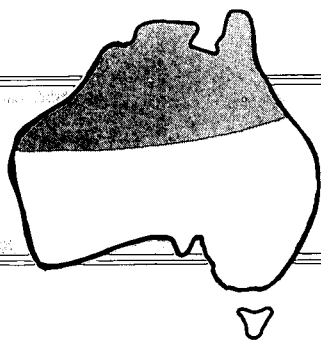
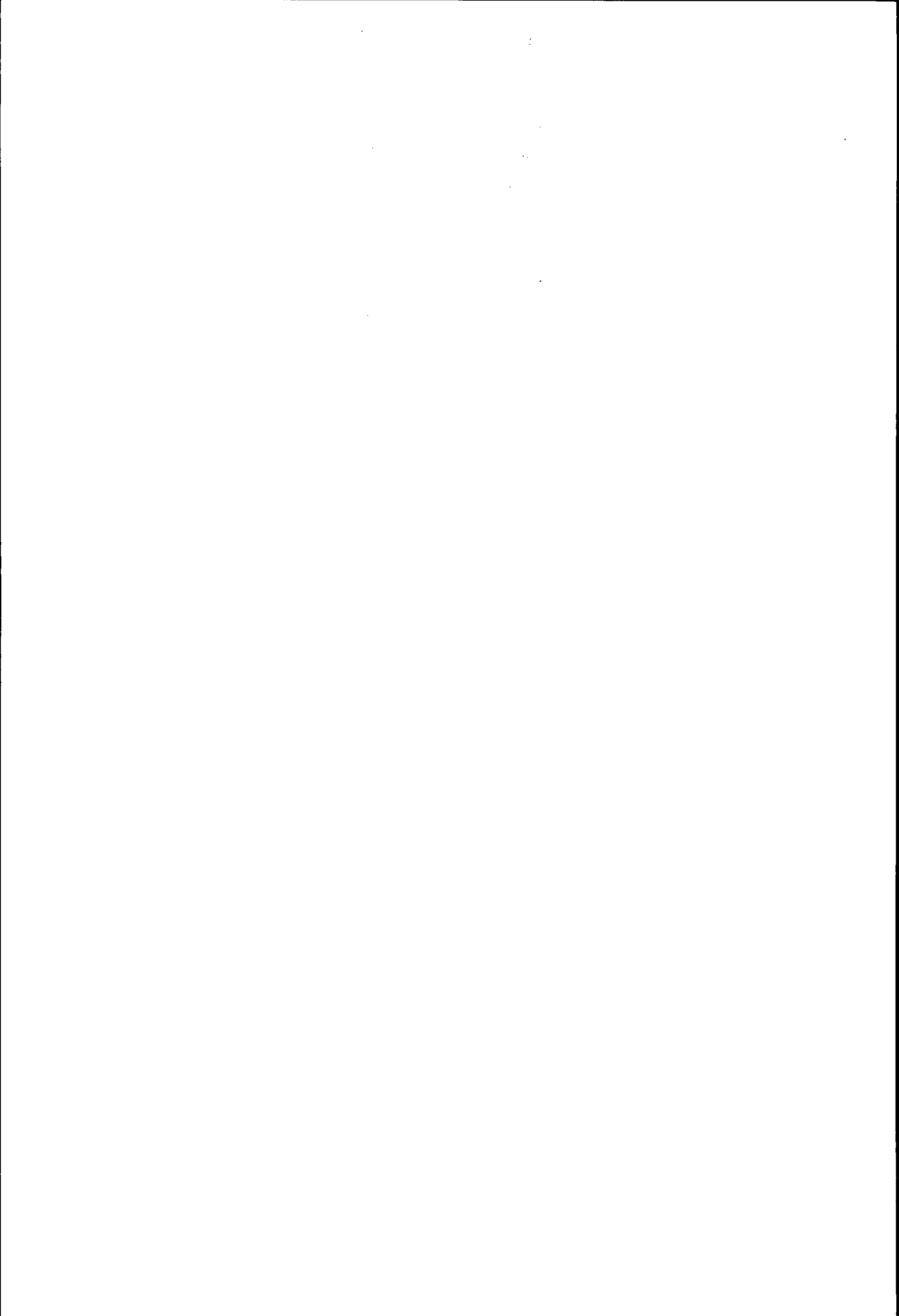


Edited by
Peter Loveday
and Ann Webb

Small Towns in Northern Australia



Australian National University North Australia Research Unit
Monograph
Darwin 1989



SMALL TOWNS IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

Edited by Peter Loveday and Ann Webb

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**Australian National University
North Australia Research Unit
Darwin 1989**

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Preface

This volume comprises papers delivered at the North Australia Research Unit's annual conference held in Darwin on 22-24 February, 1989. The title of the conference, 'Small Towns in Northern Australia', attracted not only a wide range of speakers from state government departments, non-government organisations and from other universities, but also a lively and appreciative audience over the three days. Topics discussed included those social, economic and political issues that have both determined the existence, and continue to influence the future development, of small and remote settlements north of the 26th parallel.

The editors would like to acknowledge all those people whose willing and cheerful assistance helped make the conference a success. Our grateful thanks to:

- all our contributors and delegates for their presentations and interest
- the NT Museum of Arts and Sciences - an ideal conference venue
- the NT Department of Law for the use of its excellent recording equipment, Blair Lade for some 'sound' advice, and Paul McCulloch for his calm control of the electrical gadgetry
- Meriel Corbett and Raelene Cummings for their help during the conference
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- Colleen Pyne and Sally Roberts for invaluable assistance with standardising references and proof reading papers
- and especially to Janet Sincock whose 'behind the scenes' organisation of correspondence, catering, accommodation and conference reception was absolutely invaluable and Yvonne vander Weyden whose wordprocessing skills and meticulous eye for detail and design have made possible our first 'in-house' production of a NARU publication.

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THE ROLE OF THE SMALL TOWN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS HINTERLAND

Pat Davies

Opening Address

When I was asked by Peter Loveday to give the opening address with a suggested topic of 'The Role of the Small Town in the Development of its Hinterland' I wondered what I knew about hinterland development. I did the obvious thing of course and looked for a definition of hinterland in the dictionary, and found to my relief that hinterland did indeed mean remote area. Well, at least I have had some 20 years experience living in fairly remote areas in the north of Australia, and being a member of the North Australia Development Council, which covers development in three states north of the 26th parallel is a help.

On reflection, I came to the conclusion that the role of these towns is to act as a resource centre for the surrounding region. In doing that, I believe they also tend to become the catalyst for further development. One only has to look at Pine Creek to see that happening. This was a town where the favourite activity was 'fossicking'. Because the basic town infrastructure was available, it was possible to undertake a highly active mining operation, with outstanding results. Because of the favoured 'fossicking' it appears that a number of smaller mines could be operating, and it has certainly provided a tourist venue.

The total infrastructure of many communities plays an important part in regional development. In my own town I look about and see people not actually resident in the town itself, coming in to utilise the town's resources such as the hospital, the shops, the dentist, the library, the police on occasions, and the leisure and recreation facilities that refresh and renew them, so that they are able to return to the isolation of their particular daily round. The fact that petrol, gas, banks and an employment centre are available nearer at hand than state capitals, or large regional centres, helps some of these operations, whether they be mining, agriculture or pastoral, to remain viable. Public facilities, for example roads and libraries are important aspects of general town infrastructure and are generally provided by local government. The level of commitment to rates and improved facilities is often a reflection of the desire to see appropriate development within a community.

I should put in a commercial here for local government. Quite often the enticement to a particular development is the level of assistance a local government body is able to provide, perhaps by way of cheaper land and/or rate concessions during development. Mind you we do not have that ability here, because councils do not really have control of any land. In relation to the provision of public facilities (for example roads, libraries etc) Western Australia and Queensland have total coverage of their area with regard to local government. That means that no matter how far you live from a local government centre, there is a rate obligation, a financial commitment to that centre, by property or lease owners.

I should mention here that this is not the case in the Northern Territory (NT). Whereas in other states, rural local government areas are being amalgamated to gain economies of

scale and better utilisation of resources, in the NT small, potentially non viable local government groups continue to be funded. In those areas of the NT not covered by a local government or community government scheme, a mining company or any new development setting up just outside the boundaries is able to utilise facilities without commitment to pay rates and so have the ability to put stress on those facilities. Without full input into building and planning controls by local councils in the NT I believe we are further disadvantaged in relation to utilisation and development of infrastructure. End of commercial.

Without doubt though I would say that the single best resource that these towns have, and probably the main catalyst, is the people who live in these remote towns. There are of course two main types of people in these communities, those who are long term residents or will choose to be and those who come to an area through their work, full of enthusiasm and eager for promotion to a larger town. Both groups are important in their own way. One provides the stability so necessary in these communities and the other, the new ideas, the breath of renewed life to those who would tend to think, well, we have always done it this way. I can look back over the years and see many instances of this, but I believe that the successful combination of both ways naturally works best. But more about the people later.

When I first went to live in a remote area it really did seem to be the end of the earth. With my husband and two young children I arrived in Wittenoom in the north west of Western Australia approximately three days after the asbestos mine officially closed in 1968. (It did not close because of health related reasons but through economic ones related to the cost of haulage and falling market prices.) My husband was involved in the design and construction program of housing for the new mines to be developed at Mt Tom Price for the Hammersley Iron Company. At that time there were tents and single men's accommodation only at Tom Price, so the nearest town where we, the family, could stay was Wittenoom, in the Tableland Shire.

This in itself was probably the first pointer to the developmental role of the small town. In relation to Tom Price, Wittenoom provided the first infrastructure requirements - a few shops, very importantly a post office, telephone, transport terminal, airport, hospital, school, hotel and at that time some vacant houses. There was no sealed road between Tom Price and Wittenoom, nor indeed, between Wittenoom and anywhere else. The bitumen from Perth stopped at Northam and went on patchily to Meekatharra from where you faced 1000 miles of dirt track. The coastal road was little better since the bitumen went only as far as Geraldton then. So the small town became, of necessity, a beacon in the development of these vast hot regions.

A number of these mining towns were developed; Karratha, Dampier, Mt Newman and Paraburdoo, each of them tending to rely initially on the basic infrastructure of another small remote town, until eventually the new towns and facilities were developed and a new centre was created.

It may seem that these evolving towns may have needed to rely on the existing towns because of the less sophisticated communications systems of those days. That may be so but I think that could happen increasingly in the future. The enormous cost of development and infrastructure provision these days will probably inhibit or even prohibit the birth of new towns dedicated to a particular industry or company such as the gold or uranium mining towns that were built in the 1960s and early 1970s. In all probability, it would not be considered a viable proposition today to build another town such as Jabiru, Karratha or Mary Kathleen. Rather, I believe we will see the infrastructure framework of existing small remote communities being broadened to accommodate these needs.

identified by the internal migration matrix against selected variables including: five year age-group, industry sector, occupational group and industry of employment. The final section of this paper provides a brief summary of net changes in these characteristics due to migration.

Age

Table 4 shows net migration for each of the small towns by five year age group. The main feature is a striking contrast between the rapidly growing regional centres in the Kimberley region and Katherine, where net migration gains are common in almost all age groups, and the more depressed rural centres in the pastoral areas of western Queensland as well as Tennant Creek where virtually all age groups record a net migration loss. In the rapidly growing centres, net gains are most apparent within a fairly narrow age range of 20-29, although Broome displays a fairly comprehensive pattern of in-migration. In the more depressed towns, net gains are found only in the 20-24 age group with heavy net losses apparent in the subsequent age range of 25-39. Also of interest are the substantial net losses amongst school age populations.

Table 4
Net migration by five year age group

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5 - 14	90	-22	-23	-198	-301	-32	-101
15 - 19	23	-20	22	-49	-68	-12	-10
20 - 24	186	168	149	25	-8	50	-28
25 - 29	73	155	62	-93	-108	7	-30
30 - 34	48	3	12	-84	-92	-18	-49
35 - 39	62	-11	4	-52	-101	-22	-28
40 - 44	23	58	39	-50	-69	-30	-41
45 - 49	30	9	-10	-32	-41	-9	-10
50 - 54	15	10	-8	-18	-31	-8	-19
55 - 59	23	3	-11	-19	-21	-21	-20
60+	7	8	-22	-29	-48	-19	-21

1 = Broome; 2 = East Kimberley; 3 = Katherine; 4 = Tennant Creek; 5 = Cloncurry; 6 = Flinders; 7 = Longreach

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1986

Industry sector

The pattern of net migration by industry sector (Table 5) reflects the regional mix of public and private sector investment and disinvestment along the lines discussed by Holmes (1988c). Small towns such as Tennant Creek and those in western Queensland have generally experienced net migration losses due to retrenchment in the private sector as part of the readjustment of rural industries to changing economic circumstances (Holmes 1988c). In opposition to this trend, net migration gains are characteristic amongst public sector (notably state public sector) employees - an observation which supports the contention that small northern towns are increasingly dependant upon public investment for their economic well-being. Although the migration of private sector workers has been a major cause of rapid population growth in the Kimberley towns and

Katherine, the higher population thresholds generated by this influx are also reflected in the expansion of public services and significant net migration gains in both federal and state sectors.

Table 5
Net migration by industry sector

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Federal Government	25	6	34	-24	-22	-9	-26
State Government	98	79	79	30	38	24	16
Local Government	11	3	2	10	-1	-1	1
Private	261	213	251	-129	-265	17	-102

1 = Broome; 2 = East Kimberley; 3 = Katherine; 4 = Tennant Creek; 5 = Cloncurry; 6 = Flinders; 7 = Longreach

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1986

Occupation

The distribution of occupational net migration generally supports the pattern described for industry sector workers (Table 6). In those occupational groups most closely associated with the private sector, such as tradespeople, machine workers and labourers, net losses are greatest and widespread in the economically depressed towns of western Queensland as well as Tennant Creek. In contrast, Katherine and the Kimberley towns show considerable net gains in these occupations.

Table 6
Net migration by broad occupational group

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Managers	43	3	31	-16	-2	22	8
Professionals	97	85	103	-17	-36	-13	-4
Tradespersons	100	117	69	-38	-40	2	-3
Clerks	39	62	73	-13	-26	-10	-37
Service	58	53	38	-8	-39	9	-35
Machine	4	33	38	-37	-45	-12	-30
Labourers	49	55	35	-7	-49	16	-15

1 = Broome; 2 = East Kimberley; 3 = Katherine; 4 = Tennant Creek; 5 = Cloncurry; 6 = Flinders; 7 = Longreach

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1986

When you have a look at development in each of the three 'states' that constitute northern Australia the same pattern seems to emerge. In this day and age new development seems to hinge on the level of supporting infrastructure available in the 'mother' town.

The North West Shelf development in WA draws on Karratha and Port Hedland; the new Argyle mines on Kununurra; the new coastal resort developments in Queensland most certainly draw on the resources of the surrounding area for labour, boat building and interestingly in the case of the new Mirage development, an existing palm plantation for the supply of ready grown palm trees.

Without doubt, the new RAAF base at Tindal relies on the infrastructure available in Katherine. During the early planning phases, this was one of the important factors in deciding its location. The cost of that development would have been insupportable, had there not already been those very important facilities such as schools, banks, communications, housing for construction workers etc. available in Katherine. Of course the near doubling of the existing population caused the infrastructure requirements for the whole town to be increased, resulting in an increased service and community sophistication level that made the town more attractive to a greater range of people.

Naturally, the additional services and facilities have been of benefit to the whole region. One example is the construction work available through the base development which had an effect on the Aboriginal communities around us. Commonwealth Employment Services (CES) and the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR) introduced new training programs, Social Security upgraded their staffing levels and service, and even a survey on Aboriginal housing needs was carried out by the North Australia Research Unit. A shopping complex was built, so that now we are in an even better position to service the mining boom that must surely come to our area. We certainly are better able to service the tourist industry.

Perhaps I might return again to the most incredible of all resources that influences the role of the small town in the hinterland development, and that is people of course. As I mentioned before I have the opportunity to travel fairly extensively throughout the North of Australia particularly in relation to the development of the North. I get to look at many of the new developments that are occurring, and to talk to the people. I said before that there are two main groups of people that are important to the North. For anyone to remain in the North for any length of time they need unique characteristics. They need resilience, self reliance (and in many cases self motivation), a great deal of ingenuity and skills that will allow them to improvise. I have certainly seen these qualities demonstrated.

When we first went to Wittenoom, we took no furniture with us, assuming we could buy whatever was necessary, only to find nothing there. This little lady named Ruby, whose photo you may have seen in 'A Day in the Life of Australia', lived next to me. She knew where there was a chest of drawers abandoned in one of the old company houses. The only trouble was - we had no ute. (There were only about nine families there at the time.) My means of transport was an automatic Oxford. Ruby solved the problem by sitting in the boot and holding on to the chest.

Coming from life in a city to work in a two teacher school (built of asbestos and full of tailings in the playground) I had to learn to be very resourceful. One day I was minding someone else's baby for a couple of days when a bush spinifex fire broke out. With all the abandoned company houses about surrounded by high dry grass and weeds we assumed the fire would rip through the whole place.

I set my own two children to help doing all the important things like filling a bath with water and turning out the kerosene fridges while I moved the 44 gallon drum of petrol away from the house, covered it with wet bags, put the hose on the edges and prepared to submerge us all in the bath water. Then for the first time in many months it started to rain. I learned a valuable lesson, handy in the north - do not rush in too quickly, because then I had to relight the fridges and many other jobs - quite a job.

We went to Katherine because of my husband's work. He always said I had been on eleven of the nine committees in Wittenoom, but I did not intend becoming too involved in Katherine. However I did not realise that there was no local government and that the provision of services needed to be community stimulated. That is another story, but it was interesting to see how, through a catalyst organisation, people living in remote areas could use their ingenuity to provide services.

People's becoming involved in the attainment of community goals invariably leads to provision of local government, or where it already exists to the strengthening of it and improvement of services. It is these very actions that improve the infrastructure and allow, and indeed encourage the further development of the area.

Given my earlier comments about the prohibitive cost of developing new dedicated towns, whether it be in relation to the development of the new space base at Cape York, a mine or a defence air base at Weipa, it is obvious that existing towns and existing local government areas are going to need their level of support maintained. People will need encouragement to stay and help develop these areas. That will not happen while road funding to local government areas, especially in remote areas of the north, have their road funding cut in real terms while the remote area taxation concession allows for the freight on only one litre of milk, one loaf of bread and one newspaper per day - and that does not include the *Age* or the *Australian* newspaper on a Saturday. A pioneering spirit, a sense of adventure just may not be enough to keep this valuable resource, people, up here where we need them in the future. We have such a vast land with huge potential in the North. We are the gateway to Asia and the vast markets that we could service. Someone in power needs to sit back, have a bit more vision and realise that the greater resource to any development is the unique people that become involved. They need to be encouraged to stay, to build their lives and their family future up here.

Everyone wants to see development, and I see it as most appropriate that the same towns should act as the resource centre where applicable. But we all need to spend some time thinking about how we can convince some of the various governments that small towns and their infrastructure is the key to development of various projects, and that we must find really ways of retaining and encouraging that most valuable resource needed for hinterland development - people.

