
10. Mabunji Outstation	256	452	56.6	55,340.0
11. Yugul Mangi (CGC)—Rem	228	279	81.7	27,885.8
12. Walangeri Ngumpinku (CGC)—Rem	223	229	97.4	242.8
13. Yarralin	221	231	95.7	151.2
14. Nyirranggulung Mardrulk Ngadberre (CGC)—Rem	217	267	81.3	28,710.3
15. Mungoorbada Outstation	174	182	95.6	5173.8
16. Timber Creek (CGC)	135	229	59.0	159.9
17. Mataranka (CGC)	83	252	32.9	231.7
18. Katherine Bal—Rem	707	1663	42.5	220,293.1
<i>'Rural' population of Indigenous Region</i>	<i>6,104</i>	<i>8,077</i>	<i>75.6</i>	
<i>TGT Indigenous Locations population/ Regional 'Rural' population (%)</i>	<i>41.4</i>	<i>35.9</i>		
19. Katherine (T) excl. Town Camps	1,568	7,761	20.2	580.3
20. Miali Brumby	243	259	93.8	0.9
21. Binjari (CGC)	190	190	100.0	2.8
22. Rockhole/Warlpipi Camp	174	177	98.3	0.7
<i>Katherine Indigenous Region</i>	<i>8,271</i>	<i>16,464</i>	<i>50.2</i>	<i>346,140.5</i>

Notes: a. The ABS geography includes two settlements and communities at Kalkarindji, and Daguragu and Outstations. In *Working Future* these are identified as a single TGT.

Source: ABS 2007a; NTG 2007; and data provided by ABS.

5a are 12 less populous ABS Indigenous Locations which do not correspond to a proposed TGT, plus the vast 'Katherine balance' Indigenous Location which picks up small dispersed populations from the western two-thirds of this region. At the bottom of Table 5a, excluded from the summary statistic, are the 'urban' populations of Katherine town, plus the immediately adjacent Binjari (CGC) Indigenous Location. In the Katherine Indigenous Region, my summary statistic of the 'rural' population which is within or has reasonable

Table 5b. Indigenous Locations in Katherine Indigenous Region, populations and areas, with adjacent outstations adjustment

ABS Indigenous Location	Indigenous population	Total population	Indigenous pop. as % of total pop.	Area (km ²)
1. Ngukurr	862	916	94.1	11.2
2. Lajamanu (CGC)	612	669	91.5	7,278.3
3. Borrooloola (CGC)	577	773	74.6	12.6
4. Kalkarindji ^a	267	326	81.9	6.2
5. Daguragu and Outstations ^a	209	218	95.9	44.1
6. Mabunji Outstation	256	452	56.6	55,340.0
7. Yugul Mangi (CGC)—Rem	228	279	81.7	27,885.8
<i>'Rural' population in TGT Indigenous Locations and adjacent outstations Indigenous Locations</i>	<i>3,011</i>	<i>3,633</i>	<i>82.9</i>	
8. Minyeri	425	446	95.3	2.1
9. Beswick (Wugularr)	379	390	97.2	0.9
10. Jilkminggan (CGC)	269	272	98.9	6.1
11. Barunga	260	283	91.9	7.5
12. Walangeri Ngumpinku (CGC)—Rem	223	229	97.4	242.8
13. Yarralin	221	231	95.7	151.2
14. Nyirranggulung Mardruk Ngadberre (CGC)—Rem	217	267	81.3	28,710.3
15. Mungoorbada Outstation	174	182	95.6	5,173.8
16. Timber Creek (CGC)	135	229	59.0	159.9
17. Mataranka (CGC)	83	252	32.9	231.7
18. Katherine Bal—Rem	707	1663	42.5	220,293.1
<i>'Rural' population of Indigenous Region</i>	<i>6,104</i>	<i>8,077</i>	<i>75.6</i>	
<i>TGT Indigenous Locations and adjacent outstations Indigenous Locations population/Regional 'Rural' population (%)</i>	<i>49.3</i>	<i>45.0</i>		
19. Katherine (T) excl. Town Camps	1,568	7,761	20.2	580.3
20. Miali Brumby	243	259	93.8	0.9
21. Binjari (CGC)	190	190	100.0	2.8
22. Rockhole/Warlpiri Camp	174	177	98.3	0.7
<i>Katherine Indigenous Region</i>	<i>8,271</i>	<i>16,464</i>	<i>50.2</i>	<i>346,140.5</i>
Notes:				
a. The ABS geography includes two settlements and communities at Kalkarindji, and Daguragu and Outstations. In <i>Working Future</i> these are identified as a single TGT.				
Source: ABS 2007a; NTG 2007; and data provided by ABS.				

Table 6. Indigenous Locations in Tennant Creek Indigenous Region, populations and areas

ABS Indigenous Location	Indigenous population	Total population	Indigenous pop. as % of total pop.	Area (km ²)
1. Elliott District (CGC)	349	417	83.7	5.4
2. Ali Curung	328	349	94.0	3.7
<i>'Rural' population in TGT Indigenous Locations</i>	<i>677</i>	<i>766</i>	<i>88.4</i>	
3. Alpururulam (CGC)	323	344	93.9	10.0
4. Wutunugurra	195	195	100.0	1.0
5. Canteen Creek	171	179	95.5	0.4
6. Tennant Creek Bal—Rem	464	982	47.3	303,952.9
<i>'Rural' population of Indigenous Region</i>	<i>1,830</i>	<i>2,466</i>	<i>74.2</i>	
<i>TGT Indigenous Locations population/ Regional 'Rural' population (%)</i>	<i>37.0</i>	<i>31.1</i>		
7. Tennant Creek (T) excl. Town Camps	891	2382	37.4	40.6
8. Wuppa/Ngalpa Ngalpa/Tinkarli	314	314	100.0	0.4
9. Marla Marla/Munji-Marla/ Village Camp	110	110	100.0	0.3
10. Kargaru	117	117	100.0	0.9
<i>Tennant Creek Indigenous Region</i>	<i>3,256</i>	<i>5,389</i>	<i>60.4</i>	<i>304,015.6</i>

Source: ABS 2007a; NTG 2007; data provided by ABS.

access to a proposed TGT from their usual place of residence in 2006 is down to a somewhat less heartening 41.4 or 35.9 per cent, depending again on whether one focuses on the Indigenous or total population.

