

**A comparative analysis of the industrial
relations experiences of Indigenous
and other Australian workers**

B.H. Hunter and A.E. Hawke

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Dr Boyd Hunter is a Research Fellow with the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University. He is also a Ronald Henderson Research Fellow. Dr Anne Hawke is Director of the Centre for Applied Economics, The Hawke Institute, School of International Business, University of South Australia.

Foreword

The Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (AWIRS) 1995 offers the first opportunity to systematically analyse the working conditions of Indigenous Australians. This paper uses this information to characterise how these working conditions differ from those experienced by other workers in the same workplaces and, indeed, other workplaces. While the data used is somewhat dated, the situation facing Indigenous Australians has probably not changed much. Given Indigenous labour market disadvantage is slow to change over time, the working conditions facing the average Indigenous employee are also likely to be reasonably stable.

This paper should be read in conjunction with *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 200*, 'Industrial relations in workplaces employing Indigenous Australians', which documents characteristics of workplaces with Indigenous employees compared to other workplaces and provides a detailed review of recent industrial relations reform. In addition to providing the relevant institutional background for this paper, it provides detailed analysis of the techniques used to identify workplaces with Indigenous employees and documents some implications of this methodology for the interpretation of the results. The main results in the companion paper are briefly summarised immediately after the methodology section of the following paper.

Combined, these two papers begin to tease out the interactions between Indigenous workers and the evolving industrial relations system. It is only with the careful consideration of available evidence that this will be achieved. The AWIRS data provide a unique opportunity to push the debate beyond the *a priori* analysis that dominates extant research and, inevitably, can be reduced to ideological statements about what might occur. This paper brings together two protagonists in a recent *Journal of Industrial Relations* debate in order to establish some consensus about the working conditions facing many Indigenous people and explore the policy implications of this reality in a dispassionate manner.

There is considerable conjecture about discrimination against Indigenous Australians in the workplace. I commend this research as an exploratory attempt to use available data to rigorously and systematically assess this hypothesis.

Professor Jon Altman
May 2000

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Summary

Indigenous employment policy needs to be informed by a good understanding of the industrial relations culture of workplaces. For example, the local industrial relations environment is a major factor determining wages, job conditions and the quality of workplace life. This study contrasts the experience of industrial relations for Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers in workplaces with some Indigenous employees.

The Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (AWIRS) 1995 is the first publicly released dataset that permits analysts to directly examine the industrial relations environment in firms that employ Indigenous Australians. Information from the AWIRS employee survey and AWIRS Employee Relations Managers survey are used in the analysis.

Data and method

The AWIRS interviewers successfully collected data from 2,001 workplaces (with 20 or more employees) covering all major Australia and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification divisions except division A (agriculture, forestry and fishing) and sub-division 82 (defence). While AWIRS was conducted across all States and Territories for both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, no workplaces in remote Australia were surveyed. Given that a substantial proportion of the Indigenous workforce live outside urban areas, AWIRS is not representative of all Indigenous workers. However, since Indigenous employment in such areas is predominantly in the 'work-for-dole' Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme, the following analysis could be considered indicative of existing workplaces that employ Indigenous workers.

Differences between Indigenous and other employees in workplaces that employ Indigenous workers

The power of the following analysis lies in the ability to compare the industrial relations experience of Indigenous workers with that of other workers in the same workplaces.

Indigenous respondents to the employee survey are more likely to be managers and professionals than in the (Indigenous) population at large. The Indigenous respondents are also more likely to be in these occupations than non-Indigenous employees in the same workplaces. Since Indigenous managers and professionals are more likely to have bargaining power in the workplace than if they were in manual occupations, caution must be exercised before generalising the following analysis to the total Indigenous workforce.

Notwithstanding the bias towards Indigenous managers, it is possible to make some qualitative statements using the data:

- The relatively poor educational attainment among Indigenous people is widely documented. The AWIRS data reflect this with Indigenous workers being less educated than other workers in the same firms.

- Indigenous employees in AWIRS are more likely to be short-term employees than other workers in workplaces with Indigenous employees. While the relatively short tenure of Indigenous workers may reflect the incursions of Indigenous workers into new fields and occupations, it is more likely to reflect the incidence of non-permanent work. Another explanation could be the higher level of geographic and occupational mobility of Indigenous workers.
- While there is little variation in the incidence of health conditions or disabilities among workplaces, respondents in workplaces with Indigenous employees are slightly more likely to have a health condition or disability than those from other workplaces.
- The fact that Indigenous respondents are less likely to prefer fewer hours and are more likely to prefer more hours of work per week is probably indicative of the fact that underemployment is common among Indigenous workers.
- Indigenous respondents are less likely to get holiday pay and paid sick leave than other respondents in the same workplaces. They are also more likely to have a fixed term contract than non-Indigenous workers.
- While Indigenous respondents are more likely to be able to get permanent part-time work, they are less likely to be able to access maternity/paternity leave or bonuses for job performance than non-Indigenous respondents.
- Indigenous employees are consistently less likely to report that they have control over their working environment. However, they are more likely to indicate they think workplace managers are trustworthy than other respondents in workplaces with Indigenous employees.
- Even within the same workplaces, Indigenous workers are more likely to have days off work because of work-related injury and illness than other workers. For example, Indigenous respondents to the AWIRS employee survey are more than 20 percentage points less likely have had some days off than non-Indigenous respondents. They are also likely to have more days off than non-Indigenous respondents.
- Workplaces with Indigenous employees are more likely to: have a grievance procedure, have an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) committee and to use the grievance procedure to resolve an OHS dispute. Clearly, the existence of mechanisms to deal with OHS problems within a workplace does not appear to have prevented injuries to Indigenous workers, although the incidence among non-Indigenous workers is not significantly different across workplaces.
- Indigenous respondents are 6.6 percentage points less likely to have ever been a union member than non-Indigenous respondents in the same workplaces.
- Once Indigenous respondents have been in a union, they are more likely to indicate satisfaction with union service (50.4 per cent compared to 40.3 per cent of analogous non-Indigenous respondents). In terms of attendance at

union meetings, Indigenous union members are more likely to indicate that they were active union members.

Policy implications

Legislation by itself cannot address the industrial concerns of the Indigenous workforce. Indigenous interests need to be independently and actively articulated within the industrial relations system and statutory framework. Obviously unions are not the only possible advocates for Indigenous interests. Other advocates could include legal aid bodies, Indigenous organisations and, of course, individual Indigenous persons. All of these options require appropriate resources and funding to undertake such advocacy.