I believe conferences of this nature play an important part in this awareness program, for example the papers on 'Financing of Local Government in Small Towns in the NT' (Nichols) and 'Planning for Community Services in Remote Communities' (Jane Stanley) help to highlight the problems and suggest possible remedies.

OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCE THEMES

Dr Peter Loveday

To sum up and give an overview of what turned out to be a very complex conference is a difficult task. I do not sew little threads through everybody's papers to link them together. At the risk of omitting some of the arguments, I concentrate on three themes which seem to me to be prominent, if not pervasive, in the papers.

First of all several of the papers refer to the impact on small towns of big developments, usually just one big development for the town in question. We had the instance of horticulture in Ti Tree and of course people from Kununurra have Argyle diamond mine to think about. We had tourism - that too was mentioned, for example its impact on Broome. In addition to those which were mentioned, I think there were one or two others in the background. Defence in Katherine, mining in several towns, and, without too far back into history, we could recall the impact on some communities of big cattle stations or big grain schemes in the Northern Territory.

All of these things have very important or significant impacts on a small town: on their resources, especially their land and their employable population, on the local power structures in those communities, that is, on those who make the decisions and those who influence the decisions made by constituted authority. They also have an effect on who benefits from the local economy and who bears the cost of the big operation. Sometimes the big operators come in and take away the profits and leave the costs behind as was hinted at in Stuart Phillipot's paper. That may be an over-simplification but it is one that local people in their enthusiasm for big developments ought to look at very carefully before they say yes to those sorts of things.

By and large the communities, or at least their established leaders if not the communities as a whole, usually welcome big projects in the name of development. And if they do not, then the government of their state or territory is likely to push it on them and override them anyway, in the name of development at the state or territory level. The question then arises, when developments are being promoted do the local people have adequate information on the costs and benefits, the impacts on their resources and on who bears the costs and who gains the benefits?

Now, I want to emphasise here that this theme is not peculiar to the north of Australia. It has been seen in the northern parts of Canada, and in Alaska and New Zealand. We in NARU have made an attempt in recent years to build up connections with those three places at the academic level by visiting there ourselves and drawing visitors from those parts. We have also attempted to build up a collection of research reports and books in our library which are available to genuine researchers and to those of you who confront problems of policy analysis.

One of the things which comes out of the studies in overseas countries in similar circumstances to our own, is that the values being mobilised by development are very much the values of the metropolis, the centres of big populations. They are the values of outsiders, they are not necessarily the values of either the local white or the local non white populations. In the north of Canada especially, and also Alaska, the populations in the areas to be developed are largely indigenous. In our case we have a mixture of an

indigenous population in the Northern Territory which is around 23 per cent Aboriginal and the rest an immigrant population of diverse cultural and racial backgrounds.

This leads me to the next theme which has run through this conference which is biculturalism. Originally I thought that the theme ought to be called, as is conventional wisdom, the Aboriginal/non Aboriginal theme. It seems to me that this title preserves and encapsulates the old antagonisms which I think are dissolving in the Northern Territory to some extent, though only slightly. Whether they are dissolving across the borders on either side I am not so sure. But in the Northern Territory I use the term biculturalism because most towns have black and white populations and we have to question whether monocultural institutions are appropriate, or whether some other kinds of institutions might not be a little better for everybody, black and white alike.

Australia as a whole of course is monocultural in its institutions. Here in the north though we have a unique balance of population which in some ways is best thought of in comparison with New Zealand. For a long time the New Zealanders thought that they, unlike most other countries in the world with a bi-racial population, had got it right. They discovered to their surprise and consternation in the late seventies and eighties that they had not got it right at all, and that there was a deep and suppressed Maori distress, not to say anger. The Maori did not want to say to the Pakehas 'go home'. They were quite happy to live with the Pakehas if only the Pakehas had abided by the treaty that they had signed in 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi. The government institutions in New Zealand have attempted in recent years to come to grips with their failure to honour their treaty, and as a result they have tried to change their institutions in line with the partnership principles of that treaty. This changing has meant reorganising them in ways which recognise the Maori traditional institutions and involve the Maori people and their traditional ways of doing things in the delivery of services at the local level and in administration at the national level by using public funds and drawing up special agreements which completely change the way in which the bureaucratic administration of that country operates (in areas like welfare services, local government and so on). John Paki's paper deals with one aspect of these changes in New Zealand.

Against this background in New Zealand, our attempts to recognise Aboriginal traditional institutions, and we have made some, are quite feeble. One of the kinds of things I have in mind, if an example is needed, is that in the economic field it has been conventional wisdom that the traditional subsistence type economy was a doomed economy and should be replaced by a market oriented cash based economy. That kind of thinking is, as we argue in a recent NARU report for the NT government, a mistaken view of the course of events. The traditional economy of subsistence and related activities is well worth supporting in association with the market and the cash economy. It is this kind of recognition, if you push it right through, that I speak of here as a kind of partnership. As you can imagine, it would mean quite large changes in the areas of health, welfare, legal services, education, police and correctional services and local government, which we have scarcely begun to make in the relationships between the two populations in the north.

The third theme concerns the capacity, at local government level, for people to run their own affairs. I refer here to all the people, neither black nor white in particular. This raises the question of what are the mechanisms at the local level for developing public opinion and bringing it to bear on the conduct of local affairs. It would be fairly important here to ask questions about the way in which information about local affairs is disseminated in local communities, information, for example, about the way council does its business and what the business is, and information about departmental activities and policies on such things as land distribution and land release for new suburbs, as Dr Hudson mentions. Those are the kinds of things about which much more information

could probably be provided than is at present, and which would enable people to make much more informed decisions about the way their towns are being governed.

I emphasise here, as I did at the conference to Iain Smith of the ABC, the role of the local media in talking about local affairs. Giving local people access to the media can be very important. Elections, though they are one means, are not the only way in which the local people can influence decision making processes in their community. There are residents action groups and progress associations and similar types of organisations which can be formed and promoted. For example, groups like the one which opposed the installation of the waste incinerator at Tennant Creek or the action group mentioned by Hilary Rumley in Halls Creek. These may play a very important part in the life of small towns although any discussion of power at the local level also has to examine the informal, established and less obvious local social structures for political decisionmaking.

If we are to look into this area of local affairs, we must also ask about the capability of local people for managing their own affairs: what is their financial know-how; what are their administrative and managerial skills; and above all, although it is often a thing which is hard to pin down, what is the local leadership like? Is it able to develop community opinion, to lead it and to handle political differences, to allow political differences full expression but at the end of the day when a decision has to be made, to bring people to a resolution where most of them feel that in the majority of cases they are having some sort of a say in how their town is run?

Now I think if you look into those kinds of things you might well find that most communities, especially those that have experienced the immense and rapid impact of very large developments, do not have the skills and experience necessary to make good decisions about their short term, let alone their long term, futures. They are highly dependent upon administrative agencies in Perth, Darwin or Brisbane and from the townspeople's point of view, while they cannot help being dependent on the central agencies for funds, expertise and advice, perhaps they should also have better information about the way those agencies operate and about the policies they attempt to carry out on the ground.

These types of issues and others pertaining to small towns in northern Australia are discussed in the following papers.

MIGRATION AND SMALL TOWN POPULATION CHANGE

John Taylor

Of all the issues facing small northern towns in coming years, debates concerning appropriate levels of public investment sufficient to maintain an adequate population base are likely to assume increasing significance. One reason for this is a trend towards 'private disinvestment and public investment' (Holmes 1988c) in the remoter regions of northern Australia - a phrase which encapsulates the growing financial dependency of northern population centres on public sector employment and transfer payments of various kinds. This growing dependence is set against a background of rural adjustment and wind down in primary sector activities - the traditional mainstay of northern settlement.

At the same time, localised private sector developments, notably in tourism, have generated rapid population growth in particular places whilst the shift of focus in defence policy to the north has had at least one major impact in doubling the population of Katherine in less than four years. Equally apparent is the growing significance of Aboriginal access to traditional country which has been advanced by land rights legislation and has paved the way for a more widespread and dispersed rural settlement pattern.

Ironically, this dynamism in rural settlement systems is apparent at a time when financial stringency and cost-cutting are the main determinants of public sector spending and the diseconomies of remote settlement are brought more sharply into focus. In this context, it is clearly important to understand how migration and natural population growth are changing the size, number and composition of northern towns.

The emphasis here is thus on an overview of population change in small towns and the demographic factors which have caused some to grow in size, some to decline, and others to remain stable. Data are drawn from the 1981 and 1986 censuses and the time frame is the intercensal period 1981-86. The paper has three main parts. Following a summary of rural population change in the north, patterns of gross and net internal migration are described for each small town and the composition of each of these flows is then analysed with particular attention paid to the age and labour force characteristics of migrants.

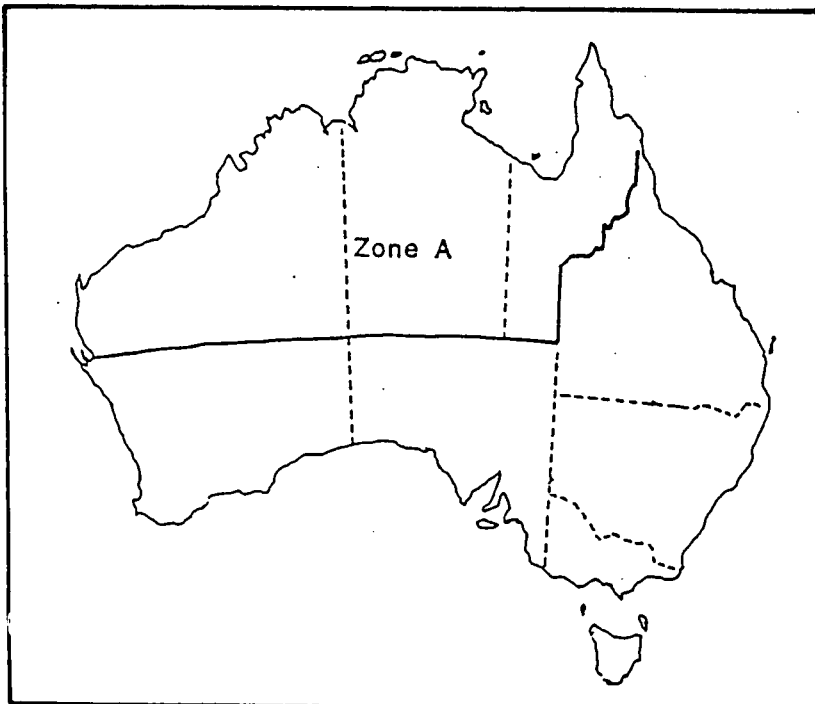
The theoretical context for this discussion derives from two generalisations which are commonly stated regarding the nature of interregional migration in Australia. The first is the observation that the long standing spatial concentration of population growth in large metropolitan areas has been showing signs of reversal because of a net shift in the balance of migration flows in favour of population growth in smaller non-metropolitan areas. The question here is whether this represents a lasting redistribution of population in favour of small northern towns. The second concerns the role of metropolitan areas as switching points in determining the pattern, level and composition of intra-state gross migration flows (McKay and Whitelaw 1977; Jarvie in press). For many small country towns, their rate of population change (in so far as this is controlled by net migration) and the socio-economic composition of their population would appear to be increasingly determined by their spatial relations with the local metropolis (Burnley 1988b). The extent to which this applies in small northern towns is examined here.

Population change in outback northern Australia

In common with many non-metropolitan areas of Australia, large areas in the north of the continent have experienced unprecedented population increase for the past two decades or so. Although the whole of northern Australia may be described as non-metropolitan in terms of the national space economy, attention is focussed here on population change in the remoter rural areas and, in particular, in small service towns. For practical purposes, in default of any systematic classification of the economic and social functions of northern towns (Bowie and Smailes 1988), 'towns' are defined here as urban centres and rural localities listed in the Australian Standard Geographical Classification Geographic Code List (ABS Catalogue 2188.0) and small towns are regarded as those with populations between 200 and 9999 persons.

The remote rural area of northern Australia, or 'outback north' to employ an euphemism, refers to that part of the continent which is tropical and removed from major concentrations of population. Using Holmes (1988a) as a guide, this includes those parts of the Northern Territory as well as tropical Queensland and Western Australia that are sparsely settled (less than one person per eight sq km) and have below average accessibility to the population as a whole. In addition, the boundary of the Tax Commissioner's Income Tax Allowance Zone A (Figure 1) incorporates an economic measure of remoteness and describes the outer limit of the area chosen for discussion.

Figure 1 Remote Australia as viewed by the Tax Commissioner



Source: Report of the Public Inquiry into Income Tax Zone Allowances June 1981, AGPS, Canberra

The point here is that these criteria effectively exclude the major centres of population in northern Australia including Darwin, Cairns, Townsville and much of the north Queensland coastal hinterland, as well as the outlying population concentrations at Mt Isa, Alice Springs and Port Hedland. In terms of ABS census geography, the closest approximation to this area comprises the Pilbara Statistical Division (SD) (excluding Port Hedland Statistical Local Area) and Kimberley SD in Western Australia, the Northern Territory - Balance SD (excluding Alice Springs) and the Central West SD, North-West SD (excluding Mt Isa) and selected SLAs (Statistical Local Areas) within the Far North SD in Queensland (Figure 2).

In outback areas of the Northern Territory and in the north of Western Australia, population growth rates have been far in excess of national averages for the past two decades or so. Although these high growth rates reflect increase from a low population base, and in absolute terms represent less increase in numbers than many other parts of Australia, they have made substantial local impact and are primarily employment-led. Thus, they reflect mining developments in the Pilbara, Kimberley and Arnhem Land regions; increased public expenditure on rural infrastructure and service provision; the construction of defence installations and redeployment of military personnel; and a prodigious growth in tourism. As a result of such activities, employment in the outback areas of the Northern Territory and the north of Western Australia increased by 48 per cent between 1971 and 1986 - exactly twice the national increase in persons employed over the same period. Not surprisingly, these areas are characterised by long standing net migration gains (at least at the SD level) which have been sustained into the 1980s, except in the Pilbara region where formerly buoyant mining communities have been affected by the downturn in mining activity and a net migration loss was recorded for the last intercensal period (Figure 3).

Standing in sharp contrast to the areas just described is the pastoral zone of western Queensland. Here, population decline has been apparent since the early 1960s (Holmes 1986) and this trend continued during the most recent intercensal period with the population of the Central West and North West SDs (excluding Mt Isa) falling by a further 2.5 per cent from an already much depleted level due to sustained net migration losses (Figure 3). At the same time, the bulk of this population loss has occurred in rural shires which fell in population by 2.1 per cent between 1981 and 1986 whilst the majority of country towns in western Queensland displayed a degree of stability or even increase in their population levels with a general increase of 8.4 per cent over the same period. This emerging contrast between town and country is consistent with the continued shedding of agricultural labour which, as the primary cause of population decline in this region (Holmes and Skinner 1986, 334), stands in contrast to recurrent public investment in central place services (Holmes 1988c, 313-20).

The Far North of Queensland fared somewhat better recording a population increase of 9.2 per cent in the last intercensal period. In the area of Far North Queensland defined here, 68 per cent of the population are Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and the higher than average rates of natural increase observed for this group (Anderson 1986) no doubt provides the basis for population increase in spite of a slight estimated net migration loss between 1981 and 1986 and the fact that employment growth was also slightly negative.

It is apparent that population increase in outback northern Australia has been unevenly distributed with some regions growing at much faster rates than others. The same applies to different levels within the settlement hierarchy. The pattern of settlement across the northern outback is relatively simple in structure with four distinct segments (Figure 2). At the top of the hierarchy are the three largest outback towns - Karratha, Broome and Katherine - with populations ranging between 5000 and 9999. Below this are 21 smaller

Figure 2 Distribution of settlements in outback northern Australia

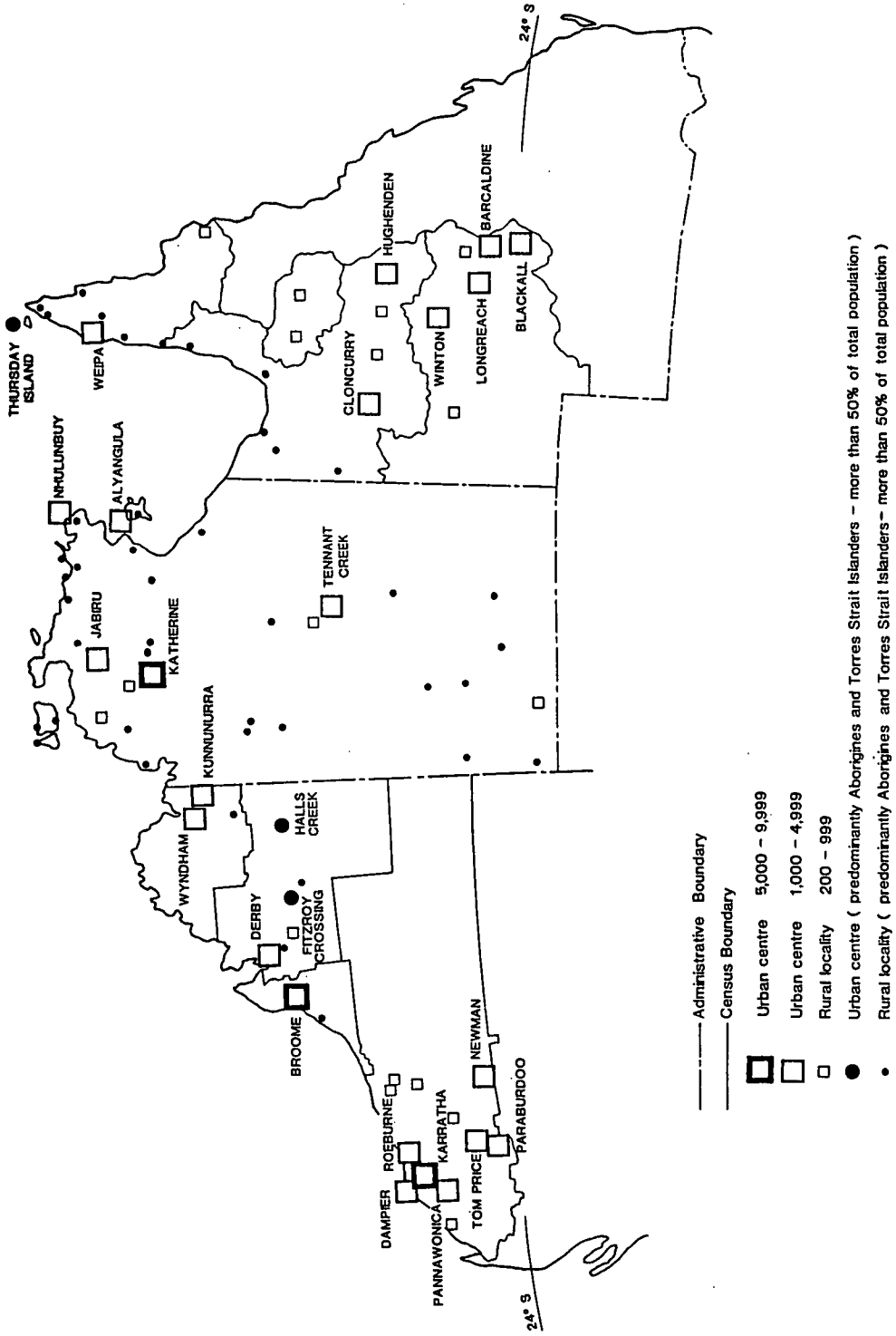
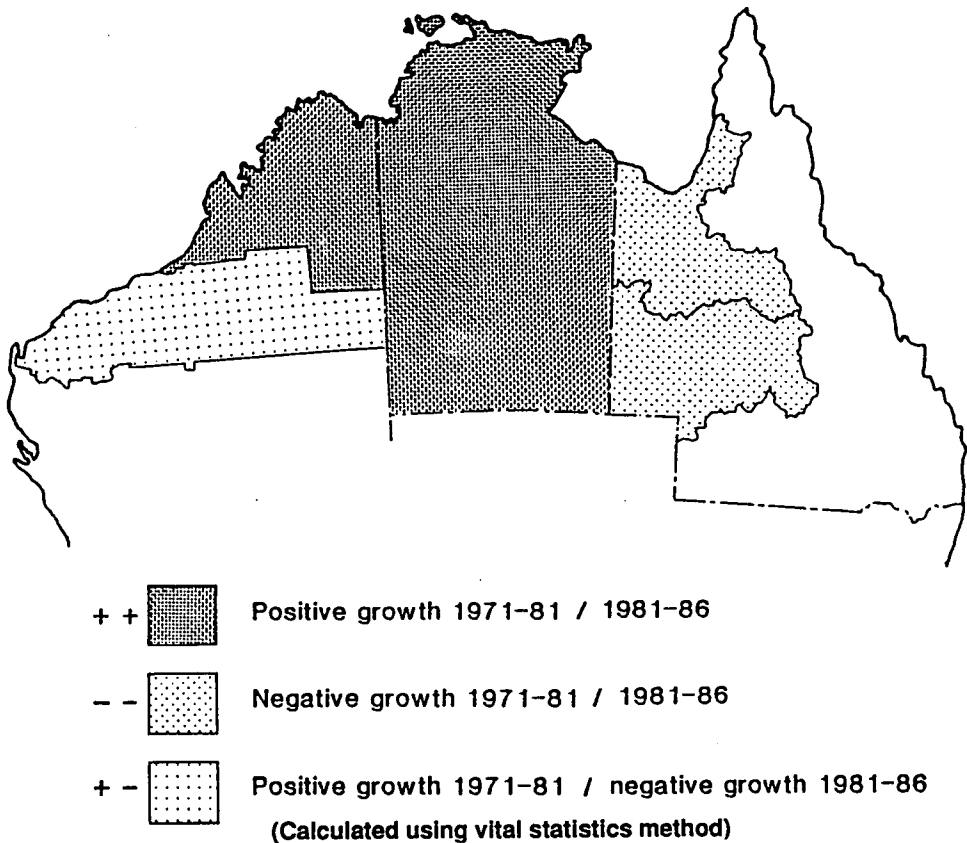