Responding again to the idea that some outstation Indigenous Locations adjacent to TGTs ought to be in the top of these tables in order to be comparable to the situation in the Nhulunbuy Region with which we started, Table 5b moves two Indigenous Locations—Mabunji Outstations and Yugul Mangi (CGC)—into the top of the table. Residents of these two Indigenous Locations in the eastern third of the Katherine Region arguably have reasonable access to the TGTs of Borroloola and Ngukurr respectively. However, even with this adjacent-outstations adjustment, the summary statistic for reasonable access to TGTs in Katherine Region still only rises to 49.3 per cent for the Indigenous 'rural' population and 45.0 per cent for the total 'rural' population. So on either the raw measure or the adjacent-outstations adjusted measure, fewer 'rural' residents in the Katherine Region have reasonable access to TGTs than in the Jabiru or Nhulunbuy Regions.

Table 6 takes the next step south to the Tennant Creek Indigenous Region, the least populous of all the ABS regions in the Northern Territory. Here there are just two ABS Indigenous Locations which correspond to proposed TGTs, Elliot and Ali Curung. In the middle of Table 6 are four other 'rural' Indigenous Locations and at the bottom, excluded from the summary statistic, are the urban Indigenous Locations of Tennant Creek town. The summary statistic in this region drops again to 37 or 31 per cent of the 'rural' population being in or having reasonable access to a proposed TGT. In this instance, no adjustment for adjacent outstations readily suggests itself. The vast Tennant Creek Balance Indigenous Location picks up small

dispersed populations from across the whole region, a small proportion of whom may have reasonable access to either Tennant Creek town or to one of the two proposed TGTs. But there is no way of knowing what that small proportion might be.

Moving further south, Table 7a details the Apatula Indigenous Region, a vast region in the south of the Northern Territory surrounding, but not including the urban area of Alice Springs. This region has three proposed TGTs which correspond to the three ABS Indigenous Locations in the top of Table 7a. In the middle of Table 7a are another 25 Indigenous Locations which contribute to the total 'rural' population of the region. At the bottom of Table 7a, excluded from the summary statistic, are two Indigenous Locations, which need a little explanation. The first, called 'Petermann/Simpson—remainder' includes the tourism town of Yulara near Uluru, mixed in with dispersed predominantly non-Indigenous populations from the surrounding area. Although some of the population in this Indigenous Location are clearly 'rural', they are excluded because they are mixed in with the 'urban' centre of Yulara. The second, called Ingerkerke Outstations/Iwupataka, is the Indigenous Location immediately surrounding Alice Springs. Though this population is 'rural', it does arguably already have access to the services of an urban area in nearby Alice Springs. Even putting aside these arguably 'rural' populations, the summary statistic for the Apatula region is by far the lowest of all the Indigenous Regions of the Northern Territory. Just 18 per cent of the 'rural' population of the Apatula region is living in or has reasonable access to a proposed TGT based on their 2006 place of usual residence.

In Table 7b, an adjustment is made for the Tjuwanpa Outstations Indigenous Location, the residents of which arguably have reasonable access to the Hermannsburg TGT. However, this adjacent-outstations adjustment only increases the summary statistic for the Apatula region to 21.9 per cent of the Indigenous 'rural' population and 21.3 per cent of the total 'rural' population having reasonable access to a TGT, which is still a long way below the figures achieved further north.

Tables 8a and 8b bring together these summary statistics for the five remote regions of the Northern Territory, giving (in column 1) the total 'rural' population rather than the Indigenous 'rural' population, but also giving (in column 4) the Indigenous proportion of that total—which in all instances is above 70 per cent. The north/south gradient, which was discernible in Table 2, is again clearly evident in column 3 of these tables. In Table 8a, where 79.3 per cent of the 'rural' population of the Nhulunbuy Indigenous Region in 2006 were resident in an ABS Indigenous Location containing a proposed TGT, that figure falls systematically through ABS Indigenous Regions to the south to less than 17.9 per cent in Apatula. In Table 8b, which adjusts for adjacent outstation Indigenous Locations, the gradient is slightly less but equally clear as it falls from 79.3 per cent in Nhulunbuy to 21.3 per cent in Apatula.

By focusing on the Northern Territory's 'biggest remote communities' as the proposed TGTs, *Working Future* appears, perhaps inadvertently, to have focused on the tropical north of the Northern Territory at the expense of the 'centre'. The 'rural' population of the southern arid zone of the Northern Territory would seem to have reasonable grounds for suggesting that this policy initiative does not engage with the existing reality of their established settlement patterns and does not serve their interests well.