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Introduction

Indigenous employment policy needs to be informed by a good understanding of the industrial relations culture of workplaces. For example, the local industrial relations environment is a major factor determining wages, job conditions and the quality of workplace life. Management practices and culture are decisive in shaping working conditions and the experience of employment. Union services and a person's relationship with fellow workers are crucial determinants of their bargaining position in a decentralised system of enterprise bargaining.

Workplace culture is also a crucial aspect of an individual job seeker's decision to accept a job and, once employed, whether they will stay in a job. For example, the prevalence of part-time work and casual work among Indigenous employees may reflect their conditions of employment and the overall quality of workplace life as much as it does the preferences of individual Indigenous workers (Hunter and Gray 1998; Hunter and Gray 1999).

The existing literature provides little or no independent information about the potentially distinct nature of Indigenous experience of Australia's industrial relations system (McCorquodale 1985; Hunter 1997, 1998a; Hawke 1998). For example, the recent *Journal of Industrial Relations* debate provided a general historical and textual analysis of the potential risks and benefits of the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* for Indigenous workers but did not provide any new data.¹ While the legislation will have important consequences for Indigenous workers, policy needs to be grounded in the actual experience of such workers rather than *a priori* theorising about what may, or may not, occur.

Previous studies have tended to focus on census data on the characteristics of employees because of the lack of information on the precise conditions under which Indigenous Australians are employed. The Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (AWIRS) 1995 is the first publicly released dataset that permits analysts to directly examine the industrial relations environment in firms that employ Indigenous Australians. Data on firms/employers are based on the responses in the AWIRS Employee Relations Managers (ERM) survey which explicitly uses the workplace as the unit of analysis. However, where there was a contradiction between ERM responses on the presence of Indigenous workers and those of individual workers in the AWIRS employee survey, the individual's response was given precedence.

The main contribution of this paper is that it sheds light on how Indigenous workers experience industrial relations relative to other workers in the same firms. This theme is explored using the responses of individual workers to the AWIRS employee survey. This paper should be read in conjunction with Hunter and Hawke (forthcoming) which documents the characteristics of workplaces with Indigenous employees compared to other workplaces and provides a detailed review of recent industrial relations reform. Combined, these two papers begin to tease out the interactions between Indigenous workers and the evolving industrial

relations system. The main results in Hunter and Hawke (forthcoming) are summarised immediately after the following section on methodology.

Data and method

AWIRS provides data on Indigenous employment from the ERM and the employees themselves. The main issues covered in the AWIRS questionnaires include: workplace characteristics, management practices, workplace agreements, grievance procedures, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), award coverage, recruitment methods, attitudes to unions as well as the industrial relations experience of individual workers. The responses to such questions should provide a detailed, albeit preliminary, understanding of how Indigenous workers experience modern Australian workplaces.

As noted in Morehead et al. (1997), 120 interviewers from across Australia conducted face-to-face interviews at 2,704 workplaces. Each interviewer was trained at one of nine three-day courses. Each interviewer was required to contact the most senior manager at a workplace selected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Business Register. They then arranged appointment times, conducted interviews, selected employees if an employee survey was to be conducted, returned to the workplace to collect the surveys and ensured the workplace characteristics questionnaire was completed.

The AWIRS interviewers successfully collected data from 2,001 workplaces (with 20 or more employees) covering all major Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification (ANZSIC) divisions except Division A (agriculture, forestry and fishing) and Sub-division 82 (defence). While AWIRS was conducted across all States and Territories for both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, no workplaces in remote Australia were surveyed. Rural areas are effectively excluded by the decision to leave the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry out of the sample. Given that a substantial proportion of the Indigenous workforce live outside of urban areas, AWIRS is not representative of all Indigenous workers. However, since Indigenous employment in such areas is predominantly in the 'work-for-dole' Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme, the following analysis could be considered indicative of existing workplaces that employ Indigenous workers.²

This paper uses information from both the ERM and employee surveys to draw conclusions about Indigenous industrial relations. However, it should be noted that there is some discrepancy between responses to the ERM and employee surveys. There were 101 workplaces where workers identified themselves as Indigenous in the employee survey but the ERM indicated that there were no Indigenous workers in the workplace. While the following results are not sensitive to the discrepancy in responses, Appendix A includes further discussion of the potential biases involved.

For the rest of this paper, workplaces with Indigenous employees are defined as those where there are any workers identified by management as Indigenous or where respondents to the employee survey indicated that they were

Indigenous. Therefore the basic dichotomy is between workplaces that employ at least one Indigenous person and those that employ only non-Indigenous people. Using all available information from AWIRS there are 1,066 workplaces which employ only non-Indigenous workers and 725 workplaces that employ some Indigenous people.³ While this may seem large relative to the proportion of the population who identified as Indigenous at the last census, many workplaces (both large and small) only employ one or two Indigenous workers.

The next section uses variables, taken exclusively from the ERM survey, which are designed to characterise workplaces both with and without Indigenous employees. These variables, based on the responses of managers, cover areas such as workforce/workplace characteristics, EEO, OHS, award coverage and management practices.

The remainder of the paper uses information from the AWIRS 1995 employee survey to analyse how the employment experience differs for Indigenous and other workers in workplaces with Indigenous employees. The employee survey permits analysis of differences in the personal characteristics of individual workers including: educational attainment, occupation, tenure of employment at a workplace, the general industrial relations experience (such as job characteristics, preferences for work, perceptions of influence over working conditions and whether management is trustworthy), the incidence of work-related injury or illness and union membership and participation. The responses from Indigenous workers are compared to those of non-Indigenous workers in the same workplaces (that is, the 725 workplaces with Indigenous employees).

The analysis of the employee survey must be qualified by the fact that there were only 245 Indigenous respondents. The relatively small sample of Indigenous workers means that the results may be sensitive to a few idiosyncratic responses. Appendix A directly addresses the representativeness of the sample and concludes that, in broad terms, the following results are indicative of Indigenous experience of industrial relations. Future research could minimise the problem by using regression analysis to hold other variables constant. For example, wages should be analysed using regression because the variation in individual circumstances (education, experience, geography etc.) is likely to determine the wage received. The 'down side' to using more sophisticated statistical techniques is that such analysis must focus on an overly specific question. Consequently, this paper explores most of the major issues covered in the employee survey using simple cross tabulations.

Are workplaces with Indigenous employees different from other workplaces?

Hunter and Hawke (2000) identify the salient differences between workplaces with Indigenous employees and other workplaces. The general workplace characteristics of the respective workplaces are analysed followed by the relative incidence of award conditions, individual contracts, workplace agreements, grievance procedures, policies on EEO and affirmative action, the coverage of

federal awards and recruitment methods in various occupations. In general, the results were not sensitive to controlling for sector of employment or workplace size.