Figure 3 Net migration trends in northern Australia 1971-86



Source: Adapted from Hugo and Smailes, 1985

towns with populations ranging from 1000 to 4999. These consist primarily of the shire towns of western Queensland; small service towns such as Tennant Creek, Wyndham and Kununurra; and a large number of mining towns scattered across the region from Cape York peninsula to the Pilbara. The next segment is comprised of 59 widely distributed small towns or rural localities, many of which, particularly in the Northern Territory, are centralised Aboriginal settlements created by missionaries and government officials as part of the now defunct policies of Aboriginal protection and assimilation. These very small towns generally supply weekly shopping items, provide basic services, and form the social hub of their surrounding dispersed rural clients. The balance of the rural population comprises the base of the hierarchy and is located on pastoral properties, rural subdivisions, and widely dispersed Aboriginal outstations.

Population change between 1981 and 1986 is shown for each of these settlement categories in Table 1. It is important to point out that the figures shown here are based on place of enumeration data. On the whole this is not a problem as Estimated Resident Population (ERP) figures available for Statistical Local Areas within the region suggest little alteration to the overall direction or magnitude of population change shown in Table 1. The main discrepancies appear in Western Australia where, unlike the rest of Australia, the 1986 census was conducted during school holidays and consequently the place of enumeration figure for a tourist centre such as Broome SLA was 17 per cent higher than the ERP. It is also interesting to note that 31.6 per cent of persons enumerated in the town of Broome were visitors from elsewhere. This of course raises questions concerning the 'true' population of particular places where the seasonality of population flows is a prominent feature as in the case of tourist centres, outstations and pastoral properties.

Overall, the greatest absolute increase has occurred amongst the dispersed population at the base of the settlement hierarchy, although the three largest centres of Karratha, Broome and Katherine experienced the largest relative increase. At the same time, growth in the rural localities, and particularly in the smaller towns, has been relatively subdued with the latter category falling substantially below the national population growth rate of 7.0 per cent for the same period. Despite the fact that most small towns and rural localities increased in population size, the scale of overall gains in these settlement types has been tempered by significant decreases in the size of many Northern Territory Aboriginal communities and small mining towns in the Pilbara.

From the regional breakdown in Table 1, it is clear that most of the growth in dispersed rural population has occurred in the Northern Territory and reasons for this are twofold. First, a range of cultural, economic and political factors have combined in many small Aboriginal towns to encourage fragmentation and population dispersion (Coombs, Dexter and Hiatt 1982) and this is manifest in the population decrease or sluggish growth registered in almost half the Territory's rural localities. Secondly, the desire for a more rural lifestyle away from rapidly growing urban centres has led to considerable population growth in low density rural sub-divisions on the fringes of Darwin in particular, and to some extent Katherine and Alice Springs (Thorpe 1987). Whilst growth in the dispersed population is also apparent in Western Australia, the opposite trend is clearly in evidence in outback Queensland where a reduction in this category was responsible for a slight overall population decline despite the fact that the majority of Queensland's small towns increased in size.

The impact of these changes on the percentage distribution of population resident in small towns as opposed to rural areas is shown for each part of the outback region in Table 2. A smaller proportion of the Northern Territory's outback population was resident in small towns in 1986 compared with 1981 with the trend clearly towards population dispersal. A similar, though far less significant trend is apparent in the north of Western Australia although here the rural population is relatively small. In contrast, the outback areas of north and west Queensland display a significant re-organisation of population distribution in favour of small towns with an increasing majority of residents located in such settlements.

Table 1
Population change by settlement size category: outback northern Australia 1981-1986

Settlement size	Increase (>+5%) centres	persons	Stable (<±5%) centres	persons	Decrease (>-5%) centres	persons	Total net change persons	per cent	Total centres
Northern Territory									
5000 - 9999	1	1954	-	-	-	-	1954	23.7	1
1000 - 4999	3	836	-	-	1	-364	472	5.1	4
200 - 999	18	2837	4	41	10	-1978	1090	7.0	32
dispersed							6873	34.6	
Total	22		4		11		10389	21.4	
Western Australia									
5000 - 9999	2	3304	-	-	-	-	3304	27.5	2
1000 - 4999	4	2197	3	-112	6	-1046	473	1.7	13
200 - 999	8	891	-	-	2	-25	866	23.7	10
dispersed							1934	17.3	
Total	14		3		8		6576	12.3	
Queensland									
5000 - 9999	5	1204	3	-10	1	-112	1082	6.5	9
1000 - 4999	9	1033	5	52	4	-462	622	6.9	18
200 - 999							-2005	-10.2	
dispersed							-301	-0.6	
Total	14		8		5				
Total region									
5000 - 9999	3	5258	-	-	8	-1522	5258	33.3	3
1000 - 4999	12	4237	6	-122	16	-2275	2026	3.8	26
200 - 999	34	4710	9	92	16	-2275	2578	9.3	59
dispersed							6802	13.4	
Total	49		15		25		16664	11.3	89

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1981 and 1986.

Table 2
Percentage distribution of population by settlement category:
outback northern Australia 1981 & 1986

Settlement Category	Northern Territory		Western Australia		Queensland	
	1981	1986	1981	1986	1981	1986
Small Towns (200-9999)	59.0	54.8	79.3	78.4	57.1	60.2
Rural	41.0	45.2	20.7	21.6	42.9	39.8

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1981 and 1986

Components of small town population change

Data problems

An immediate difficulty encountered in analysing the components of population change in small northern towns is the scale at which appropriate data is available. Most small towns are sub-sets of ABS Statistical Local Areas - usually the shire or hinterland that they serve - and there are two constraints which restrict the analysis of change to this SLA level. First of all, the Statistical Local Area is the lowest level at which vital statistics are available. Secondly, internal migration data is only available in usual residence format which, in turn, is not coded for collection districts - the geographic level of most small northern towns. This scale problem is reduced in the Northern Territory as most small towns, including Katherine and Tennant Creek which are the ones under consideration here, are SLAs. In Queensland and Western Australia, however, the problem is universal and here SLAs with a substantial small town population were selected as the unit of analysis. Thus in Queensland, the SLAs of Cloncurry, Longreach and Flinders had high proportions of small town residents with 72, 82 and 64 per cent of their respective 1986 populations located in the towns of Cloncurry, Longreach and Hughenden respectively. In Western Australia, the town of Broome comprised 73 per cent of its SLA population, whilst Wyndham and Kununurra combined accounted for 64 per cent of the population in East Kimberley SLA.

Population accounts

The pattern of population change observed in outback northern Australia derives primarily from the variable impact of net migration. In reality, of course, there is no such person as a 'net migrant' since most net changes only represent a tiny balance between two much larger flows both in and out. Gross migration flows are generally of greater volume than net flows and provide a more accurate indication of the overall importance of migration in the process of population change. One means of incorporating the components of gross migration into the analysis of population change is to specify each of the debits and additions to the original population (population at first census) in the form of an accounting procedure whereby births replace deaths, and inward migrants replace outward migrants. The balance of these components represents total change and may be added to

the non-moving survivors from the original population to arrive at the new population (population at second census). Thus:

$$\text{New population} = \text{old population} - \text{deaths in that population} + \text{surviving births} + \text{surviving in-migrating infants} + \text{surviving in-migrants} - \text{all out-migrants}$$

Despite the availability of such data, accounting difficulties arise in matching up the balance of additions and debits to the original population with the actual change in usual residents represented by the difference between usual resident counts at successive censuses. As an example of this, Table 3 accounts for the additions and debits to the original 1981 usual resident population of the town of Katherine for the period 1981-1986.

Table 3
Components of usual residence change in Katherine 1981-1986

	Additions	Debits	Balance
Migration Components			
Inter-state	1341	980	361
Intra-territory	620	732	-112
International	227	75	152
Total	2188	1787	401
Deaths		130	
Aged under 5 (births plus migrating infants)	1033		
Total additions	3221		
Total debits		1917	
Total balance			1304
Persons who did not move			
Not stated U/R 1981	544		
Persons in teh same SSD	1877		
Total	2421		
Total usual res 1986	5140		
Total usual res 1981	3550		
Total change	1590		
Total discrepancy (total change minus total balance)	286		

Sources:

1. Internal Migration Tables, 1986 Census
2. Usual Resident Statistics, 1981 and 1986 Census
3. ABS Vital Statistics 1981-1986

1. Respondents who indicated that their 1986 and 1981 usual residence was Katherine, for example, may have answered incorrectly and may well have been movers instead of non-movers and as such should have been part of the additions. Since the ABS is fairly confident about overseas migration figures, it seems likely

that any such errors would boost additions due to inter-state and intra-state migration.

2. Respondents who did not state their 1981 usual residence may also have been movers and could be allocated to migration categories as above.
3. There is also the possibility that respondents resident elsewhere who indicated that Katherine was their usual residence in 1981 may also have answered incorrectly. If so, they would inflate the debits due to migration.
4. Total recorded deaths do not reflect the true population at risk, that is the 1981 usual resident population. They are used here as an estimate only since the actual deaths to the original population are unknown.

An additional problem is that total change calculated from the components data and total change indicated by the difference between usual residence counts derive from quite different methodologies and are therefore not strictly comparable. The 1981 census usual resident count figure represents the sum of the response to question eight on the 1981 census schedule (equivalent to question 6 of the 1986 schedule) of those who indicated that Katherine was their usual place of residence for at least six months during 1981. Data on the components of change, however, are obtained retrospectively by disaggregating 1986 usual residents according to how they answered question eight of the 1986 census schedule, that is, where they were living five years previously. The fact that an alternative to the 1981 usual residence count figure may be derived by back-counting the 1986 population who indicated that they were usual residents of Katherine in 1981 underlines the incompatibility of the two measures of change.

As Burnley has observed (1988a, 33), in areas where population change has been largely because of in- and out-migration, most of the population at the second census is not the survived population anyway, but a different population. Thus, one way to achieve reconciliation between the components data and usual resident change may be to redefine the 1981 usual residents using a back-counting procedure using the known components of population change from the second census.

Patterns of net and gross migration

Bearing in mind the potential error indicated above, Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the spatial pattern of net and gross migration flows between each small town and their respective State Statistical Divisions (in the case of Queensland and Western Australian towns) and Statistical Sub-Divisions (in the case of Northern Territory towns). Total interstate flows are also indicated.

Whilst some similarities in flow patterns are apparent - such as the tendency for gross flows to be far in excess of net flows - the overwhelming feature is the way in which the pattern of movement in and out of small towns varies according to regional location. The dominant feature in Western Australia, for example, is the extent of population exchange between small northern towns and the state metropolitan area, although this is more or less matched by interstate flows. The extent to which the latter are to and from other state metropolitan areas remains to be established, although it is interesting to note that approximately half of all interstate movement is to and from the Northern Territory and Queensland which suggests that movement from other non-metropolitan areas, particularly within the north, is considerable. Also apparent, is the fact that net migration gains in the East Kimberley towns are not from Perth but more local non-metropolitan sources as well as interstate.

Figure 4 Patterns of net and gross migration: selected small towns in Western Australia and the Northern Territory

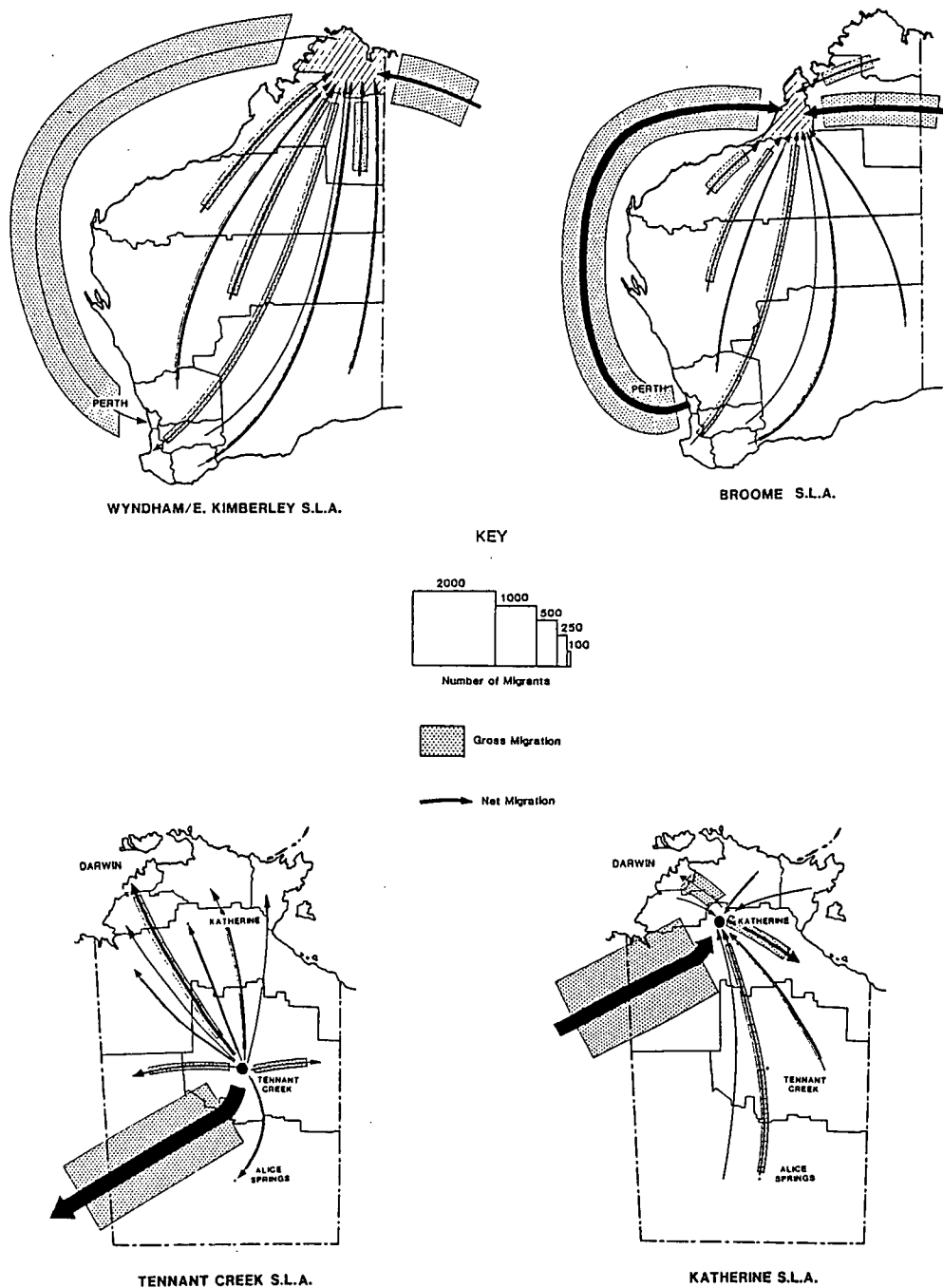
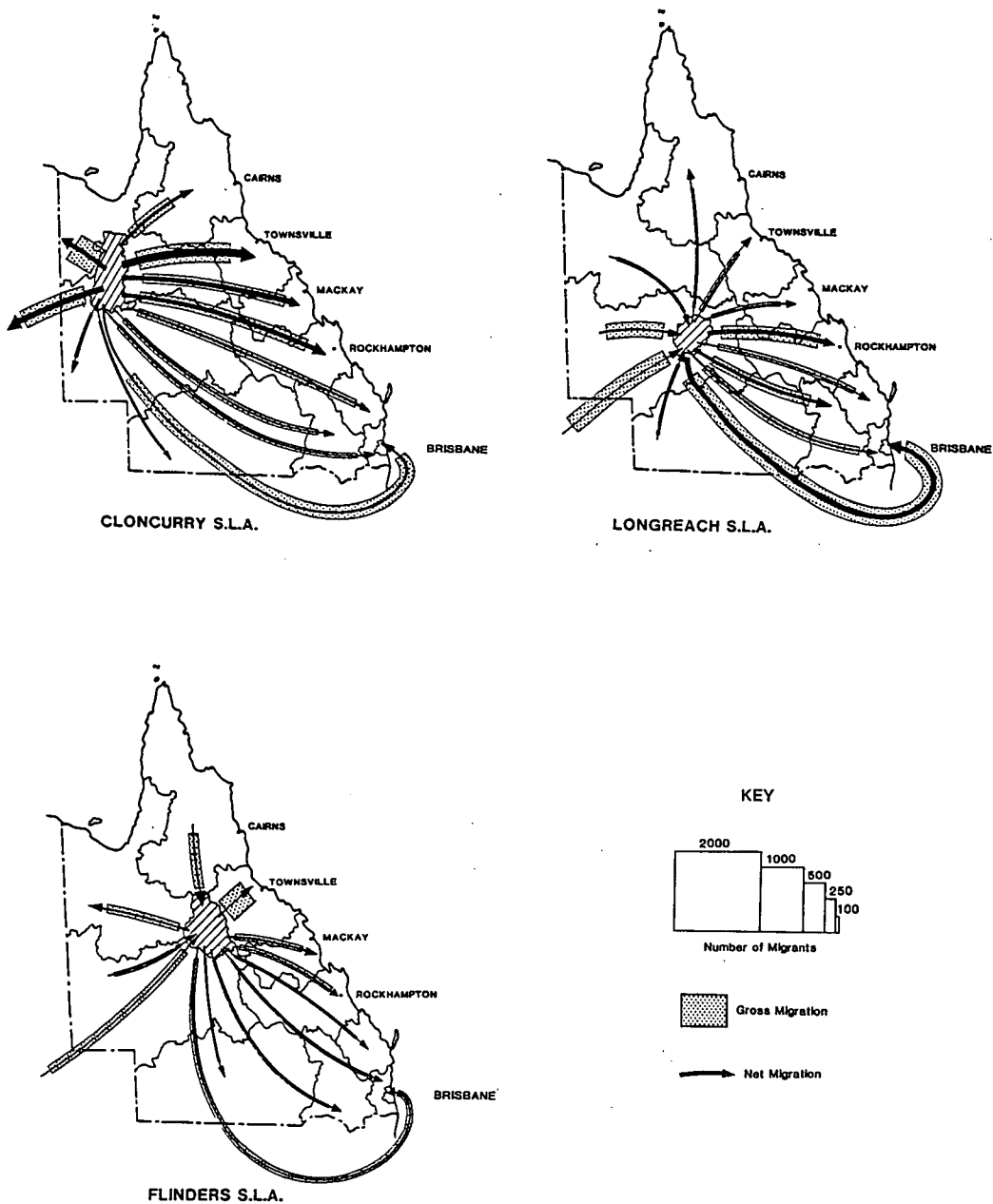


Figure 5 Patterns of gross migration: selected small towns in Queensland



In contrast, movement in and out of Northern Territory small towns has been dominated by interstate flows with substantial net gains accruing to Katherine and equally high net losses to Tennant Creek where intercensal population gain was clearly due to natural increase. Also of interest is the fact that net migration losses from Katherine to other parts of the Territory have been compensated for by interstate gains.