Table 7a. Indigenous Locations in Apatula Indigenous Region, populations and areas

ABS Indigenous Location	Indigenous population	Total population	Indigenous pop. as % of total pop.	Area (km ²)
1. Yuendumu (CGC)	605	692	87.4	22,512.3
2. Hermannsburg (Ntaria)	505	559	90.3	4.4
3. Papunya and Outstations	347	379	91.6	7,695.5
<i>'Rural' population in TGT Indigenous Locations</i>	<i>1,457</i>	<i>1,630</i>	<i>89.4</i>	
4. Urupuntja Outstation	768	799	96.1	4,012.7
5. Ltyentye Purte (CGC)	519	542	95.8	1,250.0
6. Ampilatwatja and Outstations	368	384	95.8	3.3
7. Kaltukatjara (Docke River) and Outstations	341	363	93.9	39,292.2
8. Kintore (Walungurru) and Outstations	328	356	92.1	15,116.1
9. Tjuwanpa Outstation	302	312	96.8	8,067.8
10. Sandover and Outstations	272	466	58.4	108,436.0
11. Amoonguna	270	273	98.9	3.0
12. Watiyawanu (CGC)	260	270	96.3	77.7
13. Anmatjere (CGC)—Rem	259	301	86.0	14.9
14. Nyirripi and Outstations/Wulaign Outstation	256	381	67.2	113,632.8
15. Willowra	250	271	92.3	7,471.0
16. Nturiya/Pmara Jutunta/Adelaide Bore/Illeparratye/Petyale	248	264	93.9	3,571.4
17. Laramba	237	246	96.3	5.1
18. Areyonga	235	248	94.8	0.7
19. Arltarlpilta (CGC)	222	239	92.9	12.2
20. Yuelamu and Outstations	229	248	92.3	7,452.3
21. Mutitjulu	216	282	76.6	1,356.6
22. Tapatjatjaka (CGC)	206	219	94.1	13.9
23. Finke (Apatula) and Homelands	201	265	75.8	85,867.7
24. Haasts Bluff and Outstations	169	207	81.6	25,675.9
25. Imanpa	131	149	87.9	16.3
26. Hanson Bal	105	167	62.9	31,279.0
27. Ti Tree	100	154	64.9	64.9
28. Wallace Rockhole (CGC)	84	88	95.5	4.9
<i>'Rural' population of Indigenous Region</i>	<i>8,033</i>	<i>9,124</i>	<i>88.0</i>	
<i>TGT Indigenous Locations population/Regional 'Rural' population (%)</i>	<i>18.1</i>	<i>17.9</i>		
29. Petermann/Simpson—Rem	155	1330	11.7	49,073.1
30. Ingkerreke Outstation/Iwupataka	848	973	87.2	16,088.6
<i>Apatula Indigenous Region</i>	<i>9,034</i>	<i>11,417</i>	<i>79.1</i>	<i>548,069.7</i>

Source: ABS 2007a; NTG 2007; and data provided by ABS.

Table 7b. Indigenous Locations in Apatula Indigenous Region, populations and areas, with adjacent outstations adjustment

ABS Indigenous Location	Indigenous population	Total population	Indigenous pop. as % of total pop.	Area (km ²)
1. Yuendumu (CGC)	605	692	87.4	22,512.3
2. Hermannsburg (Ntaria)	505	559	90.3	4.4
3. Papunya and Outstations	347	379	91.6	7,695.5
4. Tjuwanpa Outstation	302	312	96.8	8,067.8
<i>'Rural' population in TGT Indigenous Locations and adjacent outstations Indigenous Locations</i>	<i>1,759</i>	<i>1,942</i>	<i>90.6</i>	
5. Urapuntja Outstation	768	799	96.1	4,012.7
6. Ltyentye Purte (CGC)	519	542	95.8	1,250.0
7. Ampilatwatja and Outstations	368	384	95.8	3.3
8. Kaltukatjara (Docke River) and Outstations	341	363	93.9	39,292.2
9. Kintore (Walungurru) and Outstations	328	356	92.1	15,116.1
10. Sandover and Outstations	272	466	58.4	108,436.0
11. Amoonguna	270	273	98.9	3.0
12. Watiyawanu (CGC)	260	270	96.3	77.7
13. Anmatjere (CGC)—Rem	259	301	86.0	14.9
14. Nyirripi and Outstations/Wulain Outstation	256	381	67.2	113,632.8
15. Willowra	250	271	92.3	7,471.0
16. Nturiya/Pmara Jutunta/Adelaide Bore Ileparratye/Petyale	248	264	93.9	3,571.4
17. Laramba	237	246	96.3	5.1
18. Areyonga	235	248	94.8	0.7
19. Arltaripilta (CGC)	222	239	92.9	12.2
20. Yuelamu and Outstations	229	248	92.3	7,452.3
21. Mutitjulu	216	282	76.6	1,356.6
22. Tapatjatjaka (CGC)	206	219	94.1	13.9
23. Finke (Apatula) and Homelands	201	265	75.8	85,867.7
24. Haasts Bluff and Outstations	169	207	81.6	25,675.9
25. Imanpa	131	149	87.9	16.3
26. Hanson Bal	105	167	62.9	31,279.0
27. Ti Tree	100	154	64.9	64.9
28. Wallace Rockhole (CGC)	84	88	95.5	4.9
<i>'Rural' population of Indigenous Region</i>	<i>8,033</i>	<i>9,124</i>	<i>88.0</i>	
<i>TGT Indigenous Locations and adjacent outstations Indigenous Locations population/Regional 'Rural' population (%)</i>	<i>21.9</i>	<i>21.3</i>		
29. Petermann/Simpson—Rem	155	1330	11.7	49,073.1
30. Ingkerreke Outstation/Iwupataka	848	973	87.2	16,088.6
<i>Apatula Indigenous Region</i>	<i>9,034</i>	<i>11,417</i>	<i>79.1</i>	<i>548,069.7</i>
Source: ABS 2007a; NTG 2007; and data provided by ABS.				