Workplaces with Indigenous employees are more likely to operate 24 hours a day than other workplaces. This may be indicative of the fact that the cost of capital in such workplaces is relatively high compared to the cost of labour and therefore firms seek to maximise the time that the plant and equipment is in operation. Another feature of workplaces with Indigenous employees is that they have a similar incidence of the use of casual labour as other workplaces. The use of contract labour is more pronounced in workplaces with Indigenous employees which are 9.5 percentage points more likely to have used contractor labour.

One revealing insight is that workplaces with Indigenous employees are more likely to be in the non-commercial private sector than other workplaces. Therefore, in addition to being more involved in the public sector and government business enterprises, Indigenous workers are probably more likely to be employed in charities, churches and non-governmental welfare bodies than other workers. The previous analysis of Indigenous involvement in the private sector tends to ignore this fact because the non-commercial private sector was analysed together with the rest of the private sector (Altman and Taylor 1995; Taylor and Hunter 1997).⁴

Managers and professionals in workplaces with Indigenous employees were more likely to be receiving award rates of pay than other workplaces and less likely to be receiving over-award rates of pay and conditions. There was not much difference between workplaces in access to award rates for other occupations. All occupations employed in workplaces with Indigenous employees tend to have relatively low rates of access to over-award pay and conditions. It appears that wage rates in these workplaces are much more likely to be based on the standards set in the award with less emphasis on increments to salaries and conditions through either over-award rates or contracts. However, this could also be a reflection of their greater concentration in the public sector and paid rates awards.⁵

External advertisements are the major recruitment method for all occupations but are more likely to be used in workplaces with Indigenous employees than other workplaces. There appears to be little difference in the use of internal advertisements between workplaces. Indeed, if anything, workplaces with Indigenous employees are more likely to use internal advertisements, especially for non-managerial and non-professional occupations. Given that workplaces with Indigenous employees have substantially more basic firm-specific training and on-the-job training, it should not be surprising that managers use internal advertisements to recruit since it should be easier to ascertain the quality and reliability of applicants.

In the context of this paper, it is particularly significant that OHS and EEO are relatively prominent issues in workplaces that employ Indigenous employees. Such workplaces are more than 15 percentage points more likely to have elected OHS representatives compared to other workplaces. While these workplaces are

also 20 percentage points more likely to have an OHS committee, there is some variation in the incidence of OHS committees among workplaces with Indigenous employees.

Workplaces with Indigenous employees are much more likely to have a written policy on racial harassment and a formal grievance procedure to resolve disputes that arise relating to either racial or sexual harassment. The ability to resolve disputes revolving around racial discrimination may form part of the attraction of such workplaces for Indigenous people. Another attractive feature of these workplaces for Indigenous workers is their greater access to family or carers leave. Such workplaces are also more likely to have managers trained in issues relating to EEO, affirmative action and sexual harassment. These workplaces are also more likely to try new management practices such as team building, staff appraisals and evaluation schemes.

Workplaces with Indigenous employees are more than twice as likely to have had to use a grievance procedure for discrimination (including either racial or sexual harassment) than other workplaces. Workplaces with Indigenous employees were also substantially more likely to have used the grievance procedure for OHS disputes. The relatively high usage of procedures for discrimination does not necessarily reflect poorly on such workplaces because it is difficult to have a case of discrimination if one works in a homogenous workplace environment. That is, culturally diverse workplaces are more likely to need to address the issue of discrimination. If workplaces without Indigenous employees were to hire Indigenous workers, then they would probably become more likely to use a grievance procedure for racial discrimination. It is difficult to sustain a claim of racial discrimination if there is no, or little, racial diversity in a workplace.

Finally, the coverage of federal awards in workplaces with Indigenous employees is substantially lower, for all occupations, than in other workplaces. The implication here is that changes embodied in the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* are less likely to affect workplaces with Indigenous employees, than workplaces without Indigenous employees. For industrial relations reforms to affect the majority of Indigenous workers it will need to address both the State and federal systems. However, in terms of minimum conditions in awards, the general direction in workplace relations reform across the states has also been moving from centralised to decentralised arrangements, with a smaller role for unions.

Given these systematic differences in the workplace culture and management practices between workplaces with Indigenous employees and other workplaces, it is important to attempt to control for workplace environment. The following section does this by contrasting the experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers in workplaces with Indigenous employees. These results are benchmarked against non-Indigenous workers in other workplaces.

An analysis of the industrial relations experiences of Indigenous and other employees

The previous section provides a brief profile of the sorts of workplaces that Indigenous people work in. It is based on information provided by managers about the overall characteristics of their organisations. However, the experience of a workplace, in industrial relations terms, may differ substantially for Indigenous and other workers. Using the AWIRS 1995 employee survey, this section details how industrial relations experiences may differ for workers in the same workplace.

The characteristics of workers in workplaces that do not employ any Indigenous workers are presented as a benchmark for the analysis. On average, one would expect non-Indigenous experiences to be similar across workplaces. However, it is possible that non-Indigenous experience will differ markedly if Indigenous workers displace non-Indigenous workers from traditional roles/occupations in workplaces that employ Indigenous workers (for example, in Indigenous organisations). In that case, non-Indigenous people employed in workplaces with Indigenous employees could have a fundamentally different experience than non-Indigenous workers in other workplaces, at least in terms of their occupational status. Note that this effect is probably only important in Indigenous organisations. Given the small number of Indigenous organisations in the AWIRS survey, the distortion arising from the possible displacement of roles in workplaces with Indigenous workers can be discounted in the rest of the analysis.⁶

While this analysis provides the first insight into Indigenous workers' experience of industrial relations, it is important to bear in mind the following caveats. The first problem is that AWIRS is predominantly an urban survey, which misses out many Indigenous workers in remote Australia. In addition to the fact that workplaces are not necessarily representative of the average workplace of Indigenous workers, respondents to the employee survey may not even be representative of the workers in a particular firm. The main problem arises because of the selective response to the employee questionnaire. If selectivity problems are particularly pronounced for part-time and casual staff, because responding may be more difficult to comply with within their working week, this may disproportionately effect the reported results for Indigenous workers. Notwithstanding, the following provides the most accurate assessment yet possible of the differences and similarities in the industrial relations experiences of Indigenous and other workers.