In Queensland small towns, net migration loss to other parts of the state is common with little compensatory gain from interstate. Thus, as with Tennant Creek, small town growth recorded in this region has been due to natural increase. In contrast with the pattern of intra-state migration in Western Australia (and to some extent the Northern Territory) migration within Queensland is not dominated by interaction with the metropolitan area, at least not in the case of all small towns. In Cloncurry and Hughenden, for example, it would appear that proximity to other large centres at Mt Isa, and particularly along the north Queensland coast, considerably reduces the role of Brisbane as a switching point for interregional migration. This pattern in the more northerly small towns is underlined by the much higher metropolitan flows and net migration loss to the capital evident in Longreach.

Composition of migration flows

A prime determinant of the impact of migration on small northern towns is the character of the migrants moving in and out. It is an established fact that migrants generally do not form a random cross-section addition to the population they are joining nor are they a random subtraction from the population they are leaving. In Australia, such selectivity within migration streams has tended to work towards maintaining equilibrium within the settlement system. Thus, in country areas, for example, it has been noted how selective out-migration to metropolitan areas of young school leavers in the 15-19 age group is generally compensated for by net in-migration amongst the older 25-29 age group in response to the regional distribution of employment and training opportunities (Jarvie in press). It has also been noted how long distance interregional migration flows to and from small towns in northern Australia, are characteristically, though not entirely, employment-led (McKay 1984).

Given this latter observation, a breakdown of intercensal employment change in each small town by industry of employment, industry sector and occupational category would provide a useful adjunct to the analysis of migrant characteristics. Unfortunately, intercensal comparison of labour force data for small towns is not straightforward because of methodological changes between 1981 and 1986 in census input coding and ABS occupational classification. Briefly, in the 1981 census, housewives, pensioners and full time students were counted as part of the labour force as well as in employment. This was not the case in 1986 and as a result substantial differences in the proportion of not stated and inadequately described responses occur in the industry and industry sector tables with 1981 percentages being much higher than in 1986. As for occupational groups, the changeover from using the Classification and Classified List of Occupations (CCLO) in 1981 to the skills-based Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) in 1986 makes the analysis of occupational change impossible, particularly when dealing with small area data. An additional problem is the fact that labour force characteristics of small town populations are only available by place of enumeration and this can cause unknown distortions in towns such as Broome and Kununurra where large numbers of visitors are included in the labour force figures.

Despite the lack of data on small town employment change, it is possible to establish the employment and age characteristics of small town migrants by cross-classifying flows

identified by the internal migration matrix against selected variables including: five year age-group, industry sector, occupational group and industry of employment. The final section of this paper provides a brief summary of net changes in these characteristics due to migration.

Age

Table 4 shows net migration for each of the small towns by five year age group. The main feature is a striking contrast between the rapidly growing regional centres in the Kimberley region and Katherine, where net migration gains are common in almost all age groups, and the more depressed rural centres in the pastoral areas of western Queensland as well as Tennant Creek where virtually all age groups record a net migration loss. In the rapidly growing centres, net gains are most apparent within a fairly narrow age range of 20-29, although Broome displays a fairly comprehensive pattern of in-migration. In the more depressed towns, net gains are found only in the 20-24 age group with heavy net losses apparent in the subsequent age range of 25-39. Also of interest are the substantial net losses amongst school age populations.

Table 4
Net migration by five year age group

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5 - 14	90	-22	-23	-198	-301	-32	-101
15 - 19	23	-20	22	-49	-68	-12	-10
20 - 24	186	168	149	25	-8	50	-28
25 - 29	73	155	62	-93	-108	7	-30
30 - 34	48	3	12	-84	-92	-18	-49
35 - 39	62	-11	4	-52	-101	-22	-28
40 - 44	23	58	39	-50	-69	-30	-41
45 - 49	30	9	-10	-32	-41	-9	-10
50 - 54	15	10	-8	-18	-31	-8	-19
55 - 59	23	3	-11	-19	-21	-21	-20
60+	7	8	-22	-29	-48	-19	-21

1 = Broome; 2 = East Kimberley; 3 = Katherine; 4 = Tennant Creek; 5 = Cloncurry; 6 = Flinders; 7 = Longreach

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1986

Industry sector

The pattern of net migration by industry sector (Table 5) reflects the regional mix of public and private sector investment and disinvestment along the lines discussed by Holmes (1988c). Small towns such as Tennant Creek and those in western Queensland have generally experienced net migration losses due to retrenchment in the private sector as part of the readjustment of rural industries to changing economic circumstances (Holmes 1988c). In opposition to this trend, net migration gains are characteristic amongst public sector (notably state public sector) employees - an observation which supports the contention that small northern towns are increasingly dependant upon public investment for their economic well-being. Although the migration of private sector workers has been a major cause of rapid population growth in the Kimberley towns and

Katherine, the higher population thresholds generated by this influx are also reflected in the expansion of public services and significant net migration gains in both federal and state sectors.

Table 5
Net migration by industry sector

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Federal Government	25	6	34	-24	-22	-9	-26
State Government	98	79	79	30	38	24	16
Local Government	11	3	2	10	-1	-1	1
Private	261	213	251	-129	-265	17	-102

1 = Broome; 2 = East Kimberley; 3 = Katherine; 4 = Tennant Creek; 5 = Cloncurry; 6 = Flinders; 7 = Longreach

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1986

Occupation

The distribution of occupational net migration generally supports the pattern described for industry sector workers (Table 6). In those occupational groups most closely associated with the private sector, such as tradespeople, machine workers and labourers, net losses are greatest and widespread in the economically depressed towns of western Queensland as well as Tennant Creek. In contrast, Katherine and the Kimberley towns show considerable net gains in these occupations.

Table 6
Net migration by broad occupational group

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Managers	43	3	31	-16	-2	22	8
Professionals	97	85	103	-17	-36	-13	-4
Tradespersons	100	117	69	-38	-40	2	-3
Clerks	39	62	73	-13	-26	-10	-37
Service	58	53	38	-8	-39	9	-35
Machine	4	33	38	-37	-45	-12	-30
Labourers	49	55	35	-7	-49	16	-15

1 = Broome; 2 = East Kimberley; 3 = Katherine; 4 = Tennant Creek; 5 = Cloncurry; 6 = Flinders; 7 = Longreach

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1986

Industry

A breakdown of net migration by industry of employment provides some insight into the particular types of economic activity that have impacted on the demography of small towns (Table 7). The expansion of community services has clearly led to in-migration in most small northern towns whilst the contrast between the growing and depressed towns is demonstrated by the movement of workers in the wholesale and retail industry as well as finance, property and business. More localised economic impacts are apparent in net migration gains to Katherine (construction, defence), East Kimberley (mining) and Broome (services).

Table 7
Net migration by industry

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Agric/forestry fishing/hunting	29	55	-50	-43	41	70	18
Mining	-10	116	-7	-7	-90	-14	-8
Manufacturing	9	-39	-29	-10	-57	-1	-15
Electricity/ gas/water	15	4	8	-4	-17	-3	-2
Construction	33	45	203	-11	9	10	19
Wholesale/ retail trade	42	32	76	-31	-35	-19	-45
Transport/ storage	33	19	1	-15	11	12	-14
Communication	7	3	4	-2	-9	-7	1
Finance/property and business	23	32	65	-11	-37	-20	-38
Public admin/ defence	14	4	71	1	-14	-11	-12
Community services	128	45	75	22	-28	10	9
Recreation/ other services	67	65	40	-4	-19	-4	-1

1 = Broome; 2 = East Kimberley; 3 = Katherine; 4 = Tennant Creek; 5 = Cloncurry;
6 = Flinders; 7 = Longreach

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 1986.

Conclusion

Unlike country towns in other parts of Australia such as in western New South Wales (Burnley 1989) and South Australia (Smailes 1989) where the small town population gains of the 1970s now appear to have been reversed, many small towns across the north have continued their growth into the 1980s. In addition, some thickening of the settlement system is apparent as smaller population centres develop from the fragmentation of larger

ones in the NT and the Queensland small towns account for an increasing proportion of the remote area population in that state. Also of interest is the importance of public sector employment in maintaining a degree of population stability in declining towns and providing a significant share of the growth in boom towns.

The pattern of population change derives primarily from the variable impact of net migration gains and losses. Net migration gains are clearly restricted to the 'boom' towns where private and public expenditure have fed off each other to generate highly localised pockets of employment. Elsewhere, net migration losses are more commonplace and although these have generally been insufficient to undermine growth due to natural increase, they reflect an underlying malaise in many northern country towns, particularly in western Queensland.

In reality, of course, there is no such person as a 'net migrant' since most net changes only represent a tiny balance between two much larger flows both in and out. Gross population turnover is clearly substantial in the towns examined here and provides a more accurate indication of the overall importance of migration in the process of population change. In the larger northern towns this high turnover reflects, on the one hand, a growing imbalance between the regional supply of, and demand for, labour (McKay 1984), and on the other, individual migrants' career paths and the increasing tendency in advanced economies generally for migration to be determined by the internal structure of the large private and government organisations (McKay and Whitelaw 1977; Johnson and Salt 1980; Jarvie in press). Although some local redistribution of population is underway within the outback areas of northern Australia and a degree of population retention is emerging, the tendency is still apparent for the demographic fortunes of small towns in the region to be determined by interaction with places and events well beyond their horizons.

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THE SMALL COUNTRY TOWN AND TOURISM - NODAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Michael Fagence

In a recent study of small towns in Victoria (Henshall Hansen Associates 1988) there was clear advocacy for the adoption of a strategic approach to planning such communities, both to optimise localised comparative advantages over other townships, and to secure a coordinated regional development program. Recognition of the regional hierarchy and patterns was considered to be as important as appreciation of the idiosyncratic features of each small town; however, the construction of the creative regional strategy would need to give expression to the significant local and district features and attributes of each township, as well as to the adaptation of local services and facilities to satisfy the requirements of regional tourism and travel patterns. Caution was urged in the pursuit of tourism as the panacea for the economic malaise of a township; not all small towns exhibited the credentials of a high profile tourism destination, and many would need to settle for a role complementing other small townships in the region, and perhaps offering a particular tourism experience not available elsewhere in the region.

This assessment underpins the basic premise of the research reported in this paper, **that not all small towns have the capacity to sustain an independent viable attractiveness**, and that to achieve maximum benefit at the community and regional level such townships should be considered as integral elements in a region-wide strategy. Despite the realism implicit in such assertions there is considerable evidence that many small townships approach the possibility of generating tourism attractiveness as the local economic panacea, without recognising either the basic requirements for worthwhile tourism development or the impacts on the environment, the local economy and the host community. Various reports on the country centres projects for the Commonwealth government and even the more dramatic examples recorded by Rosenow and Pulsipher (1979) and by Wearing (1981) seem unable to persuade many communities that tourism development may not be for them. One overview of the impact of tourism development on the Australian environment identified the almost fanatical seizure of tourism as the means to arrest the decline in economic activity levels and to protect basic servicing and investment levels for small, geographically-isolated townships (Cooper 1982).

The basic premise for this paper - that in order to achieve balanced regional tourism, especially in remote areas with a geographically-dispersed pattern of townships, each small town should be considered as a nodal point of tourist attraction, capitalising on its special qualities and opportunities - is examined in a number of ways. First, the strategic role of small towns in tourism strategies is considered as an exercise in regional geometry. Second, the focus is sharpened to the Gulf region of north-west Queensland, and the potential role accorded to small towns in a series of reports on that region is assessed. Third, a selected case study of Croydon as a nodal point of potential tourist attraction is examined by means of a township appraisal, and finally, there is an assessment of the implications of replicating the exercise elsewhere.

Tourism development strategies and small country towns

Of particular concern to this study is the potential of a physical planning study to coordinate development, realise tourism development potential, prevent site pre-emption by non-tourism uses, and protect the potential tourism resource from despoliation and image-damage. A region-wide strategy, with targeted nodes of particular development should achieve that.

Despite the diversity of strategies discussed in the tourism planning and development literature, there is a tendency for them to be largely unspecific in geographic terms. This is particularly so in Australia where the various states have largely avoided the zoning of tourist developments, which may be interpreted as advantaging some areas and locations to the possible detriment of others. The reasons for this are linked to the political realities of parochialism and a reluctance to aid land speculation through zoning in statutory plans - even though that is done for most other land-using activities. A conspicuous exception to this is the recently released tourism development strategy for the north coast region of NSW (Tourism Commission of NSW 1987) in which geographical referencing was not shown in the maps but was evident in the declaration of prime and secondary tourism development areas, with each category having an important and complementary role to play in the region's overall strategy. The aim of the strategy was 'to provide a framework that will encourage the orderly development of tourism in an environmentally sensitive manner' (Tourism Commission of NSW 1987, 12).

The physical design or planning strategy for a tourism region is conventionally composed of three elements - tourism attraction complexes, networks of facilities, and spot facilities (Baud-Bovy and Lawson 1977, 173-8). Alternatively the region may be differentiated into community-attraction complexes, circulation corridors and the non-attraction hinterland (Gunn 1972; 1988b). In addition, and with particular reference to the circumstances of the region examined later in this paper, Gunn also identifies a zonal structure in which the peripheral zones are described as 'rural' (in which attractions are principally based on natural resources with patterns of settlements to satisfy the necessary servicing requirements), and 'remote' (in which the natural environment is free of all but the more frontier-type amenities) (Gunn 1988b, 62). These, and other similar spatial configurations are derived from the basic geometrical elements of points, lines and areas (see Getis and Boots 1978; Coffey 1981).

Gunn (1972; 1988b) provides a useful example of the application of the three geometric properties (Figure 1). This framework is composed of a series of cells, linked by a continuous route network, set in a vast area of unviolated hinterland and natural area. In terms of the three geometric elements the framework may be assessed as follows:

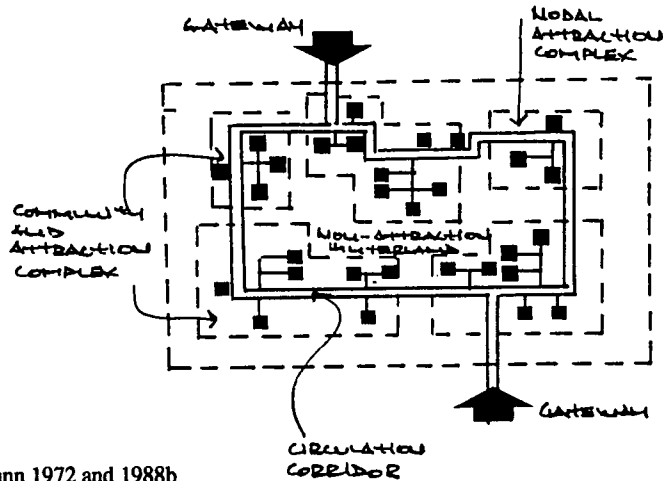
Points - Community attraction complexes composed of tourist attractions and cells of services (such as accommodation, entertainment, provisioning).

Lines - Circulation corridors, of circuit-linear form, accommodating any mode of transportation.

Areas - Non-attraction hinterland.

The tourism strategy of Victoria (Victorian Tourism Commission 1984) reveals some evidence of the Gunn framework with its references to resort zones and tourism corridors. If the attraction complexes, as points, are conceived as nodes, the NSW study previously

Figure 1 Schematic regional framework



Source: Based on Gunn 1972 and 1988b

mentioned (1987) nominates principal tourism development status to major 'small' townships, and the secondary status to coastal holiday villages, inland service centres, and inland towns and villages. In the context of this study of northern Queensland, the small country towns in the Gulf region are similar to the secondary level status used in the NSW regional study. This will be the assumption underlying the remaining discussion in this paper.

One further strategic issue needs to be raised here - the differentiation between 'touring' tourism and 'destination' tourism (Gunn 1979, 317-32). This is particularly pertinent in the case of the Gulf region, and other regions which are geographically extensive; the distribution of the nodal points along routes will be determined not only by their tourist attractiveness, but also by their function as convenient enroute stopping points.