Table 8a. 'Rural' populations of remote ABS Indigenous Regions and TGTs

ABS Indigenous Region	Total 'rural' population	'Rural' population in TGT Indigenous Locations	TGT Indigenous Locations population/ total 'rural' population (%)	Indigenous percentage of total 'rural' population	Number of TGTs
Nhulunbuy	8,768	6,955	79.3	92.4	7
Jabiru	10,728	5,841	54.4	83.8	4
Katherine	8,267	2,902	35.9	76.1	4
Tennant Creek	2,466	766	31.1	74.2	2
Apatula	9,124	1,630	17.9	88.0	3

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006 and author's own calculations.

Table 8b. 'Rural' populations of remote ABS Indigenous Regions and TGTs, with adjacent outstations adjustment

ABS Indigenous Region	Total 'rural' population	'Rural' population in TGT Indigenous Locations and adjacent outstation Indigenous Locations	TGT Indigenous Locations population/ total 'rural' population (%)	Indigenous percentage of total 'rural' population	Number of TGTs
Nhulunbuy	8,768	6,955	79.3	92.4	7
Jabiru	10,728	6,510	60.7	83.8	4
Katherine	8,267	3,633	45.0	76.1	4
Tennant Creek	2,466	766	31.1	74.2	2
Apatula	9,124	1,942	21.3	88.0	3

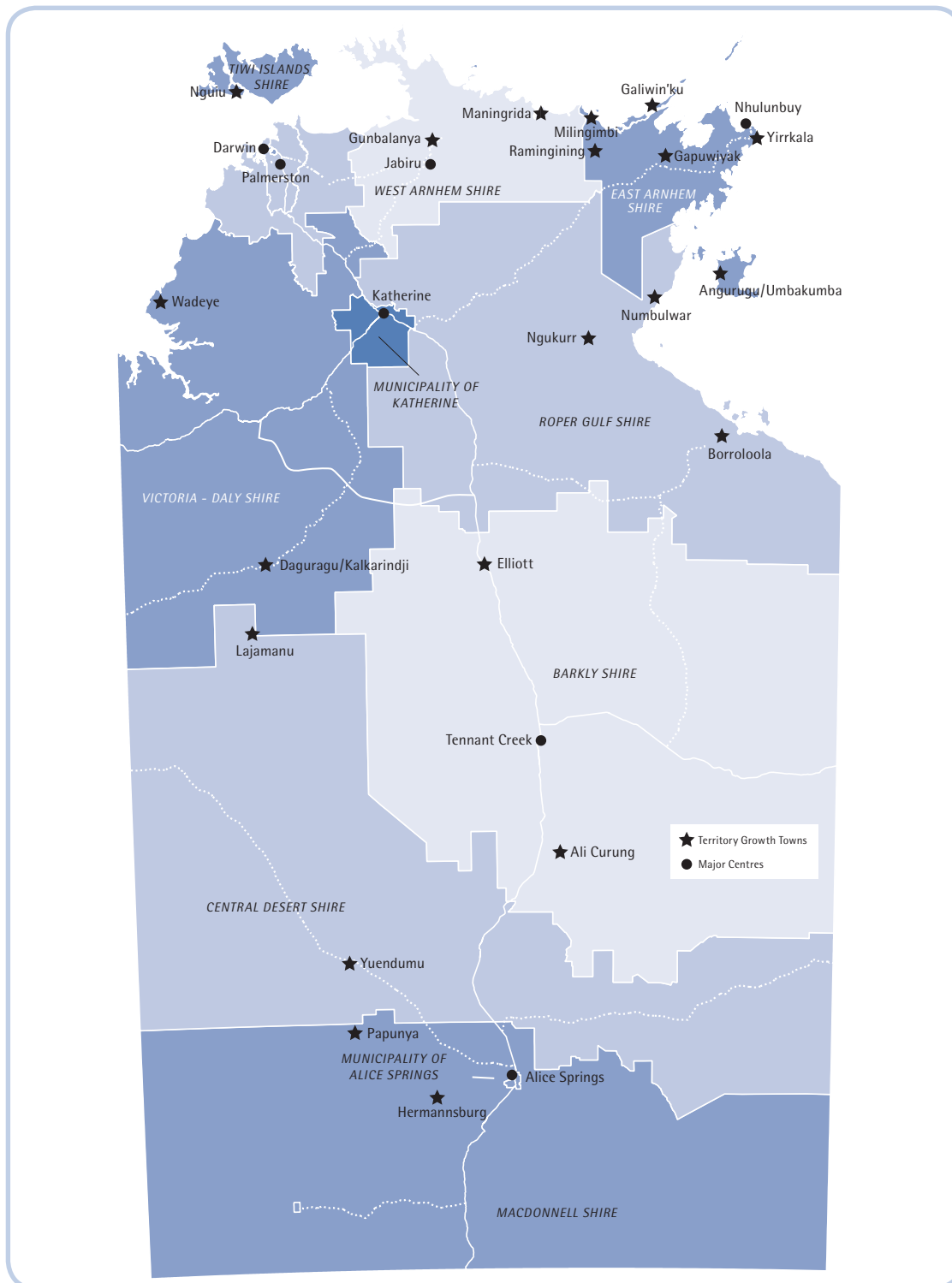
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006 and author's own calculations.