Before analysing the differences between responses to the employee survey it is worth reflecting on whether the sample is representative of the population at large (Appendix Table A2). The major differences between the 1996 Census and the AWIRS 1995 employee survey responses are largely driven by AWIRS sampling a particular set of workplaces in urban Australia. For example, after excluding census employment in the agriculture and defence industries to ensure comparability with the AWIRS sample, there is a clear tendency to over-sample

workers in manufacturing and electricity gas and water industries. Among Indigenous workers, AWIRS under-samples the health and community services sector — probably reflecting a concentration of Indigenous health workers in non-urban Australia. However, given the geographically specific nature of the AWIRS sample, it is probably surprising that there is not more differences between the 1996 Census and the AWIRS sample.

Differences in employee response between workplaces with Indigenous employees and other workplaces may be a result of management diligence in securing the cooperation of their workforce in completing questionnaires. In general, there is little difference between the non-Indigenous response rates for workplaces with and without Indigenous employees. The exceptions are in Government administration and manufacturing.

The differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous responses in workplaces with Indigenous employees might be driven by the selective response to the employee questionnaire. Given that respondents are employed in the same workplaces, it is unlikely that the variation in management practices is responsible for differential response rates. However, it is not possible to discount the possibility that some managers may have been more or less diligent in encouraging Indigenous workers to complete questionnaires. For example, the higher response rate for Indigenous employees in Government administration industry might be explained by public servant managers drawing Indigenous workers' attention to the questionnaire.

Notwithstanding minor exceptions, the overall response rates of Indigenous and other employees in workplaces that employ Indigenous workers appears to be largely random and, therefore, it is possible to directly compare responses to the employee survey in such workplaces. Similarly, the employee responses in other workplaces are not too dissimilar to those in workplaces that employ Indigenous workers. The remainder of the paper benchmarks Indigenous experience of industrial relations to that of non-Indigenous workers in workplaces with Indigenous employees and workers in other workplaces. Unfortunately, given the relatively large difference between the distribution of industry identified by employees in the census and AWIRS, the results should not be generalised to be representative of the population either Indigenous or other Australian workers.

Differences between Indigenous and other employees in workplaces that employ Indigenous workers

The power of the following analysis lies in the possibility it provides to compare the industrial relations experience of Indigenous workers with that of other workers in the same workplaces. However, experiences may differ because people fulfil differing functions within a firm and have differing levels of other observable and unobservable characteristics (for example, education and motivation respectively). Needless to say, unobservable characteristics are difficult or impossible to control for in a simple tabular analysis. The next two tables provide data on variations in education and occupation of workers in the AWIRS 1995

employee sample as a means of discussing potential extraneous sources of variation in the industrial relations experiences of Indigenous and other workers in the same workplaces.

The relatively poor educational attainment of Indigenous people is widely documented (Hunter and Schwab 1998). Gray, Hunter and Schwab (2000) show that despite some absolute improvements in Indigenous educational outcomes between 1986 and 1996, there have been little if any real gains relative to the non-Indigenous population. Table 1 reflects this, showing Indigenous workers to be less educated than other workers in the same firms. For example, the first line shows that 5.7 per cent of Indigenous workers have only a primary school education. In contrast, 2.7 per cent of non-Indigenous workers in workplaces with Indigenous employees left school immediately after primary school. Non-Indigenous workers in other workplaces have a similar incidence of employees for whom primary school is the highest level of education attained (2.4 per cent).

Indigenous workers are also more likely to have left school immediately after Year 10 than other workers in the same workplaces (40.0 per cent compared to 26.2 per cent). The incidence of employees who nominate Year 12 (completion of secondary school) as the highest level of education does not differ much between Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers.

Table 1. Highest level of education attained by presence of Indigenous employees in workplace (per cent), 1995

	Workplaces without Indigenous employees		Workplaces with Indigenous employees	
	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Level of education attained				
Primary school	2.4	5.7	2.7	
Year 10	28.7	40.0	26.2	
Completed secondary school	19.5	18.3	17.2	
Basic vocational	4.3	8.3	4.4	
Skilled vocational	11.3	7.0	12.5	
Associate Diploma	9.3	7.8	9.5	
Undergraduate	13.2	5.2	14.6	
Postgraduate	9.1	6.1	11.0	
Other	2.2	1.7	1.9	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Number of observations	10,558	235	7,477	

Source: Unpublished cross-tabulations of AWIRS 1995 data.

In general, Indigenous workers are less likely to have a qualification than other workers. The only exception to this generalisation is that Indigenous workers are more likely to have completed a basic vocational course but not

secured any further qualifications. The poor level of educational attainment among Indigenous workers is particularly pronounced among graduate-level qualifications. Non-Indigenous employees are almost three times more likely to hold an undergraduate qualification than Indigenous employees in the same workplaces (14.6 per cent compared to 5.2 per cent). While the incidence of post-graduate qualifications is also more pronounced among non-Indigenous employees, the sample of Indigenous workers in AWIRS seems well qualified relative to the population estimates for the 1996 Census (Gray, Hunter and Schwab 2000).

The final observation from Table 1 is that there is very little difference in the educational qualifications of non-Indigenous workers across workplaces. That is, educational attainment is unlikely to be a major source of variation in the industrial relations experiences of non-Indigenous workers in workplaces with Indigenous employees and other Australian workplaces.

Table 2 shows the occupational distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees in AWIRS. For example, 6.1 and 7.9 per cent of Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers in workplaces with Indigenous employees are labourers. Slightly more non-Indigenous workers in other workplaces are labourers (8.6 per cent). The similarity in these estimates is remarkable given the relative concentration of Indigenous workers in manual occupations in the Census (Taylor 1994). At the other end of the occupational scale, Indigenous respondents to the employee survey are more likely to be managers and professionals than in the (Indigenous) population at large (Taylor 1994). Indigenous respondents are also more likely to be in these occupations than non-Indigenous respondents in the same workplaces. Similarly, these Indigenous workers are also more likely to be a professional than non-Indigenous respondents. The occupational distribution of non-Indigenous employees in AWIRS is broadly consistent with that in the census-based estimates.

In contrast to the observed patterns in educational attainment being basically consistent with census estimates (Table 1), occupational distribution of Indigenous respondents is clearly at variance with our expectations. This implies that Indigenous managers in workplaces that employ Indigenous people are less likely to be tertiary educated than non-Indigenous managers. If education is an important aspect of an informed management decision-making process, then this may have some implications for the quality of management in such workplaces. However, this should not be an issue as long as these managers have access to well informed, appropriately educated professional advice.