Tourism strategies for the Gulf region

Earlier commentary in this paper has drawn attention to the lack of *strategic* geographical specificity in most Australian tourism planning at the regional scale. This is particularly so in the Gulf region. Despite a series of studies since 1985, the evidence of systematic assessment and evaluation, and the application of strategic concepts is outweighed by the evidence of pragmatism and expediency. As the Gulf region lacks a concentration of attractions for tourism, but rather embraces a diversity of potential tourism experiences distributed unevenly across an expanse of some 186 000 sq km (including the 'natural' extensions into the Northern Territory and the nearest island groups in the Gulf of Carpentaria) it would seem that a *strategic framework* was necessary to achieve balance and coordination so that the tourist/traveller may gain maximum benefit from exposure to the region and so that the communities and entrepreneurs in the region derive maximum return from their expenditure of effort.

The Gulf region (of Queensland)

The Gulf-Savannah tourism region lies fully within the tropical zone (Figure 2). As defined by prevailing administrative boundaries the region is largely an artificial entity,

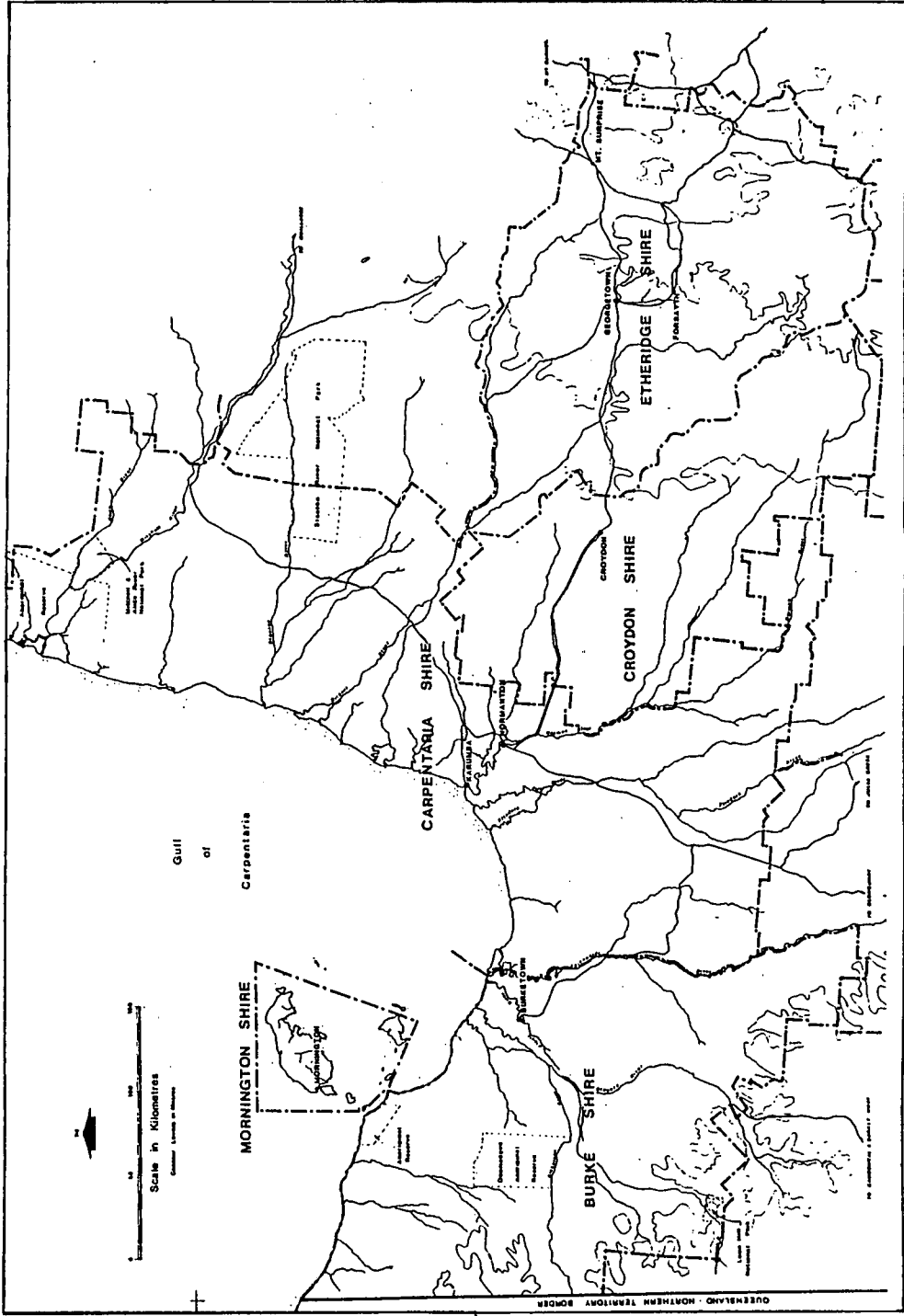
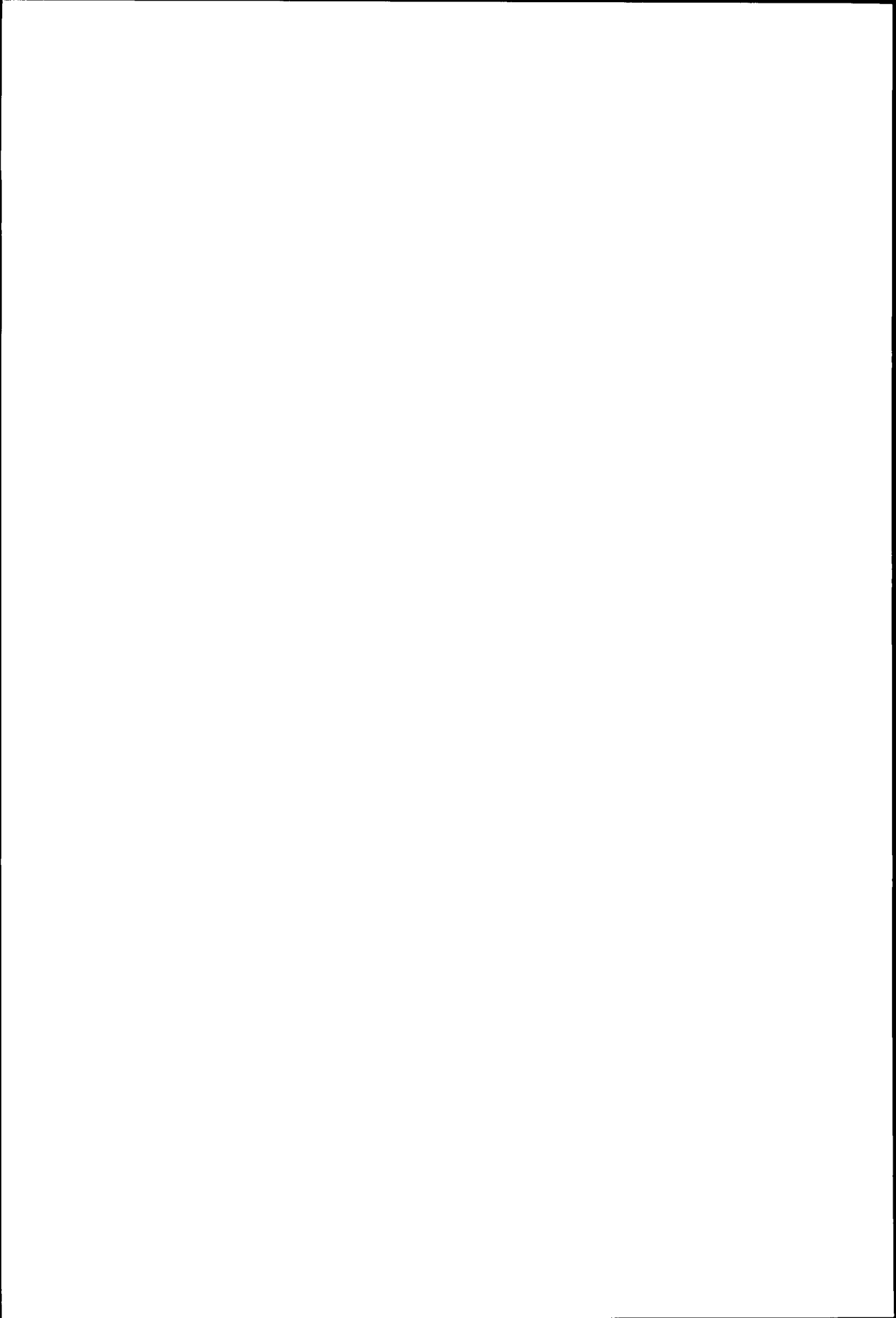


Figure 2 The Gulf Region, Queensland



with affinity for tourism extending across the border into the Northern Territory, and across the Gulf to the nearest island groups. The region extends approximately 700 km east-west by 500 km north-south. It is not physically uniform; on the western periphery it is marked by the Barkly Tableland and on the eastern periphery by the Atherton Tableland, and between by a diversity of wetlands and savannah with small-scale changes in topographical profile reflecting variations in rock outcrop, soil quality, water courses and level of water table. Surface changes in colour and texture are created by variation in soil types, vegetation types, variety of fauna, and agricultural systems. In many locations there is surface debris indicative of previous site occupation for settlement or economic enterprise. The vast distances, extensive panoramas and often hazy horizons contribute psychologically to the diversity of environmental experiences.

Across this diverse environment the pattern of settlement reflects the demands of previous periods of pioneer colonisation and environmental exploitation, although modern economic activity has added elements to the settled landscape. The present pattern of settlement is somewhat anachronistic, with a number of small townships providing community services to small indigenous populations and a scarcely larger population scattered across the hinterland in various stations and at mine/exploration sites. Settlement hierarchical ordering and complementarity is impeded by the dispersed pattern of townships and by the generally low population levels (see Table 1), so that there is a

Table 1
Population in shires and small country towns of the Gulf region, 1971-1986

Shire	Town	1971(1)	1976(2)	1981(2)	1986(3)
Burke		894	1137	1320	1433
	Burketown	na	na	210	232
	Domadgee	na	na	862	922
Carpentaria		2558	2809	3273	3287
	Edward River	na	na	387	420
	Karumba	359	418	670	535
	Kowanyama	na	na	782	805
	Normanton	745	817	926	1109
Croydon		236	222	255	324
	Croydon	na	na	na	229
Etheridge		974	940	1010	1210
	Georgetown	279	324	319	324

Sources: 1. Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Census 71, Bulletin 7 - Characteristics of the Population and Dwellings in Local Government Areas, Queensland, Reference No 2.89.3, Canberra.

Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Census 71, Bulletin 6 - Population and Dwellings in Local Government Areas and Urban Centres, Queensland, Reference No 2.88.3, Canberra.

2. ABS, Census 81, Persons and Dwellings in Local Government Areas and Urban Centres, Queensland, Catalogue No 2403.0, Canberra.

3. ABS, Census 86, Persons and Dwellings in Legal Local Government Areas, Statistical Local Areas and Urban Centres/(Rural) Localities, Queensland, Catalogue No 2464.0, Canberra.

degree of repetition and 'sameness' about the concentration of community and commercial services. The pioneer route system remains in place linking the dispersed townships on an axial and circuit network which is not fully operational during the monsoon period. Even significant mining activity or major tourism development is unlikely to seriously influence the entrenched pattern of routes and settlements. The region is not typically 'wilderness' in character, despite the frequent (and loose) use of the description in most studies of the Gulf; rather, it exhibits remoteness, vastness and primitiveness. Within this frontier zone the pattern is of a loose mosaic of nodal points located at route intersections, at existing/past mine sites, at convenient journey time/distance intervals along a major traffic artery; development of the Gulf shore indicates response to the third primary activity - fishing.

Review of past studies

Most studies have concentrated on inventories of potential development (not always to any degree of specification) and an advocacy of management systems, proceeding to interpret locational capability as strategic suitability and desirability. A particular casualty of this geographically uncritical approach has been the lack of determination of the appropriate regional role for each small country town.

References to the quality of the 'outback' experience, remoteness, primitiveness, wilderness and the frontier environment pervade most studies (see for example Pannell Kerr Forster 1983; Gulf Local Authorities Development Association 1985, 1988; Pacific Asia Travel Association 1988; Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation 1988). Common denominators in these studies have become the establishment of an interpretation/guide school, the creation of a joint local authority, and the recognition of the 'wilderness zone' through a special management plan. Different degrees of attention are paid to the specifications of what constitutes the special Gulf experience, and to the discussion of the regional attributes of pioneer settlements, the legacy of historic mining activity, current mine sites and activity, geological and archaeological phenomena of tourist (as well as scientific) interest, and Aboriginal culture. The PKF study commented on the network of small communities 'which are a convenient driving distance apart' (1983, Ch 4, 3). That study advocated (by implication) a linear and circuit strategy with tourism development being concentrated into water courses and along the developmental road with nodal point locations for servicing at existing townships or at route intersections. The strategy weakened the consolidation of attention at the townships with its advocacy of intermediate courtesy camp sites. Equal pragmatism is evident in the GLADA (1985) study which eschews strategic planning in favour of assigning tourism roles to stations, routes and townships on the basis of convention, commitment and a recognition of 'what is'. The outcome of the assessment was a confirmation of assigned roles to townships such as Georgetown (gateway, reference/interpretation centre), Croydon (historic village precinct, terminus of Gulflander rail route), Normanton (basic service centre), Karumba (access to the Gulf shoreline) and Burketown (basic service centre) without specific evidence of complementarity, or strategic appropriateness; in fact, strategic considerations were disrupted by unspecific nomination of sites for 'upmarket' outback lodges/resorts. Concern is expressed in many reports on the potential damage to the 'outback' image by the introduction of alien planning forms and architectural styles. This particular matter was addressed by Fagence and Sinnamon (1986), who reported that the Gulf was not a homogeneous region and that there was a diversity of indigenous styles which exhibited local responses to local conditions.

A later GLADA study (1988) identified a number of key locations for resorts/lodges, and nominated unspecified development at 29 locations including each of the small towns.

This approach is politically acceptable but may not be strategically sound, and may exacerbate any existing regional imbalance, site-use capacity problems, and locational complementarity, and may frustrate linkages, specialisation and the pursuit of efficiency and coordination. Similar problems are in evidence in the 'in-house' QTTC report (1988), and the most recent PATA study (1988).

The most recent study (PATA 1988) declared that 'there have been enough studies and reports in the past five years' (p32), and that the necessary task was to assign 'priorities, a time frame, a workable action plan and a budget' (p38). After an eight day inspection of the region, it advocated careful treatment of tourism development so as to conserve the best attributes of the sensitive and fragile natural, cultural and social environments. A zonal perspective was adopted as the recommended strategy, emphasising:

- controlled entry points (gateways) and controlled circulation;
- three primary attraction zones, with nominated principal attractions in each;
- '*genius loci*' treatment of existing communities by policies of 'greening', cultivating pioneer/frontier life-style experiences, accentuating differences between communities, and targeting new/additional accommodation of a general or specialist nature;
- intermediate courtesy camp sites.

Despite the discernible strategic imprint in the 1988 studies, the zonal treatment accorded lesser significance to the core area, and excluded some communities or facilities because 'of lack of community interest and support', or because restoration 'would be expensive' or 'it is not in the right place to justify expense' (p53).

As an indication of the levels of specificity which may be appropriate to the treating of tourism nodes in a developmental region similar to the Gulf, the following section presents an examination of the township of Croydon, a small town which received mention in most of the previously reviewed studies, and was nominated as a possible tourist attraction in the form of an historic precinct. The following assessment is planning-oriented, and omits the admittedly necessary comparison study of economic and social attributes and potential, whilst concentrating on imageability and derived potential.

Nodal point study - Croydon

There is no existing overall physical strategy for tourism development in the Gulf region, and as a result development is proceeding piecemeal without any coordination or an integrated perspective on land use planning and promotion of economic activity, and with no overall concept of a Gulf 'image'. Although the argument has not been developed in this paper, two premises underline the previous discussion and assessment and the ensuing interpretation of Croydon. First, that in a region such as the Gulf the most likely strategic framework will be linear, with circuits, and with tourism attractions and servicing concentrated at nodal points. Second, that the small townships in the region complement each other so as to increase the aggregate of tourism opportunities and experiences available in the region. Even if these premises are not fully acceptable, there must be careful examination of the opportunities and constraints in each township if the tourism development viability is to be efficiently determined and projected into a workable plan at the community level.

In most of the previously reviewed studies which nominate potential tourism attraction centres, Croydon is listed as a centre for tourism development; the rationale most often cited includes the township's location midway between the Atherton Tableland/eastern

margin of the Gulf region and the 'natural' centre at Normanton, its location at the southern terminus of the Gulflander railway system, and its historical association with mining in the local goldfields.

A pilot assessment of Croydon was conducted in November 1987 involving social scientists from James Cook University, a landscape architect and the author of this paper, as a means of development a study framework for the assessment of other townships in the region. It is the geographical/planning aspects of that pilot survey which are considered here; the approach has been replicated to different degrees in Georgetown, Normanton and Karumba by the author.

Croydon: the basic features

The nodality of the township on the Gulf development road is conspicuous (Figure 2). From the Gulf's eastern margin at Forty Mile Scrub, the route westwards to the region's core township (Normanton) is composed of three equidistant segments:

Forty Mile Scrub to Georgetown	-	149 km
Georgetown to Croydon	-	150 km
Croydon to Normanton	-	151 km

This pattern makes Croydon a convenient journey 'comfort-stop' in each direction. The township is an oasis in an area of undistinguished topography and scrub vegetation. Its location was determined largely by mining activity in the area which began in 1885. The town grew from a mining campsite to become one of interior Queensland's largest towns (population in 1899 was 6 000 - Pike 1986, 28). The township was a service centre to a number of shanty communities located closer to the mine sites. By 1986 the population was 229 (ABS 1988). It remains a service centre for an extensive pastoral district, and a latent centre of a goldfield which is being re-assessed. Basic commercial service provision is augmented by a base hospital, police station, school and post office.

The tourism potential of the township is derived from six sources:

- historical associations with the goldfield activity of the 1880s and 90s;
- the scenic attractiveness of some local natural sites;
- the service capacity to frontier/station experiences on local stations;
- servicing of travellers enroute through the region;
- the collection of buildings of frontier styles and industrial archaeological paraphernalia;
- the terminus of the Gulflander railway.

Although the form, structure, image and function of Croydon is incomplete and loose, as befits a township which has experienced decline, the potential for some form of tourism development is evident. Nodal point, specialist treatment would seem rational in a strategic planning context.

The approach to nodal point studies

The township is the scale at which it is possible to introduce those measures of planning guidance and control which may give effect to the identity of settlement in the Gulf region, so that each may perform its particular function in an overall tourism development strategy. Each nodal township presents particular problems and requires special treatment. Efficiency is achieved if the resultant town form and structure are tightly controlled and coordinated. Most townships present incomplete mosaic forms with many blocks of the

original survey grid entirely or partially incomplete. In addition, many townships lack a conspicuous centre or focal point, are devoid of symbolic gateways, and present loose, even indistinct edges. In such situations the basic planning guidance should attempt to consolidate the town form, fill in the voids, accentuate the centre, form a distinctive hard periphery, maximise internal vistas, form built-environment groups from the free-standing built-form elements, and mark the township's entrance/exit points. These various matters may be brought together conveniently using the imageability study approach promoted by Lynch (1960) in which the township:

- is divided into *cells* (purpose, land use, density, environmental characteristics, fabric, topography);
- is held together by *paths* or routes;
- has defined hard *edges* to indicate clearly where there is transition from one *cell* to another;
- has defined activity *nodes* such as a transport interchange (eg a rail terminal);
- has distinctive *landmarks*, which may be buildings, monuments, sites, built features, towers.