GEOGRAPHIC MAL-DISTRIBUTION OF TERRITORY GROWTH TOWNS AND THE 'OPEN TOWN' ISSUE

One other notable aspect of the proposed TGTs in central Australia is that all three are to the west or north-west of Alice Springs. This can be seen in Fig. 2 which is the map included on the *Working Future* website.⁵ There are no proposed TGTs either to the north, south or east of Alice Springs. This would seem to limit the likelihood that these chosen localities, in the words of *Working Future* quoted above, 'will become the economic and service delivery centres for their regions' (NTG 2009: Overview). It would seem more likely, in central Australia, that people to the north, south and east will look to Alice Springs as their regional service centre rather than to the proposed TGTs to the west or north-west.

This geographic mal-distribution of proposed TGTs around Alice Springs perhaps contributed to the Northern Territory Opposition's spokesperson on Indigenous policy, Adam Giles, floating in the media in early June 2009 the idea that the tourism town of Yulara, 500 kilometres to the south-west of Alice Springs, should also be included on the list of proposed TGTs (ABC News 2009). This would seem in many

Fig. 2. Working Future map 2009, showing Territory Growth Towns



Source: NTG 2009.

ways a reasonable proposition, though it may be complicated by the fact that large parts of the town were effectively sold to a hotel chain by the Northern Territory Government in 1997 and may now fall beyond direct government control. Including Yulara as a TGT would also seem in line with the view of the then Minister for Indigenous Policy who announced *Working Future*, Alison Anderson, who in an article in *The Australian* coinciding with the launch of the policy argued that TGTs 'will not be black towns or white towns' but rather 'proper towns' with 'town plans; secure land tenure; private investment; integrated transport links; high schools; police stations; hospitals; cafes and recreation facilities' (Anderson 2009). Anderson then went on to say that TGTs will be 'strategically placed' to be 'the service delivery centres for the vast majority of Aboriginal people living in the bush' (Anderson 2009). If the 2006 Census figures above are accepted, it is only in the Nhulunbuy Indigenous Region that *Working Future* comes close to achieving this declared goal of offering service delivery centres to 'the vast majority of Aboriginal people living in the bush'.

Anderson's and Giles' words also raise another issue, which is that the Northern Territory has long had a number of small roadside towns which are recognised as somewhat different from discrete Indigenous communities or settlements. These 'open towns', as they are sometimes called, already have land that can be bought and sold for private investment or other purposes, and they are freely open to non-Indigenous residents (Loveday & Webb 1989). Three of the proposed localities for TGTs—Borroloola, Elliot and Kalkarindji—are towns of this type and it is notable, in Tables 5a and 6, that they have slightly lower proportions of Indigenous people in their populations compared to other proposed TGTs. But there are also other localities of this sort that could just as easily have been considered as TGTs, as well as Yulara.

One other small open town with which I am familiar is the roadside town of Ti Tree, 200 kilometres north of Alice Springs, which might seem well placed to become a TGT for the Anmatjerr region. Although the population of the Ti Tree Indigenous Location in Table 7a is only 154, this needs to be considered in conjunction with the population of 264 in the surrounding Indigenous Location of Nturiya/Pmara Jutunta/etc. With a school, health clinic, police station, roadhouse and store, Ti Tree is already a service centre for both town residents and the residents of these surrounding discrete Indigenous communities, plus it already has land that can be bought and sold. Another of these open towns, with which I am less familiar, is Timber Creek, on the road south-west from Katherine to the Western Australia border. The 2006 usual residence population of Timber Creek is 229, around 40 per cent of whom are not Indigenous (Table 5a). So why are towns like Ti Tree and Timber Creek, which are already service centres, with significant proportions of non-Indigenous residents and with land that can be bought and sold, being overlooked as potential TGTs?

The answer to this question relates to a later section of this paper, which suggests that *Working Future* is not so much a sole policy initiative of the Northern Territory Government in remote area development. Rather it is a continuation of recent collaborative intergovernmental policy change in remote Indigenous housing developed between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory. However, before turning to intergovernmental relations and collaborative federalism in remote Indigenous housing, I wish to add one further dimension to my critique of the *Working Future* policy by numbers.

CHINS DATA AND THE EXISTING SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY AMONG DISCRETE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

In response to an earlier draft of this paper, it was suggested to me that the 2006 Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey (CHINS) might provide a better basis on which to measure access to TGTs than the crude manipulation of 2006 Census data engaged in above. The CHINS is a survey of discrete Indigenous communities conducted by the ABS in the lead up to the census which, rather than

using household interviews as in the Census, uses a central reference person interview methodology. The publicly-available data from the 2006 CHINS did not seem to be able to be manipulated to give a better measure of access to TGTs in different parts of the Northern Territory, but it could be manipulated to produce some quite useful statistics on the characteristics of discrete Indigenous communities across the whole Northern Territory (ABS 2007b).