Clearly, occupation is a potentially extraneous source of variation in the industrial relations experiences of Indigenous and other workers in the same workplaces. Indigenous managers and professionals are more likely to have bargaining power in the workplace than those in manual occupations. Hence, caution must be exercised before generalising the following analysis to the total Indigenous workforce. Notwithstanding the bias in the AWIRS employee sample towards Indigenous managers, it may be possible to make some qualitative statements using the data. For example, if Indigenous respondents are less likely

to feel they have no control of the industrial relations environment than other workers, then the differential is probably understated due to the disproportionate number of managers among the AWIRS Indigenous sample. However, the opposite finding may result from either the unexpectedly good industrial relations experience of Indigenous workers or the sample's bias towards Indigenous managers.

Table 2. Occupation by presence of Indigenous employees in workplace (per cent), 1995

	Workplaces without Indigenous employees		Workplaces with Indigenous employees	
	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Occupations				
Labourers	8.6	6.1		7.9
Plant operators	15.3	9.6		17.3
Sales	10.5	10.0		14.0
Clerks	8.1	9.6		9.1
Tradespersons	18.3	16.1		18.7
Para-professional	14.4	10.9		9.1
Professionals	9.2	13.5		9.8
Managers	14.7	23.5		13.2
Other	0.8	0.9		0.9
Total	100.0	100.0		100.0

Note: See Table 1 for number of observations in each category.

Source: Unpublished cross-tabulations of AWIRS 1995 data.

Indigenous employees in the AWIRS are more likely to be short-term employees than other workers in workplaces with Indigenous employees (Table 3). For example, 22.8 per cent of the Indigenous sample worked for less than one year in their current workplace. Of non-Indigenous employees in the same workplaces, only 16.6 per cent worked less than one year in that workplace. The analogous statistic for non-Indigenous employees in other workplaces is also less than that of Indigenous workers (17.3 per cent). The Indigenous sample of AWIRS is also more likely to have worked between one and four years in the current workplace. Conversely, Indigenous employees are less likely to work in their current workplace for five or more years.

The relatively short tenure of Indigenous workers is a probably a reflection of a greater prevalence of casual and impermanent work and the historic concentration of Indigenous workers in the secondary labour market. While it may also reflect incursions of Indigenous workers into new fields and occupations, it is more likely to reflect the incidence of non-permanent work. For example, workplaces with Indigenous employees are more likely to have casuals and contractors than other workplaces, especially in the private, non-commercial

sector (see Hunter and Hawke 2000). Another explanation for the shorter tenure of Indigenous employees could be the higher level of geographic and occupational mobility of Indigenous workers.

Table 3. Length of time at workplaces by presence of Indigenous employees in workplace (per cent), 1995

	Workplaces without Indigenous employees		Workplaces with Indigenous employees	
	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Length of time at this workplace				
Less than one year	17.3	22.8	22.8	16.2
1 to 4 years	35.5	38.8	38.8	33.4
5 to 9 years	25.5	18.5	18.5	25.7
10 or more years	21.7	19.8	19.8	24.7
Total (per cent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: See Table 1 for number of observations in each category.

Source: Unpublished cross-tabulations of AWIRS 1995 data.

Table 4 summarises the personal characteristics and experience of industrial relations of respondents to AWIRS 1995 employee survey. For example, Indigenous respondents are slightly more likely to be males than non-Indigenous respondents in the same workplaces (60.0 per cent and 56.4 per cent, respectively). Non-Indigenous respondents in workplaces without Indigenous employees are even less likely to be males. That is, more males responded to the survey in workplaces with Indigenous employees than in other workplaces.

The other variables in Table 4 document the industrial relations experience of respondents. While there is little variation in the incidence of health conditions or disabilities among workplaces, respondents in workplaces with Indigenous employees are slightly more likely to report a health condition or disability than those from other workplaces.

Table 4 shows that Indigenous respondents are less likely to prefer fewer hours and are more likely to prefer more hours of work per week. This is probably indicative of the fact that underemployment is common among Indigenous workers (Hunter and Gray 1999). There is relatively little difference between non-Indigenous workers in workplaces with Indigenous employees and other workplaces. The bias of Indigenous respondents towards managerial and professional occupations means that the extent of underemployment is likely to be understated in the AWIRS data.

Indigenous respondents are about five percentage points less likely to get holiday pay and paid sick leave than non-Indigenous respondents in same workplaces. That is, consistent with our expectations, Indigenous workers are more likely to be casual employees (defined on the eligibility for holiday pay and sick leave). Non-Indigenous respondents in workplaces without Indigenous

employees are also less likely to be casual workers than Indigenous respondents to AWIRS, although the differential is not large. Indigenous respondents are also more likely to have a fixed term contract than non-Indigenous workers. Again, the occupational bias in the sample is likely to understate the incidence of casual work among Indigenous workers.

Table 4. General Industrial relations experience by presence of Indigenous employees in workplace (per cent), 1995

	Workplaces without Indigenous employees		Workplaces with Indigenous employees	
	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous
Male	54.8	60.0	56.4	
Health condition or disability	7.6	8.6	9.2	
Prefer to work fewer hours per week	16.4	13.3	17.4	
Prefer to work more hours per week	8.4	12.0	7.7	
Get paid holiday leave	89.5	86.8	91.8	
Get paid sick leave	89.0	86.4	91.3	
On a fixed term contract	6.9	14.3	10.4	
Employer provided job training last year	64.4	63.6	66.8	
Can get permanent part-time work	55.7	60.8	58.3	
Can get maternity/paternity leave	79.2	76.6	83.4	
Bonuses for job performance last year	23.6	19.2	20.9	
Consulted about any changes in last 12 months	61.9	60.5	65.1	
Given chance to have say in last 12 months	53.6	49.8	54.1	
No influence over type of work	19.2	21.6	18.7	
No influence over how work done	7.6	12.4	7.1	
No influence over starting/finishing time	34.0	38.7	32.7	
No influence over pace of work	14.1	22.2	14.4	
No influence over decisions which affect worker	27.0	33.0	26.3	
Workplace management are trustworthy	38.7	39.4	30.9	

Note: See Table 1 for number of observations in each category.

Source: Unpublished cross-tabulations of AWIRS 1995 data.