Croydon affords a convenient opportunity for the image concept assessment technique to be applied. The appraisal which follows is derived from the use of imageability techniques.

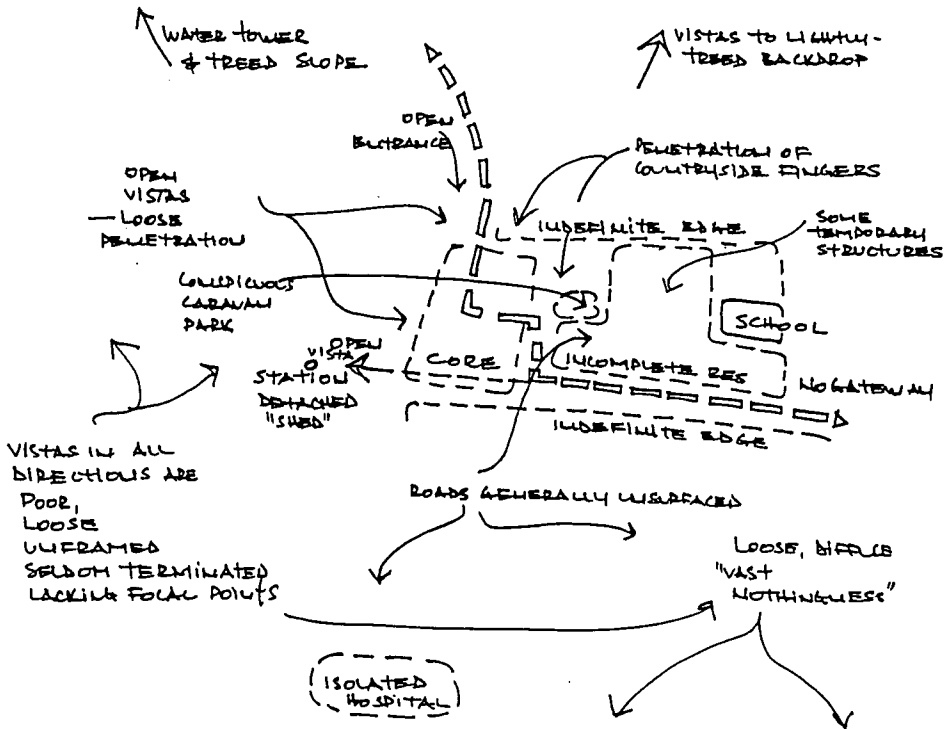
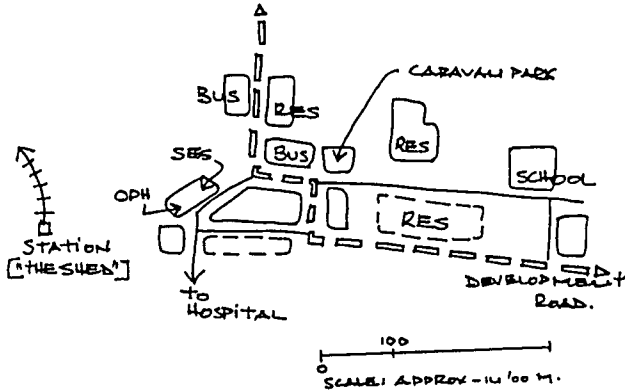
Summary appraisal of Croydon

The township lacks defined gateways announcing 'arrival' in Croydon (Figure 3). From the Georgetown entrance after the service station the town scarcely exists for several blocks, and the vista is terminated in the far distance by a decrepit railway shed. The Normanton entrance (west) is less loose in form and articulation as the township periphery at that point is built-up even if the structures are nondescript and scarcely complemented by the vacant panorama of the Memorial Park. Circulation through the township is simplified by the small-scale of the developed area. Only the Gulf Developmental Road and Samwell Street are surfaced, with many 'lower order' accessways being unformed and superseded by more convenient tracks worn by constant use. The core area is severed by the developmental road.

There is a very loose form and structure. The built fabric is dispersed into a few 'solids' surrounded and penetrated by many open development 'voids'. The school, hospital and the railway station are in peripheral and almost isolated locations. Even the core area is not fully built-up. In the creation of a definable image, a township needs conspicuous districts or cells, paths, edges, landmarks and nodes. Croydon's form is too diffuse for a positive determination of cellular structure. There is no conspicuous edge to the township because the penetrating countryside creates many voids. The township lacks principal landmarks and nodes, although the core precinct/ cell may meet basic image requirements. Any planning strategy for Croydon would need to address these matters, whether or not its tourism potential was to be developed or exploited. Most potential for tourism development is focused on the core area. However, this is the area of the most irksome planning problems (see Figure 4). In general, the township is set in a poor scrub environment, lacks form, structure, coherence and legibility. However, there is a potential for spatial re-organisation, environmental improvement and consolidation, and tourism development.

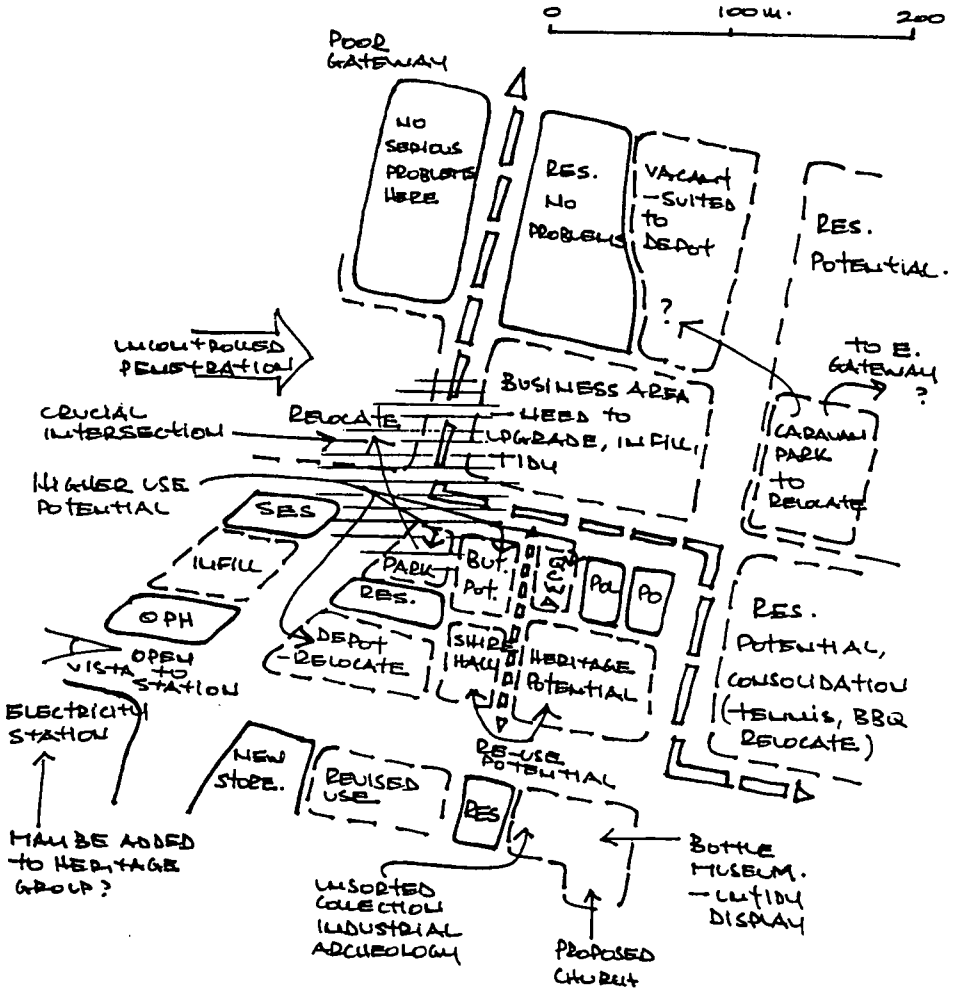
Figure 3 Croydon - structure - appraisal

EXISTING BASIC STRUCTURE



TOWNSCAPE APPRAISAL

Figure 4 Croydon - core area appraisal



PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS:

- LACK OF FOCUS
- LACK OF COHESION - VISUAL, BY FUNCTION
- POTENTIAL UNREALISED, PARTLY FRUSTRATED
- COST/BENEFIT OF CHANGE - WORTH IT?
- DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES?

Opportunities, constraints; planning principles

The planning strategy for Croydon is constrained by its location and competition from Normanton and Georgetown, the small size of the township and its infrastructure capacity (especially water-supply), the uncertainty of mining ventures, and the expectation that tourism might rescue the local economy.

Opportunities for township improvement and development are likely to be dependent upon the initiative begun by the Council with restoration and rehabilitation in the core precinct and with the collection of industrial artefacts and upon the partnership with private interests to secure infill development and site improvement in the core precinct.

Possible planning action

For convenience, the expressions of planning possibilities may be considered in two sections, the town as a whole, then the core area.

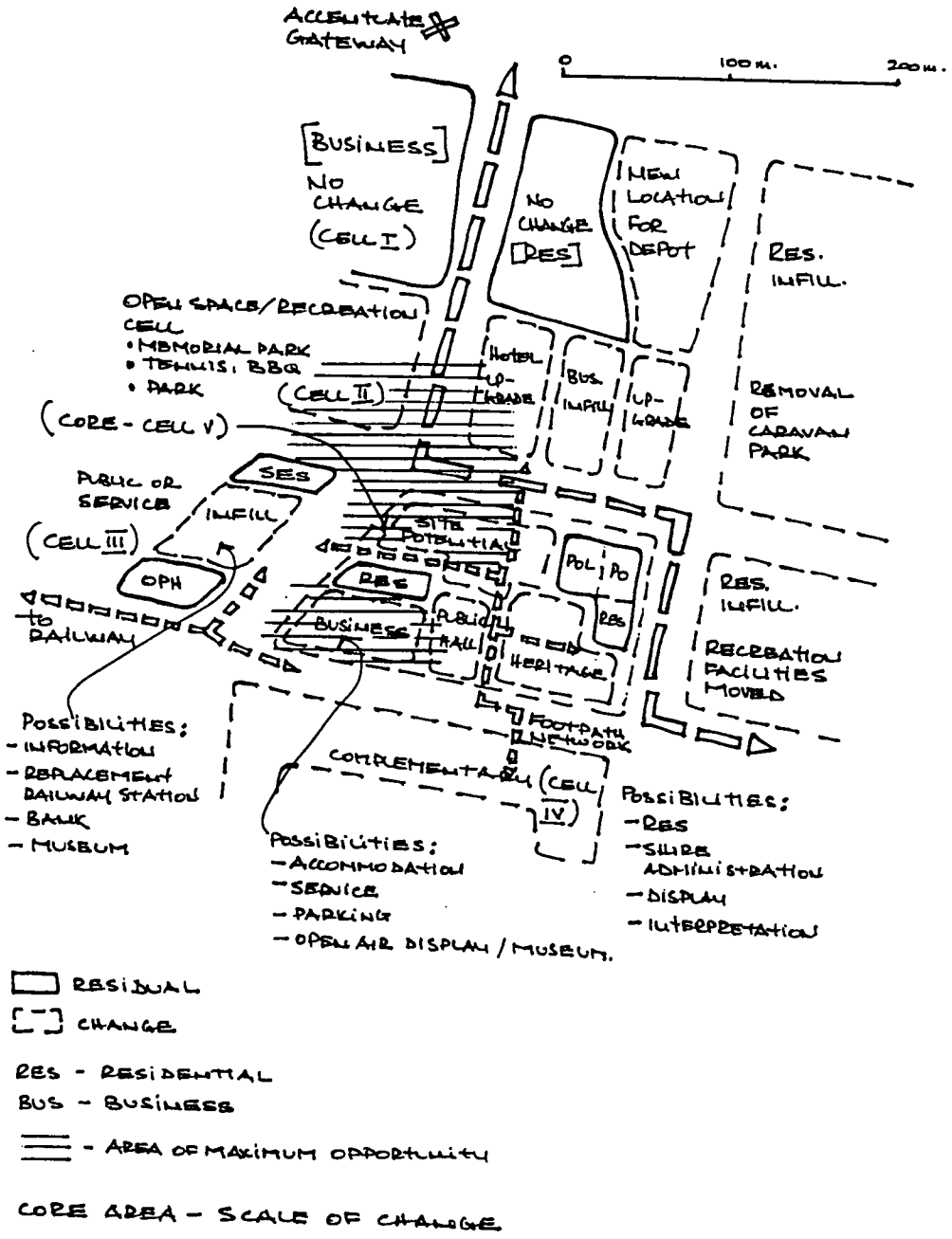
The township, astride the Gulf Developmental Road - could be moulded to a linear form with sharply defined cellular structure and rudimentary circulation system (see Figure 5). At both entrances the gateways would need accentuation. For residential land uses the preference would be directional infill outwards from the core. There should not be any residential development beyond the parameters of the linear form since the basic intention is to achieve consolidation. Any future mining development needs could be met within the existing town form. Recreation/open space requirements could be met by consolidation of existing under-used facilities and amenities.

Planning action within the core would need more comprehensive treatment, especially to contribute to any theme treatment as an historic precinct (Figure 5). The core, whilst contributing specifically to the theme attraction of Croydon, should be considered as a multipurpose zone with public facilities, information and interpretation amenities and heritage conservation. Maintenance of the heritage buildings restored so far, restoration of the town hall to public use, and retention of the existing residential uses are only a few of the complementary courses of action which may be suitable for developing the core. It is necessary for the core to be considered as an integrated unit, with complementary uses, consolidating development, and integrated design to maximise the tourism potential *on site* of what is a very small country town with considerable attraction potential.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to grapple with the problem of defining a role for small country towns in a regional tourism strategy. The task, in practice, is beset with problems of parochialism, political expediency, and often with the lack of a prepared strategy into which small townships can be functionally incorporated. It may be argued that the strain to contrive a tourism profile for Croydon is evident in this paper; whilst that may be true the case study has been used to raise a number of issues - firstly, to question the assumption that every small town *has* a tourism role; secondly, to consider strategic configurations which could accommodate roles for small towns as nodal points; and, thirdly, to pursue an investigative process through which the planned configuration to meet the requirements of a chosen role might evolve.

Figure 5 Croydon - core area - possibilities



A number of conclusions may be drawn: it is not yet common practice for regional studies in Australian tourism planning to be geographically explicit in the assignment of roles for small country towns; the basic geometrical principles and elements of regional strategy formation can be assembled in such a way that townships may be assigned particular nodal roles and contributions 'to the bigger picture'; and the lack of sensitivity to a particular nodal role can be overcome following an assessment of township image and character. Of course, if the region is congested, or the township has little intrinsic tourist attraction, any small town may exist merely by being 'well-placed' to satisfy enroute/stopover servicing.

To contrive a role for the township may be only a short-term palliative, and may well deflect investment from other (perhaps more) appropriate locations or developmental forms. Almost inevitably, the processes of economic Darwinism will prevail, and the Baud-Bovy and Lawson (1977) maxim of site selection even with an area generally suitable for tourism may 'naturally' determine the contribution to an aggregate regional strategy of any small town. For such townships to contribute strategically the emphasis should be directed towards complementarity. Even though marketing and social issues (which have not been addressed in this paper) may have an impact on the regional strategy, spatial configurations incorporating specialised nodal points would seem to be one means of including small towns meaningfully in regional tourism strategies.

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DIVERSITY IN SMALL SERVICE TOWNS IN NORTH WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Phillippa Hudson

Overview of some small town research

Small towns were largely bypassed in the mainstream of research into urban systems until the 1980s when increased attention was paid to the considerable changes most have undergone over recent times. Structural adjustments in agriculture and a consequent 'rural crisis' in some rural areas, created problems for rural service centres. The Australian Communities in Danger Conference in 1979, organised by the Kellogg Rural Adjustment Unit at the University of New England, Armidale, highlighted the plight of the struggling small country town. Writers such as McKenzie (1985) drew attention to the fact that low income families living in small country towns were the forgotten poor of Australia, and McSwan in his PhD thesis on inland Queensland towns concluded: 'Indeed, the neglect of the non-farming residents of declining pastoral areas is profound' (1983, 217).

Further weight was given to the depressing picture of small towns by Holmes (1978, 1979, 1981) and Burnley (1979, 1981) who wrote of population decline in small inland towns, while Jensen (1977, 1982) discussed the problems facing business people in small towns. Prompted by these reports, research was undertaken in four New England towns in New South Wales from 1979 to 1981 and considerable improvements were found to have occurred in these locations (Hudson 1986). One third of the sampled residents had moved to these towns during the previous ten years. There were two components to this migration. The first was an expressed preference for a rural life style, the second was an ability to buy a house at about one third of the price of its equivalent in Sydney. It was not until Hugo and Smailes (1985) published their findings on an urban to rural turnaround on a nation wide basis, that 'other adjustment processes at work which are tending to offset historic trends towards the concentration of the nation's population in metropolitan areas' were recognised (Musgrave 1987, 7). In Victoria in 1987, the state government commissioned a small towns study 'to more closely understand the causes and consequences of change in country Victoria and the impact of these changes on small towns' (Henshall Hansen Associates 1988, 1). This study confirmed that the rate of population growth in the Melbourne urban area has continued to fall behind the rest of the state. They found that the towns most at risk were those with less than 1 000 people due to their vulnerability to service withdrawals and further population loss (1988, 11).

Recently, other researchers have noted that regional centres are expanding at the expense of the small towns and that towns in areas of rural crisis, such as the Eyre Peninsula, are continuing to be badly affected (Burnley 1989; Smailes 1989). This appears to have led to early conclusions that the turnaround of the previous decade has ceased. However, there now appears to be confusion about the term turnaround. Once it referred to non metropolitan growth, but now it seems to exclude larger rural centres and include only the smaller rural towns. Furthermore, since some smaller rural towns are still growing, the overall picture remains unclear.

The above discussions generally relate to the southern parts of Australia, that is NSW, Victoria and South Australia. Current work being undertaken by the Australian National University through its North Australian Research Unit is attempting to link northern

changes in population movement (Taylor) and changes in the more remote small northern towns (Hudson) with other Australian research.

Social and economic structures in small towns in remote areas of northern Australia - research objectives and methodology

This paper forms part of a wider project - an investigation of the functions and characteristics of small towns in northern Australia. The study will examine small towns in the north in terms of their growth, stability or decline; migration patterns; changing functions; input of private and public sector resources; and the level of services and quality of life experienced by local residents. Community profiles will be presented.

Within a broader framework, the research project will examine the rural population turnaround of the past decade and attempt to establish whether these trends are continuing in small northern towns. Questions about government policies relating to small towns will be considered. The value of the selected small towns will be investigated from a local perspective and an attempt will be made to relate this to decision makers' perceptions on this subject. Particular attention will be paid to tourism and the impact this is having on some local environments.