The 2006 CHINS identified 641 discrete Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, with populations ranging from less than 50 to over 1,000 and a total population of just over 40,000 people (Table 9). The most populous 18 communities reported usual populations of over 500 and accounted for a total population of almost 18,000. All had primary schools, health centres and stores, plus eight also had secondary schools up to Year 10. Below these communities were around 100 with populations of between 50 and 500 people which, as their populations decreased, increasingly did not have primary schools, health centres and stores (see Table 9). Below this again were 500 communities with populations of less than 50, virtually none of which had either a store or a health centre and only 39 of which had primary schools. So in relation to the central-place services of schools, health centres and stores, there was in 2006 already a clearly established settlement hierarchy evident among the discrete Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory in which many small settlements did not have these facilities and relied on accessing them in other settlements.⁶

Table 9. Characteristics of Northern Territory discrete Indigenous communities, 2006 CHINS

Population	<50	50–99	100–199	200–499	500–999	1,000 or more	All communities
Reported usual population	6,527	3,424	4,120	9,770	8,530	9,310	41,681
Number of communities	510	50	29	34	12	6	641
Store	1	10	16	31	12	6	76
Primary health centre	1	10	18	31	13	8	81
Primary school	39	17	18	28	12	6	120
Secondary school (Year 10)		5	2	6	5	3	21
Permanent dwellings	1522	522	633	1,672	1163	930	6422
Usual population/dwelling	4.3	6.6	6.5	5.8	7.3	10.0	6.5
Dwellings needing major repair or replacement	324 21%	246 47%	239 38%	457 27%	469 40%	274 29%	2009 31%

Source: ABS 2007b.

In relation to housing, the distribution across the communities revealed in the 2006 CHINS was more even and in proportion to population than for schools, health centres and stores. A total of 6,422 permanent dwellings were spread across all 641 communities at an average of 6.5 usual residents per dwelling. In fact the number of usual residents per dwelling was somewhat less than this average in the smaller communities with populations less than 50 (4.3 per dwelling) and somewhat more in the larger communities with populations over 1,000 (10.0 per dwelling). So housing in these communities, as it existed in 2006, was *widely dispersed* rather than being centralised in the settlement hierarchy like schools, stores and health centres. Also of note, in the bottom line of Table 9, is that around about one third of these dwellings were assessed in the 2006 CHINS as in need of major repairs or replacement. However, any pattern of smaller or larger communities doing better or worse in this regard is hard to discern.

The relevance to *Working Future* of these characteristics of the Northern Territory's discrete Indigenous communities revealed in the 2006 CHINS and detailed in Table 9 is primarily that, if policy focuses on about 20 of the most populous communities, it will end up reaching down to communities with populations of a little less than 500 and will not reach down to communities in the 100–200 or 200–400 ranges. This can also be seen by returning to Tables 3–7 where it can be noted that the Indigenous Locations corresponding to TGTs in the north often have populations well in excess of 500. In the two southern regions, by contrast, only two of the five proposed TGTs have populations in excess of 500 and then only marginally so.

This critique of *Working Future* by numbers is essentially that it does not engage with the Northern Territory's existing settlement hierarchy in which about 70–80 discrete Indigenous communities, plus a few small open towns, already act as central-place service delivery locations for remote regions. A realistic remote area development policy might try to analyse and slightly consolidate this number of 'hub' settlements (see Moran 2010). However, by focusing on just 20 of the most populous of these hub locations, *Working Future* becomes skewed to the more densely settled north of the Territory and disengaged from the settlement pattern in the more sparsely settled south. This would seem to be making 'policy by numbers' also in the sense of proceeding rather mechanically and without great thought for existing social realities, like the difference in settlement density between the tropical savannah and the desert.

WORKING FUTURE AND COLLABORATIVE FEDERALISM IN REMOTE INDIGENOUS HOUSING

In this section, I turn to recent intergovernmental relations in remote Indigenous housing in an attempt to understand and explain how such an instance of rather poor policy by numbers could come about. This is not intended as a full account of collaborative federalism in Indigenous housing, to which I am dedicating a companion paper (Sanders forthcoming). However, a brief account will help explain how and why *Working Future* took the shape it did.

In March 2008, 14 months before the announcement of *Working Future*, the Northern Territory Chief Minister, the Commonwealth Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Member of the House of Representatives for the remote Northern Territory seat of Lingiari announced a 'landmark joint housing program' which would:

... deliver vital construction, refurbishment and infrastructure developments, as well as jobs in 73 Northern Territory Indigenous communities and some urban areas (Macklin, Henderson & Snowdon 2008: 1).

With the Commonwealth contributing \$547 million and the Northern Territory Government contributing \$100 million over four years, the program promised 'around 750 new houses' and 'over 2,500 housing upgrades'.⁷ The announcement went on to say that the Northern Territory Government would 'deliver the program' and that the Commonwealth would 'provide support in the development stages to establish the program'. This was, the Northern Territory Chief Minister said, 'a new era of delivering housing in the bush' in which governments, 'industry and communities' would 'work in partnership' (Macklin, Henderson & Snowdon 2008: 1–2). One further, final comment in the announcement of this joint program related to security of land tenure, which was to be:

... a key element in allocating this funding. Communities receiving capital works under this program will need to enter into a lease for a period of time appropriate to the life of the capital works being funded (Macklin, Henderson & Snowdon 2008: 2).

The announcement then listed '16 communities to receive major capital works' and '57 communities to receive housing upgrades' (Macklin, Henderson & Snowdon 2008: 2–3). Those to receive 'major capital works', which seemed to mean newly constructed houses, and which would 'need to enter into a lease' were listed as:

Hermannsburg, Yirrkala, Yuendumu, Gapuwiyak, Numbulwar, Angurugu, Umbakumba, Milyakburra, Milingimbi, Gunbalanya, Nguiu, Ngukurr, Galiwinku, Maningrida, Wadeye, Lajamanu (Macklin, Henderson & Snowdon 2008: 3)

This joint program announced in March 2008 soon became known as SIHIP and it is notable that 15 of these 16 communities to receive new houses were included, 14 months later, in the Northern Territory Government's list of proposed TGTs in *Working Future*.