The variation in working conditions is less systematic. As indicated above, workplaces with Indigenous employees are more likely to have job training provided by employers than other workplaces. However, Indigenous respondents are less likely to have received such training than non-Indigenous respondents in both types of workplaces. Indigenous respondents are actually more likely to be able to get permanent part-time work, but less likely to be able to get access to maternity/paternity leave or bonuses for job performance than non-Indigenous

respondents. If one bears in mind the occupational bias in the AWIRS Indigenous employee sample towards managers, then the poor access to employment conditions is an understatement of the true situation. Given that Indigenous families are much larger than other families the constraint on maternity/paternity leave is particularly concerning. That is, inability to access maternity/paternity leave is likely to be an impediment to ongoing Indigenous employment and is likely to contribute to the relatively high incidence of impermanent work.

Indigenous employees are consistently less likely to report that they have control over their working environment. While there was relatively little difference in the satisfaction of non-Indigenous respondents across workplaces, Indigenous respondents are about five percentage points less likely to indicate some degree of control or influence over work. Indigenous respondents were less likely to indicate that they had been consulted about any changes in the last 12 months. Indigenous employees were more likely to indicate they had no influence over: type of work, how work was done, the starting/finishing time, pace of work and other decisions which affect workers.

Ironically, Indigenous respondents are more likely to indicate they think workplace managers are trustworthy than other respondents in workplaces with Indigenous employees. The disjuncture between Indigenous attitudes to management and their experience of industrial relations might be explained, in part, by loyalty to Indigenous managers. Given that non-Indigenous respondents in workplaces without Indigenous employees trust management in a similar proportion to Indigenous respondents, it could be argued that non-Indigenous workers who work with Indigenous employees have a disproportionate distrust of management. Notwithstanding, in none of the workplace categories examined did trust of management exceed 40 per cent. That is, distrust of management is a prevalent attitude in Australian workplaces.

Table 5 indicates the incidence of work-related injury or illness among Indigenous and other workers. Even within the same workplaces, Indigenous workers are more likely to have days off work than other workers are. For example, Indigenous respondents to the AWIRS employee survey are more than 20 percentage points less likely have had some days off than non-Indigenous respondents in either workplaces with Indigenous employees or other workplaces. Indigenous respondents are also likely to have more days off because of work-related injury and illness than non-Indigenous respondents. Note that non-Indigenous workers have a similar profile of work-related injury or illness irrespective of whether Indigenous employees work in workplace.

Given the relative abundance of Indigenous respondents in managerial and other high status occupations (Table 2), the incidence of illness among Indigenous workers cannot be explained solely by labour market segmentation. While it is possible that differences can be explained by the fact that many Indigenous employees are working in relatively new role/job/occupations, the size of the differential means that it is likely to be an important issue. The differential

provides disturbing evidence that work-related injury or illness among Indigenous workers needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

Table 5. Number of days off from most recent incident of work-related injury/illness by presence of Indigenous employees in workplace (per cent), 1995

	Workplaces without Indigenous employees	Workplaces with Indigenous employees	
	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Number of days off from most recent work-related injury/illness			
No days off	52.2	30.6	52.1
1 to 4 days	26.1	30.6	24.3
5 to 9 days	9.0	12.2	8.6
10 or more days	12.7	26.5	15.0

Note: See Table 1 for number of observations in each category.

Source: Unpublished cross-tabulations of AWIRS 1995 data.

Hunter and Hawke (200) show that workplaces with Indigenous employees are more likely to have a grievance procedure, have an OHS committee and use the grievance procedure to resolve an OHS dispute. Clearly the existence of mechanisms to deal with OHS problems within a workplace do not appear to have prevented injuries to Indigenous workers, although the incidence among non-Indigenous workers is not significantly different across workplaces. The next question to arise is whether Indigenous workers are being adequately represented on official bodies which deal with OHS disputes. This question can be indirectly examined by analysing the access to union services by Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers.

Table 6 describes the incidence of union membership, satisfaction with union services and attendance at union meetings in the 12 months before the AWIRS. Indigenous respondents are 6.6 percentage points less likely to have ever been a union member than non-Indigenous respondents in the same workplaces (57.3 per cent and 63.9 per cent, respectively). However, non-Indigenous respondents in other workplaces are slightly less likely to have ever been a union member than Indigenous respondents.

The raw data on union membership presents a more complex picture than Pat Dodson indicated in the Western Australian Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Commonwealth of Australia 1991). Dodson claimed that the fact that the industrial relations system focussed on employment, workers conditions and wages meant the Aboriginal population was largely left outside the Union process. The evidence from AWIRS appears to indicate that Indigenous workers are more likely to be unionised than workers in other firms, but less likely to be in a union than non-Indigenous workers in the

same workplaces. Given AWIRS's occupational bias in the sample of Indigenous employees and that managers and professionals are less likely to be in a union than other occupations, the estimate of unionism among Indigenous workers is likely to be conservative.

Table 6. Union services by presence of Indigenous employees in workplace (per cent), 1995

	Workplaces without Indigenous employees	Workplaces with Indigenous employees	
	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Ever been a union member	54.0	57.3	63.9
Satisfied with union service	42.5	50.4	40.3
If union member, how many union meetings attended in last 12 months			
Attended most	35.2	38.1	31.8
Attended some	32.3	28.9	37.9
Not attended any	22.3	19.6	22.7
No meeting held	10.2	13.4	7.7

Note: See Table 1 for number of observations in each category.

Source: Unpublished cross-tabulations of AWIRS 1995 data.

Once Indigenous respondents have been in a union, they are more likely to indicate satisfaction with union service. Just over one-half, or 50.4 per cent, of Indigenous respondents who indicated union membership were satisfied with union service compared to 40.3 per cent of analogous non-Indigenous respondents in the same workplaces. Indeed, as a proportion of all workers, irrespective of previous union membership, Indigenous workers are more likely to be satisfied union members than other workers in the same workplaces.

In terms of attendance at union meetings, Indigenous union members are more likely to indicate that they were active union members. Among Indigenous unionists, 38.1 per cent indicated they attended most union meetings in the previous 12 months, compared to 31.8 per cent of non-Indigenous unionists in the same workplaces. This differential would probably be larger but for the higher incidence of Indigenous respondents who reported that no union meeting was held in that period. Note that the variation in incidence of meetings within the same workplaces may be a result of the differential coverage of unions for the jobs undertaken by Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents and the random nature of the timing of many industrial issues.

The overall conclusion is that union membership and participation is more common than previously thought. While the workplaces in AWIRS are probably not as costly to service as those in remote Australia, unions appear to be addressing issues of importance to Indigenous workers. Notwithstanding, unions should be mindful of the need to service disadvantaged clients in non-urban areas.

This section documented several areas in which Indigenous workers need some form of active and informed representation within the industrial relations system. The poor access to maternity/paternity leave, the apparent lack of control over the working environment and the relatively high incidence of work-related injury and illness mean that Indigenous interests need to be considered by unions and policy makers. The failure to take into account legitimate industrial relations concerns contributes to ongoing employment disadvantage among the Indigenous population.