For the purposes of this project, three forms of delineation have been adopted. Firstly, the more remote settlements in the north are the focus of this research. Remoteness has been classified as falling north of the 26th parallel and being within income tax Zone A, except in the case of Queensland where the boundary has been extended to include Longreach because it lies within thinly populated country and it provides a suitable comparison to the north Western Australian towns which are also experiencing growth due to tourism (Figure 1). Secondly, 'small' has been defined as any settlement with less than 6 000 people in 1986. Within the delineated northern region of Australia, this includes all but six towns (Darwin, Alice Springs, Mt Isa, Port Hedland, Karratha and Carnarvon). Lastly, only service towns are being investigated. This is due, in part, to the fact that mining towns have already received attention (see for example Woodhams 1979; Lea and Zehner 1986; O'Faircheallaigh 1986).

To achieve an understanding of small towns, it is necessary to attempt a holistic approach involving obtaining data on the following:

- community facilities and services;
- the present structure of local businesses and industries;
- social structures and social relationships;
- the operations of local government and the involvement of Commonwealth and state governments;
- the role of local voluntary and semi-voluntary organisations;
- the functions of local Aboriginal organisations;
- the inter-relationship between the towns and their hinterland;
- the life style and attitudes of local residents in these northern locations.

It is anticipated that over a year will be spent in six to seven selected towns.

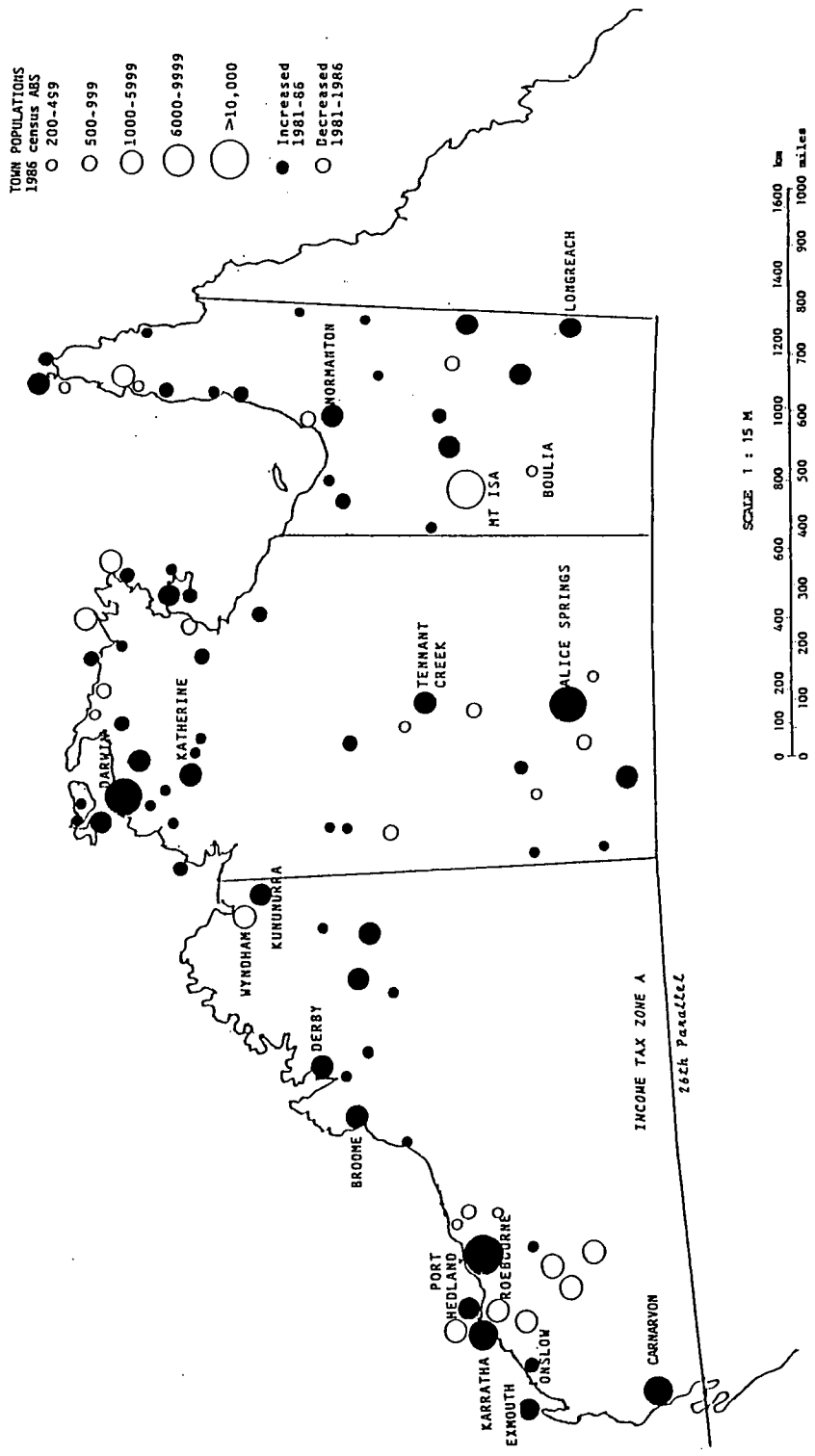


Figure 1 Settlements in the more remote parts of northern Australia: growth and decline 1981-1986

Population changes in the northern towns

When all settlements with more than 200 people within the northern study area (Figure 1) are considered, 66 out of the 94 settlements had grown in size (ABS Census 1981, 1986 - enumerated data). All but 6 of the 28 which had declined were either mining towns or Aboriginal settlements. Hugo (1987, 8.8) has shown that the Northern Territory and northwest Western Australia have sustained net migration growth from 1961 to 1981 but western Queensland has not shared this population expansion, although some growth has occurred from 1971 to 1981 in the north of western Queensland. The Northern Territory continued to experience a population growth from 1981 to 1986 (22.4 per cent - usual place of residence counts, Taylor 1988, 9). Service towns in northern Western Australia have grown and there is evidence of recent growth also in the northern part of western Queensland. (For a more detailed discussion of these trends see Taylor in this volume.)

For a number of reasons, this small town study will concentrate on a comparison between selected towns in the north of Western Australia and in western Queensland. An obvious difference between these two regions is the higher percentage growth in town populations in northern Western Australia during the last intercensal period (Figure 2).

Seven small service towns in north Western Australia

An overview visit to seven small service towns in north Western Australia was made during November and December 1988. The objectives of this visit were to obtain an initial understanding of the towns in this region, to select three towns suitable for further in-depth work and to establish the receptiveness of the people in these locations to this study.

Although the length of stay in each location ranged from only four to seven days, 150 interviews were held with a wide range of people. The information presented below is based on these interviews as well as some participant observation while staying in each community. Hence, much of this paper is of a qualitative nature. Factual information on aspects such as businesses, local facilities, services and accommodation costs has been provided by appropriate local informants. A questionnaire to 99 of the 150 residents interviewed provided additional non-quantifiable perception material (see Appendix). Interviews were held with administrators, business people, professionals, a range of public servants, local government councillors and some long term residents.

The aim of this paper is firstly to discuss the ABS census data in relation to these towns; secondly, to classify and describe the seven towns; thirdly, to highlight the main issues raised in relation to services, businesses, local government, housing and land; and finally to summarise and suggest themes for further investigation. It is too early in this project to offer firm conclusions or recommendations.

The ABS census data relating to these towns

The location and size of the seven towns are presented in Figure 1.

With regard to population changes, it is apparent that a turnaround did not occur for most towns until the late 1970s (Table 1). Between 1981 and 1986, only two of the seven towns have declined. The remainder have experienced population growth of between 11-58 per cent. As it is not possible to obtain usual place of residence census data at the town level, the figures quoted are enumerated data which include visitors.

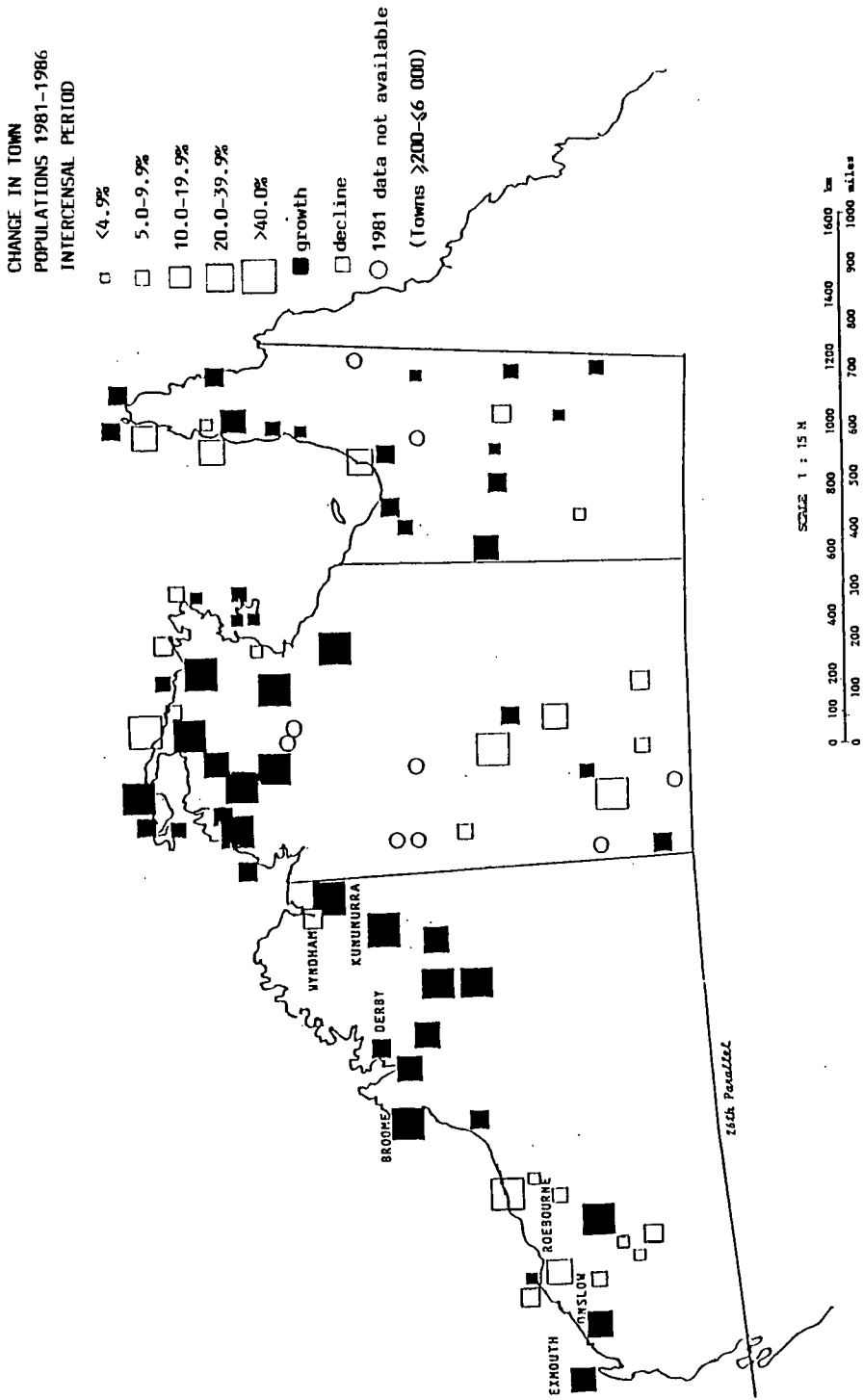


Figure 2 Population changes in small towns in northern Australia 1981-1986

Table 1
WA towns population change 1971-1986

Town (urban centre)	1971	1976	% change	1981	% change	1986	% change
Kununurra	1240	1540	24.2	2081	35.1	3137	50.7
Wyndham	1515	1383	-8.7	1509	9.1	1329	-12.0
Derby	2538	2411	-5.0	2933	21.7	3258	11.1
Broome	2049	2920	42.5	3666	25.5	5778	57.6
Roebourne	1515	1368	-9.7	1688	23.4	1269	-24.8
Onslow	349*	220	-37.0	594	170.0	750	26.3
Exmouth	2670	2336	-12.5	2583	10.6	3514	36.0

Sources: *Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Census 71, (Rural) Localities, WA Office

Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Census 71, Population and Dwellings in Local Government Areas and Urban Centres, Part 5, WA, Catalogue No 2.88.5

ABS Census 81, Persons and Dwellings in Local Government Areas and Urban Centres, Western Australia, Catalogue No 2405.0

ABS Census 86, Persons and Dwellings in Legal Local Government Areas, Statistical Local Areas and Urban Centres/(Rural) Localities, Western Australia, Catalogue No 2465.0

It can be seen that permanent residents as well as the number of visitors have increased (Table 2). Due to the high proportion of visitors in most of these towns, many of the local characteristics are distorted.

One distortion arising from enumerated census figures is the seasonal variation in the number of visitors and Aborigines in towns. Visitors in June are usually non-Aboriginal and this lowers the actual proportion of Aborigines living in the towns. In Wyndham for example, it is estimated that the Aboriginal population is closer to 60 per cent. This increases even more during the wet season when outstation Aborigines migrate into town. Similarly in Roebourne, Aborigines comprise approximately two thirds of the population. The very high proportion of service workers in Wyndham (73 per cent) reflects the unbalanced economic base due to the high proportion of Aboriginal people who depend upon a large number of services.

Enumerated data also distorts unemployment rates and marital status data. For example, the low ratio of single people to couples in Exmouth is due in part to an influx of elderly couples escaping the winter in Perth. There is a local explanation also. It is Australian naval policy to send only married defence personnel to Exmouth, hence the higher married ratio. (There are 50 RAN families in Exmouth.)

Table 2
Characteristics of Seven Small Service Towns in Northern WA (1986)

Towns (UC/RL)	Pop		No. of Visitors	Abor/ TSI % Pop	Marital Status % Pop >15 yrs	Unemployed % of total Labour Force	Industry 1986 (% of total)							Total (incl not stated)					
	1986	% Change 1981- 1986					1981	1986	1986	1981	1986	Single	Married		Sep/divorced	Widowed	Fishing Agric/forest/	Mining	Services*
Kununurra	3137	50.7	207	607	23.8	36.1	52.1	8.7	3.2	1.9	9.2	7.3	7.4	46.0	14.7	3.4	11.7	1.3	100
Wyndham	1329	-12.0	178	220	40.6	41.1	45.0	10.6	3.3	2.1	13.8	1.6	0	73.1	14.1	1.0	5.5	0	100
Derby	3258	11.1	402	600	29.0	37.8	50.0	8.8	3.4	4.0	12.0	2.3	0.7	55.9	12.5	2.1	17.0	0.5	100
Broome	5778	57.6	853	1828	23.5	35.4	51.9	9.2	3.4	3.5	13.4	5.2	3.7	56.9	14.5	8.0	7.5	0.9	100
Roebourne	1269	-24.8	245	133	47.0	33.6	48.8	11.9	5.7	8.2	22.7	3.1	8.6	52.6	10.0	2.6	0.2	1.1	100
Onslow	750	26.3	110	226	26.3	26.2	59.0	10.2	4.6	17.1	13.9	12.1	2.7	52.3	14.5	3.5	8.6	0	100
Exmouth	3514	36.0	750	1733	0.3	14.8	77.5	5.8	1.9	1.5	5.9	5.1	1.7	69.7	11.0	4.0	5.3	0.4	100

*Services includes: elec/water/gas; transport/storage; communications; finance/business; public administration; defence; community services; recreational/personal/other services

Sources: ABS, Census 81, Urban Centres, 7 page format, mf Batch No. 81.207, WA

ABS, Census 81, Bounded Rural Localities, 7 page format, mf Batch No.81.211, WA.

ABS, Census 86, Urban Centres and (Rural) Localities, 7 page format, mf Batch No. C86.206 WA.

On the other hand, enumerated data is more useful for assessing service requirements and community needs. The impact of a regular influx of visitors is an important aspect in future planning. For example, in the Kimberley region the number of people placed in visitor accommodation from 1984 to 1986 rose from 120 000 to 190 000 (Munro A 1988, pers. comm.).

Classification and description of the seven north western towns

The seven towns have been classified into four groups primarily on the grounds of population changes but information obtained during the visits has also influenced the categories adopted.

The boom towns

Both Broome and Kununurra have experienced boom growth with an intercensal (1981-86) population increase of around 50 per cent (Table 1). Tourism is a major reason for this expansion, particularly in Broome where eight luxury hotels and motels have either been built or expanded. This year a further 360 new accommodation units are to be built, providing 1 800 beds by September 1989. Farmers department store and a new shopping complex have been opened, and the number of small commercial businesses has increased dramatically. Broome's 'Chinatown' has had a face lift 'as the new up-market image sweeps through town' (all unreferenced quotes were made by local residents during interviews). Construction work has mushroomed as new houses are built to accommodate the expanding population. During the last financial year, 212 homes were built (Broome Shire Council Records). Keeping pace with basic infrastructure such as roads, and servicing new developments and houses, has consumed Council's finances and attention. One informant cited \$75m worth of development approvals over the past 15 months.

Broome is fortunate in having a pearling industry which is now worth over \$60m annually. This not only enhances the exotic attraction of the town but it also contributes to the economic base. Government services have also increased. Although 57 per cent of the employed population work in the service sector, an important component of this figure would be the private services catering for the hospitality industry (Table 2).

Two events are regarded as turning points in Broome's recent development. The first is the Shinju Matsuri festival which commenced in 1971 and set Broome on a path towards tourism. Many of the people who came to the festival 'fell in love with Broome'. The clear blue water and untouched Cable Beach with its 22 km of white sandy foreshore were certainly a major attraction. Broome had a special flavour which was strongly influenced by its pearling and Chinese trading. However, there was another attraction which, according to many, was even more important. That was the fascinating cultural mix of people and the cosmopolitan atmosphere - coloured people side by side with full blood Aborigines and local non-Aboriginal people. 'The Aborigines walk tall here.' One analyst considers that the coloured people provided a buffer between non-Aboriginal people and Aborigines. Race relations in the past were reported to have been good.

The second event was the coming of British entrepreneur and businessman Lord McAlpine in 1982. Publicity about Broome has intensified since McAlpine began purchasing and renovating old tropical style Broome houses with their corrugated iron, louvred windows and latticework. This has driven home prices as high as \$350 000 (*Sunday Territorian* October 30 1988, 39 and local informants). With the completion of his Cable Beach luxury tourist resort and the now famous zoo next door, the jet setters are starting to arrive. Broome has become the 'flavour of the month'. Ansett Airlines' 'green season' package provides direct competition with the Bali market.

The face of Broome and the reason for being there have changed. 'People are now chasing money.' Local residents are caught in a spiral of soaring land and housing prices, rental accommodation is not only prohibitively expensive but also scarce. As one local said 'I can no longer afford to live in the community where I was born and have lived all my life. I am seriously considering moving my family to Queensland'.

In response to protests about development work taking precedence over recreational and community facilities, council is building a swimming pool and a new \$800 000 recreation centre this year. The centre will have an oval, eight tennis courts, six netball courts, a cricket pitch, changing rooms and car parking. However, concern remains about the altered quality of life and the residents' lack of control over how their community is changing. A series of working committees initiated by the Department of Regional Development and the North West and Broome Shire Council represent a current attempt to address these concerns. The effectiveness of these groups remains to be seen.