In early 2009, shortly before the announcement of *Working Future*, the Commonwealth Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, re-announced this list of 15 Northern Territory communities which would receive new housing as part of a new national 10-year program on remote Indigenous housing. The program focuses on 26 'priority locations', the other 11 of which were in Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales (Macklin 2009a, 2009b).⁸ A National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing had been signed at a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting in late 2008 by the Commonwealth, the States and the Northern Territory. This clearly foreshadowed the new national program announced in early 2009, even if it didn't yet go as far as naming the priority locations (COAG 2008).

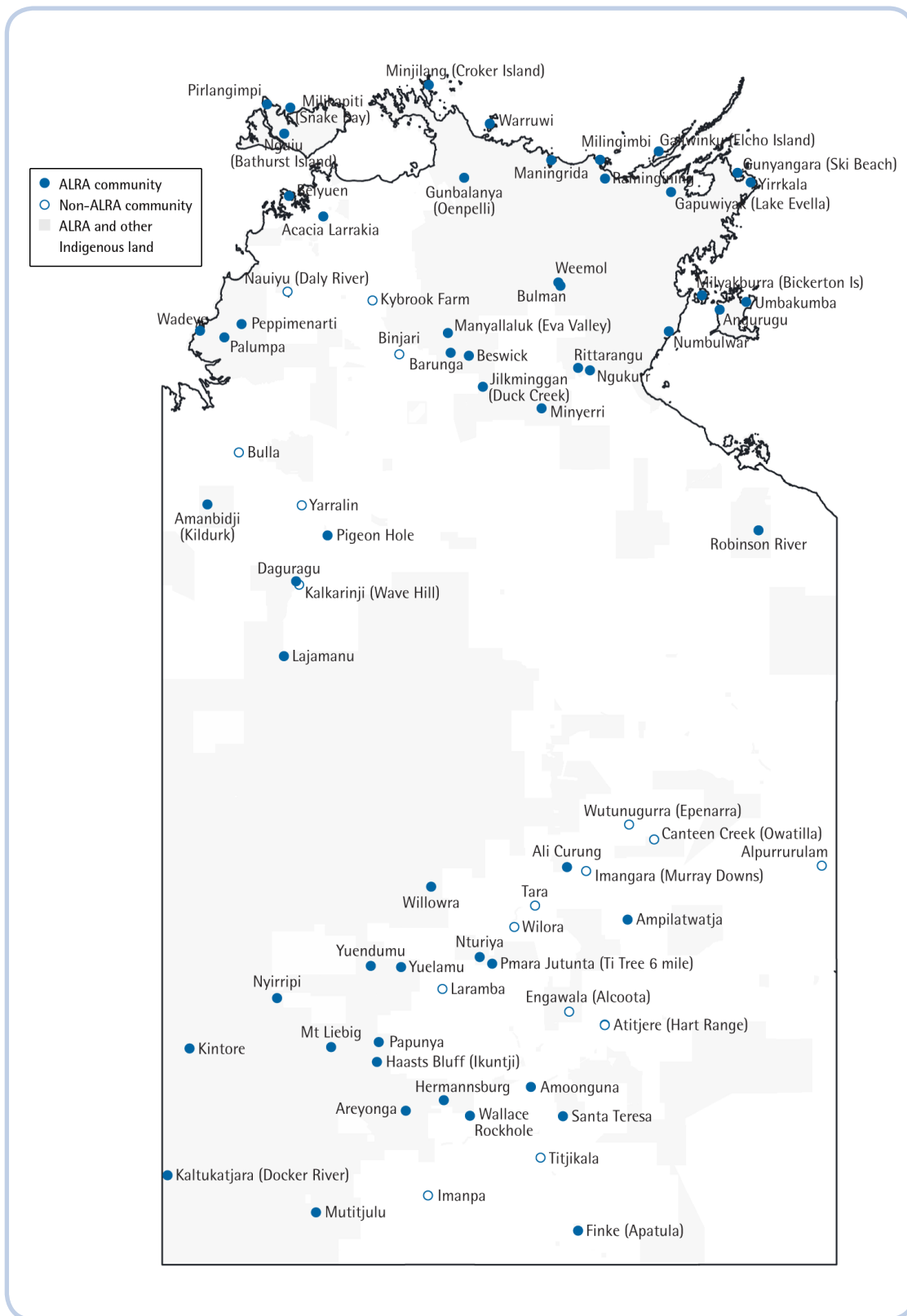
COAG:
Council of
Australian
Governments

What was happening during 2008 and early 2009 in remote Indigenous housing was the continuation of a policy change process which dated back to 2005 and the abolition of ATSIC. Before 2005, for 30 years the predominant approach to remote Indigenous housing had been for governments to provide grant-funded dwellings which were built on Indigenous-owned land and vested in Indigenous Community Housing Organisations. Since 2005, however, first the Northern Territory Government, then the Commonwealth withdrew their support for this approach and switched instead to a public housing model for remote areas on land leased to government by Indigenous owners; together with, possibly, some lease-based individualised home ownership (see Brough 2007; Commonwealth of Australia and Northern Territory of Australia 2005; Dillon 2006; McAdam 2006; Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2007). The announcement of the four-year SIHIP in the Northern Territory in March 2008, and of the new 10-year national remote Indigenous housing program based on the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing in early 2009, both built on and extended this emerging policy change. No longer, as revealed in Table 9, would government-funded Indigenous housing in remote areas be widely dispersed across Indigenous-owned land and vested in Indigenous Community Housing Organisations. Rather it would be provided as concentrations of public housing on leased land in select localities.