Discussion

This paper documents the unique aspects of Indigenous experience of 'mainstream' employment and points to several areas in which Indigenous workers need active and informed representation within the industrial relations system. The poor access to maternity/paternity leave, the apparent lack of control over the working environment and the relatively high incidence of work-related injury and illness suggest that as a group, the needs of Indigenous people have not been seriously considered by either unions and policy makers. This failure to take into account legitimate industrial relations concerns contributes to on-going employment problems and socioeconomic disadvantage in the Indigenous community.

The extent of disadvantage identified in this paper provides a compelling justification for a clearly defined, comprehensive strategy involving not only Indigenous people, but employers, governments and unions. Consideration should be given to investigating legislative initiatives from other developed countries which have been successful in facilitating improvements in employment outcomes of indigenous people.

It is important to recall, however, that the findings of the paper refer to the period prior to the enactment of the *Workplace Relations Act 1996*. Given that Eichbaum (1997) and others suggest this Act has negatively impacted on the capacity of union to organise labour, it is possible that industrial relations outcomes for Indigenous people has declined further since data used in this paper was collected. This factor heightens the need for action.

Poor outcomes for Indigenous people in work are, however, only part of the issue. Serious impediments remain to Indigenous people entering the formal labour market. Indeed, as identified by Altman and Hawke (1993), it is important than any focus on improving the industrial relations experience of Indigenous people should also include efforts to ensure that increases in segregation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees does not occur. That is, governments have a responsibility to ensure the institutional framework facilitates rather than hinders the movement of individuals between jobs.

One example of how the legislative framework could be strengthened to improve outcomes include changes to anti-discrimination legislation. One case highlighting the potential for legislative remedies includes *Bligh and others v. State of Queensland* (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Nos.

H95/74-80 and H96/88, 28 January 1997). In this case, a number of Indigenous residents of Palm Island were found to have been discriminated against in the course of their employment in that they were paid less than that to which they were entitled and such discriminatory conduct was based solely upon their Aboriginality. The case suggests some shortcomings in pursuing employment discrimination issues outside the industrial relations arena. The monetary compensation awarded by the Commission was considerably less than rough calculations made by the complainants about the additional money they would have been entitled to under the closest relevant awards. In awarding \$7,000 to each successful complainant, the Commission stated that it 'would be unrealistic to attempt now to decide what precise amount was lost by each complainant'. The ruling came 13 years after the last documented incident of discrimination by the Queensland Government. The prolonged nature of the dispute shows that there is room for industrial relations procedures, such as equal employment opportunity provisions in awards, which go beyond simple prohibition of discriminatory award provisions by actively seeking to eliminate discriminatory practices in the short and medium term.

Another example of the need for legislative reform is in the OHS area.⁷ The existing legislative mechanisms dealing with OHS issues have not prevented an acceptable level of injuries among Indigenous workers in 1995. Unfortunately, the situation may have been exacerbated by the Workplace Relations Act, which directly reduced the number of avenues for addressing unsafe work practices and conditions by listing OHS and clothing provisions, workplace amenities and rest periods as non-allowable matters for the purposes of awards (Hunter 1997).

Legislation, by itself, cannot address the industrial concerns of the Indigenous workforce. Despite the professed satisfaction with union services among Indigenous respondents to AWIRS, there is a need for an independent, Indigenous voice within the workplace, especially in the areas of OHS and racial discrimination. Obviously, unions are not the only possible advocates for Indigenous interests. Other possibilities include legal aid bodies, Indigenous organisations and, of course, individual Indigenous persons. All of these options require appropriate resources and funding to undertake such advocacy. If history is any guide, Indigenous interests will continue to be ignored unless institutional and financial incentives are consistent with an adequate level of advocacy.

Clearly, an integrated strategy to address the industrial concerns of the Indigenous workforce is required. Indigenous interests need to be *independently* and *actively* articulated within the industrial relations system and statutory framework. Governments in particular have a duty to provide leadership in facilitating improved outcomes for Indigenous employees. History suggests that without this leadership, improvements in outcomes for Indigenous people may be difficult to achieve.

Notes

1. For example, Hunter (1997) concludes that while the Act includes provisions intended to address discrimination, several amendments may have adverse consequences for indigenous people. Amendments of particular concern to indigenous employees fall into the broad areas of the role of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, awards, agreement-making, termination of employment and union rights.
2. Under the CDEP scheme indigenous communities receive a grant of a similar size to their collective unemployment benefit entitlement to undertake community defined 'work'. The benefit recipients are then expected to work part-time for their entitlements. Historically the CDEP scheme was available on a one-in-all-in basis for each community. The current policy that evolved gradually in the mid-1990s, however, allows the unemployed the choice as to whether or not they participate in the scheme, when the CDEP scheme is provided in a community (Altman and Gray 2000).

Originally the CDEP scheme was available only to remote communities but in recent years its geographic dispersion has increased and there are numerous CDEP schemes in urban areas. Nonetheless, CDEP schemes are predominantly concentrated in rural and remote regions that have very poor non-CDEP employment prospects (Altman and Hunter 1996; Altman and Gray 2000). It is unlikely that there is significant displacement of non-CDEP employment with CDEP employment.
3. The main analysis is based on a sample of 1,791 workplaces for which there was reliable information for both managers and employees. Of the original 2,001 workplaces in AWIRS, there are 20 responses (workplaces) missing from workplace questions, while 210 workplaces are missing when data from the ERM and employee surveys are combined.
4. Note that Altman and Taylor (1995) also identified a disproportionate concentration of Indigenous employment in charities and churches in the 1986 Census. However, unlike the analysis above, that paper did not examine how Indigenous employment conditions in this industry sector differ from other sectors.
5. Paid rates awards are a rather prescriptive and detailed system of awards, predominantly found in the public sector.
6. For example, only 21 workplaces indicated that more than 10 per cent of their workforce were Indigenous.
7. McHugh's (1996) study of the cotton industry in northern New South Wales provides an alarming analysis of the poor treatment of low skilled Indigenous workers, known as 'chippers', and the failure of the authorities to take into account basic health and welfare issues. As many as 90 per cent of 'chippers' (workers who move through rows of cotton removing weeds) in northern New South Wales are Indigenous. In 1984, almost one-third of Indigenous chippers surveyed reported they had been sprayed with dangerous chemicals at work. It is not surprising that these chippers had a high incidence of rashes, blisters, vision problems, giddyness, asthma and other

conditions associated with pesticide poisoning (McHugh 1996: 151). The response of authorities to the chippers problems raise questions about the adequacies of the statutory regulation of the working environment. For example, the New South Wales Department of Agriculture's Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee set the allowable exposure limit at 0.1 mg/kg of the pesticide, chlordimeform, metabolites in a 48-hour pooled urine sample. When the authorities discovered that this was being exceeded in the first season, they simply doubled the allowable limit (McHugh 1996: 138).