Working Future took as given the Commonwealth-nominated list of 15 select localities for concentrations of remote area public housing on Indigenous-owned land in the Northern Territory. All 15 were also nominated, two months later, as TGTs. However, *Working Future* also identified seven more localities to become TGTs, which were Ramingining, Borroloola, Elliot, Ali Curung, Papunya, Kalkarindji and Dagaragu.⁹

These are notable in two respects. The first is that six of the seven are south of Katherine, outside the 'top end' of the Territory. So my foregoing critique of policy by numbers would have shown an *even greater* skew to the tropical savannah north of the Territory if it had been applied to the Commonwealth's 15 priority locations for remote Indigenous housing construction rather than the Northern Territory Government's 20 TGTs. The second notable aspect of the Northern Territory Government's list of TGTs is that three of the

Fig. 3. Northern Territory Indigenous communities on and off land held under ALRA



Source: Adapted from Altman, Buchanan Et Larsen 2007.

additional locations—Borroloola, Elliot and Kalkarandji—are open towns as discussed above. So as well as increasing the number of localities being focused on, the Northern Territory Government also seemed to be trying to broaden the scope of debate to open towns.

ALRA:

Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976

The Commonwealth's focus, by contrast seemed *solely* to be on Indigenous communities on Indigenous-owned land held under its *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA). All 15 of the Commonwealth's priority locations are on land owned by Indigenous people under this Act, which covers a little less than half the Northern Territory as shown in Fig. 3. Not only are there no open towns among the Commonwealth's priority locations, but neither are there any discrete Indigenous communities on other land held by Indigenous people, such as community living area excision settlements. These latter settlements are common in areas of the Northern Territory where there is an active pastoral industry and have been created under Northern Territory, rather than Commonwealth, legislation. Omitting excision settlements from consideration has meant that whole areas of the Territory do not have priority locations—such as to the north and east of Alice Springs and to the west of Katherine (see Fig. 3). This focus on Indigenous land held under the Commonwealth ALRA legislation, and omission from consideration of either other Indigenous-held land or open towns, provides yet another lens on how the Commonwealth's 15 priority locations became so differentially distributed within remote regions of the Territory. Not only was it the more populous remote Indigenous communities that were being focused on, but also, it would seem, only those on land held by Indigenous people under Commonwealth legislation. The Northern Territory Government, in *Working Future*, was just slightly extending this Commonwealth focus.

CONCLUSION

This paper is subtitled 'a critique of policy by numbers' for two distinct reasons. The first is because I use 2006 Census populations counts and numerical data from the 2006 CHINS to demonstrate the way in which *Working Future* skews the distribution of TGTs to the tropical savannah north of the Northern Territory and away from the southern arid zone. The second is because I see both *Working Future* and the collaborative federalism in remote Indigenous housing policy on which it is built, as having rather partial views of existing Indigenous settlement patterns across remote areas of the Northern Territory. These partial and seemingly poorly informed views feed into a simple and perhaps somewhat unrealistic vision of how existing Indigenous settlement patterns may be changed and developed in the future. Australian Indigenous affairs seems to have arrived at a rather strange juncture in which policy is developed without much knowledge of or attention to existing social circumstances, or how they might be reasonably developed and improved. Policy processes are characterised, instead, by a high moral tone in which participants are simply invoked to do much better than in the past, irrespective of existing social realities. When this high moral tone and disregard for existing social circumstances is combined with a simple and inadequate use of statistics, the result is appropriately referred to and critiqued as policy by numbers.

NOTES

1. Visitors from elsewhere in Australia are included in the place of enumeration count, but overseas visitors are excluded.
2. Areas sometimes comprise a single Location but are more commonly groups of two to four Locations. This analysis does not use Areas, but rather focuses on Regions and Locations only.
3. CGC here stands for Community Government Council, a terminology used in Northern Territory local government until 2008. It indicates that the boundaries of the Indigenous Location corresponded with those of a small local government area.
4. These adjacent outstation adjustments are intended to respond to a line of criticism which emerged when I gave an earlier version of this paper as a seminar in Darwin and Canberra. They are however, somewhat arbitrary. For example, Table 4 makes no adjustment for access to Kunbarllanjna from the adjacent Indigenous Location of Kakadu/Marrakai and Table 3 makes no adjustment for access to Yirrkala from the adjacent Indigenous Location of Laynhapuy Homelands. These two adjacent Indigenous Locations are large in geographic area and daily access to the TGTs for most of their residents is questionable.
5. It is also notable that the background for this map is the new local government Shires in the Northern Territory. It was suggested, in response to an earlier draft of this paper, that the Shires would provide better grouping of the statistics than the AIGC Indigenous Regions. This is probably how ABS presentation of Northern Territory census statistics will develop in the future. However the current presentation of 2006 Census statistics by the ABS has not yet caught up with this development of the Shires and still predominantly reflects the AIGC classification developed during the ATSIC years.
6. It is these communities of less than 50 people that are generally referred to as homelands/outstations. As Kerins (2010) makes clear, they have long been tied into larger hub communities for many central-place services.
7. It also promised 'over 230 new houses to replace houses to be demolished', though it is a little unclear as to whether these are in addition to or part of the 'around 750 new houses' (Macklin, Henderson & Snowdon 2008).
8. The community in the March 2008 list of 16 which subsequently dropped out is Milyakburra.
9. By referring to the last two localities on this list, Daguragu and Kalkaringi, as one TGT and doing likewise for Angurugu and Umbakumba on the Commonwealth's list of 15 housing priority locations, the Northern Territory government managed to squeeze 22 communities/localities into its list of 20 TGTs.

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