Appendix A. Representativeness of AWIRS sample of workplaces with Indigenous employees.

This Appendix analyses the representativeness of the AWIRS sample and considers the potential biases from combining data from the ERM and the employee surveys. Table A1 describes the discrepancies in responses between the two surveys by workplace size to illustrate the processes at work. Given that research on recent censuses has indicated that the level of 'bogus' identification of non-Indigenous people as Indigenous is not a major issue (Hunter 1998b), the following assumes that the Indigenous responses to the employee survey are genuine.

As indicated above there were 101 workplaces where the manager indicated there were no Indigenous workers but at least one employee indicated they were Indigenous. The fact that the ERM is not aware of the presence of the occasional Indigenous worker should not be surprising since Indigenous identity is often not explicitly revealed in the recruitment process. In such circumstances, the ERM would be relying on the colour of a worker's skin, which may not be a reliable indicator. The relatively random nature of the process by which ERM incorrectly indicate the proportion of Indigenous employees in the workplace is revealed by the fact that there is on average about one Indigenous employee per workplace who responded to survey but was not identified in the ERM responses.

In contrast, 522 workplaces the ERM said yes to the Indigenous question but there were no Indigenous responses to the employee survey. This is not that concerning given the manner in which the employee survey was collected. Interviewers went to selected workplaces and chose a (random) sample of employees from management records. The relatively small numbers of Indigenous workers in such workplaces is emphasised by the fact that over one-fifth of these workplaces were very large having more than 500 employees.

Therefore, the ERM was more likely to correctly identify the presence of Indigenous workers in relatively large workplaces. This is consistent with Indigenous workers being more likely to complete the employee survey form in larger workplaces and a more systematic collection of employee records in such workplaces. The requirements of the relevant EEO legislation provide an incentive for many public sector and government business enterprises to systematically

collect information about the Indigenous, non-English speaking background and female components of their workforce.

Table A1. Workplace size by presence of Indigenous employees in workplace, 1995

	Presence of Indigenous employees in workplace				Total
	Manager - no, Employee Survey - no	Manager - no, Employee Survey - yes	Manager - yes, Employee Survey - no	Manager - yes, Employee Survey - yes	
Workplace size					
20–49	46.6	30.7	18.8	20.6	36.1
50–99	25.0	28.7	17.6	22.5	22.9
100–199	15.3	25.7	21.1	22.5	18.0
200–499	9.8	11.9	21.1	18.6	13.7
500+	3.3	3.0	21.5	15.7	9.3
Total (per cent)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (number)	1,066	101	522	102	1,791

Note: The manager who indicates the proportion of Indigenous employees in workplace is the Employee Relations Manager.

There are two potential distortions on the type of people who answer the AWIRS employee survey arising from the geographic scope of the survey and the method with which workers were surveyed. The geographic scope of the survey is discussed in some detail in the text. Table A2 examines the representativeness of the respondents to the employee survey by benchmarking it against census data on industry of employment.

The major differences between the 1996 census and the 1995 AWIRS employee survey responses are largely driven by AWIRS sampling a particular set of workplaces in non-remote Australia. For example, after excluding census employment in the Agriculture and Defence industries to ensure comparability with the AWIRS sample, there is a clear tendency to over-sample workers in manufacturing and Electricity Gas and Water. Among Indigenous workers, AWIRS under-samples the Health and Community services sector—probably reflecting a concentration of Indigenous health workers in non-remote Australia. However, given the geographically specific nature of the AWIRS sample, it is probably surprising there is not more differences between the 1996 Census and the AWIRS sample.

Differences in employee response between workplaces with Indigenous employees and other workplaces may be a result of management diligence in securing the co-operation of their workforce in completing questionnaires. In general, there is little difference between the non-Indigenous response rates for workplaces with and without Indigenous employees. The exceptions are in Government administration and manufacturing.

Table A2. One-digit ANZSIC industry distributions for Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees, 1995 and 1996

Industry	AWIRS 1995			1996 Census	
	Workplaces without Indigenous employees	Workplaces with Indigenous employees		Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
		Non-Indigenous	Indigenous		
Mining	3.4	5.5	3.8	1.7	1.2
Manufacturing	23.0	20.4	17.8	7.9	14.0
Electricity, gas and water	4.2	2.6	4.4	0.6	0.9
Construction	3.4	2.6	2.2	5.5	7.0
Wholesale	5.5	2.1	2.1	2.8	6.5
Retail	9.1	7.2	5.9	8.6	15.0
Accommodation and restaurants	3.2	3.8	2.7	4.0	5.1
Transport and storage	4.8	3.4	3.5	4.0	4.8
Communication	2.1	4.7	4.3	2.3	2.2
Finance, insurance	5.4	3.0	3.1	1.1	4.3
Property, business	6.3	3.4	5.2	6.8	10.8
Government administration	6.4	18.7	13.8	15.8	3.7
Education	7.1	6.0	10.3	8.9	7.8
Health, community services	8.0	7.7	13.1	22.0	10.3
Cultural and recreational	3.7	3.8	2.7	2.5	2.6
Personal, other services	4.4	5.1	5.2	5.5	4.0
Total (per cent)	100	100	100	100	100
Total (number)	10,429	235	7,495	72,979	6,794,590

Note: Employment in Agricultural and Defence industries are excluded from the 1996 Census calculations to make it comparable to AWIRS 1995 data.

The differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous responses in workplaces with Indigenous employees is probably driven largely by the random method of selection of respondents for the employee questionnaire. Given that respondents are employed in the same workplaces there are unlikely that the variation in management practices is responsible for differential response rates. However, it is not possible to discount the possibility that some managers may have been more or less diligent in encouraging Indigenous workers to respond to the survey. For example, the higher response rate for Indigenous employees in Government administration industry might be explained by public servant managers drawing Indigenous workers' attention to the questionnaire.

Notwithstanding these minor exceptions, the overall response rates of Indigenous and other employees in workplaces that employ Indigenous workers is largely random and, therefore, it is possible to directly compare responses to the employee survey in such workplaces.

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