Obviously the boom growth has been good for some. Local residents who have sold property to McAlpine have done very well. Because McAlpine treasures Broome's beauty and history, some aspects of his presence are welcomed. 'At least McAlpine has done his restoration and development with style.' McAlpine has 154 people on his payroll and this carries considerable weight. The extent of land and property owned by Lord McAlpine in Broome is considerable. One informant estimated that he possibly now owns around 50 per cent of the land in Broome. Certainly the white picket fences, one of McAlpine's trademarks, can be seen enclosing a growing proportion of the old Broome buildings. The darker side of this is his control over the town and the fact that 'he likes to get his own way if obstructed he has the power to dispose of people' and examples were provided. The business sector is another group which has benefitted as trade has increased with the expanding population and tourists.

Today, one has to hunt for the multicultural flavour that Broome once had. Spruced up Chinatown, boutiques and busloads of white tourists are now the first impression of Broome. One new resident commented that over the past 18 months Broome has changed so rapidly that 'Wagga is more rural than this town'. (Wagga Wagga is a town of 38 000 people in NSW.) A key informant replied that Broome's main attractions are its beach and its weather. There was no mention of its people. The Gold Coast type of development can be questioned as it is undeniably destroying the appeal of what was once a remote and very different frontier town. Although council has limited building to two storeys, this does not hide the main purpose of many of the new structures - that is, to cater for more affluent tourists. Local people rightly ask 'should their community be turned into a playground for the rich?'

Kununurra is just over half the size of Broome. It has also experienced rapid population growth during the 1980s but the contributory factors are more diverse. Kununurra began in 1959 as an agricultural service centre for the Ord River Irrigation Scheme but the town was reported to have changed little until the 1980s. Four factors can be identified as contributing to this change - a growth in tourism, increased government expenditure on community facilities and services, the commencement of the Argyle diamond mine and the success of more recent agricultural initiatives.

Certainly tourism has had an impact on Kununurra but major tourist developments have not occurred yet. The four year Foreshore Study froze accommodation expansion along the river until its recent completion in February 1989. McAlpine has purchased a prime riverfront site but so far has not commenced any construction. During the tourist season there is not enough existing accommodation and visitors have to be turned away. Western Resorts has had a virtual monopoly, owning the three major hotel/motels. The only

competition has been a guesthouse. Tourists come to Kununurra primarily to see the spectacular surrounding environment, especially the Bungle Bungles, in contrast to Broome where tourists mostly focus on the local town attractions of Cable Beach, Chinatown, the pearling industry and the old style Broome buildings. Some spend a week relaxing around a pool and enjoying excellent food. Hence, Broome gains more of the tourist dollar. Tourism in Kununurra is estimated to contribute \$10m annually. No estimate has been made of the income from tourism in Broome.

Perhaps the most significant growth factor in Kununurra has been the increase in public infrastructure and employment. Regional headquarters have been established within the new state and Commonwealth office blocks, and some staff have been relocated from Wyndham to Kununurra. Government employees now work in airconditioned luxury. There is an obvious contrast between the working conditions of these public servants and those of farmers and other outdoor workers and struggling local businesspeople. This contributes to a strong anti-public service feeling among long term locals. The public servants are seen as well paid and holding secure positions, yet some claim they contribute little to the town. The considerable multiplier effect of public sector investment is not widely acknowledged.

What is more generally acknowledged is that Kununurra is well provided for in terms of community facilities. Part of the credit goes to Argyle Mines which gave \$5m for a leisure centre, stage one of the new hospital, and extensions to the high school and police station. The leisure centre consists of a 25m swimming pool, children's pools, three squash courts, a main hall which seats 400 and a series of meeting rooms. It is fully airconditioned and has made a substantial difference to the quality of life of the local residents. Wyndham-East Kimberley Shire Council did not have to provide any funds for this facility. The state gave \$600 000 and Argyle \$1.3m. However, the local council maintains the facility and meets the \$80 000 annual loss.

The commencement of the Argyle diamond mine in 1981 was a third factor contributing to Kununurra's growth and has undoubtedly influenced the amount of state funding the town receives. Argyle Mines is a subsidiary of CRA. The company's decision not to build a townsite (the mine is 220 km from Kununurra) was controversial because the prepaid royalty of \$50m went to Perth and not to Kununurra or the region. Undoubtedly some has come back through the new and upgraded state government services and facilities, but there is a strong feeling that all of this should have stayed in the East Kimberley. It should be noted that the WA state government contributes \$0.5m annually to the Argyle Social Impact Fund. Although Argyle decided to bring the majority of its workers from Perth on a 'fly-in fly-out' basis, it did build 62 houses in Kununurra to accommodate its administrative and technical staff. A further 25 employees live in Kununurra and are flown to the site. The head office is also located in Kununurra. Thus, the town benefits from the spending power of Argyle employees who earn good wages. Some are also involved in local organisations.

A final factor contributing to Kununurra's expansion is the steady improvement in agriculture in the area.

Against a background of extensive land and water resources, a sometimes climatic advantage through its warm winter or dry season, and the complementary advantage of remoteness, the value of agricultural produce (about \$10m in 1986) is now approaching that of the peak of the cotton era which finished in 1974 (McGhie 1987, 179).

By 1988, production and profits had exceeded cotton returns (McGhie D 1988, pers. comm.) The dry season figure for agriculture in the Ord in 1988 was \$13.33m but this is considered to be a conservative figure (Department of Agriculture 1989). Agriculture has less impact on the actual growth of Kununurra because the proportion of people involved is small and population expansion has been restricted by the failure to release additional land. Only 6 000 ha of the available 11 000 ha in the Ord River Irrigation Area has been released (McGhie D 1988, pers. comm.) Future opportunities are considered to lie in canning and other agricultural processing industries.

Presently, Kununurra is going through a consolidation period with the earlier boom growth showing signs of slowing down. Nevertheless, long term growth seems assured due to the greater diversity of its economic base. The value of agricultural production may prove to be less fickle than the tourist market which relies on a buoyant economy. In an economic downturn holidays are the first to go, food the last.

A town on the verge of rapid expansion

Exmouth was established in 1963 as a US/Australian defence telecommunication base for very low and some high frequency transmissions and this is still the major reason for its existence. The permanent military population has remained relatively stable - in 1988 there were 452 employees - 182 married and 220 single USN personnel, 50 married RAN employees and 218 civilian workers.

Prawning is the biggest single industry operating in Exmouth. The prawning ground yields some of the best export prawns in the state (Department of Fisheries Officer). There are 19 licensed boats each bringing in about 57 000 kg of prawns. One boat with a crew of three will earn \$100 000 in an eight month season. The nearby prawning village has an average population of 230 people who either work on the boats or in Kailis' onshore prawning factory. Kailis has around 100 employees and pays in excess of \$2m a year in wages, some of which benefits the town. There is no room for expansion of this industry as the prawning grounds are already under restricted licences.

The greatest change in Exmouth has been the increase in the transitory population. Visitors now equal permanent residents during the peak winter tourist months. In response to this, economic diversification is about to take place with some major forthcoming tourist developments.

Although local residents have long been aware of the magnificence of their environment, it has remained protected from the through tourist traffic since it lies in one of the more remote coastal locations. Coral reefs, Cape Range National Park and beautiful beaches are attracting an increasing number of tourists to this peninsula. Exmouth has been better known in the past for its fishing, both game and recreational. The tourist potential here is enormous but so is the danger of ruining a relatively untouched area.

The glut of regular visitors has always placed strains on local health and other services. This has been exacerbated by a steadily growing stream of other kinds of tourists. Unlike Broome though, local residents support the development of a tourist industry - the inconveniences can be solved. Civilians and private residents in Exmouth have always felt nervous about the future of their town as a decision to close the base could see the town fold within six months. The necessity to diversify their economic base is widely recognised and it is estimated that 80 per cent of the local people are in favour of future tourist development. But all seem to agree that they 'do not want another Broome'. How to control the developments so that they do not spoil the way of life is the challenge facing Exmouth.

The two most significant development proposals are the \$12m Coral Coast Marina Resort and the \$10m tourist resort at Vlaming Head. The marina has taken considerable political manoeuvring as the first developer is the Department of Marines and Harbour who are responsible for the land and harbour development. Tribute has been paid to 'the long hours spent at Parliament House in recent weeks by the Shire President' (*Exmouth Expression* December 1988, 1). Stage one of the marina development is to include a shopping centre and tourist accommodation area of 100 chalet rooms, 50 motel rooms and a caravan park. Accommodation prices will range from budget to international resort level. Several developers have expressed an interest in the resort hotel complex, including McAlpine. It is proposed to construct 60 commercial mooring pens and 100 recreational pens. An extension of the game fishing and reef viewing activities will be a component of the tourist development.

The Vlaming Head resort is being developed by Jack Savage who proposes 200 units of accommodation geared specifically for the Scandinavian market. Developments of this magnitude will change Exmouth forever. On the positive side, the marina is being constructed near the town, not on top of the unique and beautiful parts of the peninsula. The cape development is also set back from the sea. Exmouth is more fortunate than Broome in that there is more room for development and therefore more opportunity to preserve the diversity of its environment. Also, the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) own the largest proportion of land in Exmouth shire and the existing national parks provide considerable safeguards. It is relevant to note that there is no cultural or historical past to this area prior to European colonisation as Aboriginal people seem to have avoided this peninsula.

Regrets expressed by local people include the inevitability of losing their safe and relaxed lifestyle, and having to share their unique place with others. A few residents are concerned that the area is being promoted before adequate local infrastructure is in place. There is also considerable concern about the impact of tourists on the park and reef but mechanisms are already in place to preserve these environments. The Ningaloo Marine Park has become the first reef to be incorporated into a park management plan. However, there is some controversy about the restrictions being imposed on local residents within this plan. Already some locals mention that 'the romance has been taken out of the park by CALM'. Regulations, signs and blockades to once favourite spots have angered local residents. Lack of consultation by CALM has been a hot issue.

Slowly growing towns

The towns of Derby and Onslow have been placed in this category. Although Onslow grew by 26 per cent compared with Derby's 11 per cent, a good proportion of Onslow's increase has been attributed by local observers to tourists. It is also about to experience a set back due to the proposed transfer of the shire office from Onslow to Tom Price this year. This, as well as the severe shortage of land and houses available for purchase will retard Onslow's future growth, at least in the short term.

Derby is generally described as a government town. It is the regional centre for health services (including the regional hospital), the regional headquarters of the Flying Doctor Service, the regional community health administration, and has the only nursing home in the Kimberley. School of the Air and the Educational Resource Centre also operate from Derby. Another large government sector in Derby is the Agricultural Department. Consequently, Derby's future is highly dependent on government decisions.

Past withdrawals have reduced some of the government functions once located here. For example, Derby no longer has the regional office for the State Electricity Commission.

Administrators and linespeople were moved to Broome. Then the meatworks, which employed 150 people, closed in the 1970s; Stateships ceased calling and the wharf closed. However, the permanent population has slowly increased and although its tourist trade is much smaller than that of Broome, the number of visitors noted in the census is equivalent to Kununurra (Table 1). A commonly cited characteristic is that public servants are staying longer and requesting return postings. This was confirmed by some interviewees. For example, a surgeon who came to Derby Hospital on a three month locum is still there six years later. Four out of the eight public servants interviewed had returned because they found they enjoyed living in Derby so much. They spoke of the good community spirit and the friendly atmosphere of the place. 'The government people are becoming a more stable population and other people are putting down roots'. The increasing amount of private housing substantiates this trend.

The growth of nearby Broome has been of some concern to Derby residents. Fear of losing regional departments to Broome is expressed as Broome's size grows to almost double that of Derby's. Certainly Broome has gained a sizeable proportion of government services and facilities but the forthcoming expenditure of a further \$9.3 on Derby Regional Hospital has allayed some of these fears. In the last two years, \$2.25m has been spent on the Numbala Nunga Nursing Home and \$3.2m on the hospital. The Commonwealth opened a business education centre costing \$640 000 and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) has just built a \$0.5m office complex. Hence, the present pattern does not indicate a contraction of government support, in spite of concern that Derby is not able to attract funding to the same extent as Broome or Kununurra.

In some respects, Derby is now picking up the overflow from Broome. As prices rise in Broome, Derby is being chosen as a location for workers associated with hinterland mining projects. Broome residents now make shopping trips across to Derby because prices are reported to be cheaper there. Perhaps, the most important effect has been the realisation by Derby residents that they are glad to be living in Derby and not boomtown Broome. They know of the residential conflicts and soaring prices, and they can see the destruction of the community. New hope for Derby is dawning as the community sees some breathing space to plan their future.

Derby's short term future hinges on three main factors. The first is the decision regarding the airport. Negotiations about moving from the present airstrip, which is in particularly bad condition, to the RAAF Curtin airport, 40 km out of town, are proceeding. There was some concern in the community about the airport being so far from town, but on the positive side the RAAF strip would be maintained by the Defence Department and is of international standard. Ansett is requesting 25 year lease arrangements at the Curtin airstrip and in the meantime has stated that it will not land at the present strip during very wet conditions. The shire council is having difficulty clarifying decisions relating to the airport move. Since good air transport is vital for the future of Derby, the town is in limbo until firm commitments are obtained.

A second factor is the growth of tourism. Derby is ideally located to take advantage of visitors wishing to travel up the Gibb River road, an untouched wilderness area of magnificent grandeur. There are also other nearby islands which have tourist potential. Alan Bond has already bought Cockatoo Island and his resort opened in April this year. Koolan Island mine closes in 1990 and the island offers future investment opportunities. Construction jobs associated with these projects have beneficial effects on Derby. The future of the Leprosarium is the subject of a current consultant's report. There is a substantial asset available in the land, buildings and other infrastructure here.

McAlpine also owns land in Derby but access to water has thwarted some of his earlier ideas. It is rumoured that he is currently involved in discussions with Curtin University about establishing a biological station in Derby. Certainly, investors such as McAlpine, Bond and Coppin can provide valuable and sometimes much needed input into these communities, provided their interests do not control the community and displace local residents.

Finally, a number of people considered that Derby needs an industry to consolidate its future. They are more than happy to have Broome's meatworks which now sits on prime land in Broome and is not considered to be in tune with the evolving exclusive environment. The reopening of the wharf is another hoped for development. Further diversification of Derby's economic base is recognised as desirable but residents do not wish to see any rapid change.

Onslow is still a village and many would like to keep it that way. It has been sheltered from passing highway traffic by 82 km of unsealed road until two years ago. Fishing has expanded to 10 trap fishing boats and 14 prawning trawlers in the season but over half these boats come from elsewhere. There is considerable concern that the area is being overfished and locals wish to see licences introduced. Two pearling farms have commenced over the last eight years. One owner lives in Onslow and accommodates four Japanese technicians to do the seeding from September to November. His company is a joint venture with the Japanese and he shares the profits. His yearly earnings are considerable and he is a valuable potential investor in Onslow.

The other growth industry in Onslow is tourism but so far no firm tourist development offers have been made to Ashburton shire council. Onslow does not have the same quality of local beaches as Exmouth, but the outlying islands offer a range of excellent attractions. Onslow's appeal lies in its slow moving life style and the sprinkling of characters around the place who let visitors know they have entered one of the last outposts of a previous era. 'This is a refreshing backwater in today's society'.

Retired people have been the most regular visitors. They come for a warmer winter climate and to fish, 'arriving with freezers full of food and departing with freezers full of fish'. Employees from the mines at Tom Price, Paraburdoo and Pannawonica also come to Onslow for weekends and holidays. Recently, the 'sleepy hollow' image has been shattered. Hydrofoils carrying loads of workers can be seen racing across to nearby Thevenard Island and trucks are travelling to Onslow in increasing numbers.

Although WA Petroleum (WAPET) has used Onslow as a base since 1967, drilling for oil (in the Saladin Oil Field) from Thevenard Island commenced in 1988. A decision was taken to locate a self-contained camp for construction workers in Onslow. It appears the only agreement made was that WAPET would leave the shire council the \$70 000 ablution block. The shire has expressed an interest in turning the area into a caravan park when WAPET vacates. At the time of the agreement, it was understood that there would be 180 employees and the camp would be there for a year. As the impact of the camp on the village is greater than anticipated, and the number of people associated with the oil project will also be more, there is now a considerable amount of ill feeling about the 'deal' that Onslow got. Locals say 'they use our land, our creek and our facilities, yet they contribute nothing to the town'. There are also indications that WAPET will be in Onslow longer than a year.

Increased business activity in the village and the recent quick expansion of population due to the arrival of temporary WAPET employees can only be regarded as a short term effect, however, other factors point to a slow but steady growth in this village. The most

important sign is the demand for land and housing for permanent and holiday residences. As in Exmouth, there is a serious shortage of accommodation and the delay in obtaining land for residential expansion is a major factor inhibiting growth. At the end of 1988, it appeared that there were no residential blocks available for sale and efforts on the part of the council to secure the release of more land have so far failed. Anyone who manages to purchase a house is regarded as extremely fortunate, as few come onto the market. A recently arrived public servant to Onslow commented that he was surprised at the amount of building which had taken place.

The impact of moving the key shire employees out of Onslow is still being debated at council meetings. Although relocation is estimated to cost \$300 000, it is estimated that \$90 000 could be saved annually if council operations were centralised in Tom Price (Shire Clerk 1988). (This is equivalent to the yearly losses incurred in maintaining a swimming pool.) It was noted that Onslow, unlike the mining towns, has few recreational facilities. As part of the normalisation procedure, council is being required to take over many of the facilities in the mining towns, including swimming pools. Current negotiations between council and the mining companies focus on the fact that mining towns have facilities which are greater than what is 'normal' in most towns of equivalent size. It is understandable that Onslow residents consider the cost savings made through relocating the shire office quite inequitable, particularly when cessation of other services, such as the only banking service, will follow. A spiral of effects is inevitable.

Onslow residents argue that Tom Price already has a mining company there to look after the interests of the townspeople. Furthermore, Tom Price is contracting which means that development decisions are not being made there. In contrast the shire office is the heart of Onslow, providing the only financial and administrative skills in the village. Onslow is presently under considerable pressure to expand and the permanent presence of the shire clerk to oversee this and the WAPET operations is considered highly desirable.

Decisions such as these lie at the centre of a small or struggling town's future. It has already been noted that towns with populations under 1 000 are most at risk, largely due to their vulnerability to losing services. Council withdrawal could well trigger this process. Some locals talk of the town dying if council goes.

In the final analysis, the question has to be asked whether government bodies should be financially accountable only within their own economic frameworks, or should they have wider obligations? In the case of Onslow, local residents believe that by taking the shire office away, the core is taken out of the town. This is certainly what happened in the two towns which fall into the last group discussed below.

Declining towns

The two declining towns of *Wyndham* and *Roebourne* represent the only service towns in the north west which have lost population during the 1980s. Both have been established over 100 years and were the sole service centres in their regions until the late 1950s. They contained the shire offices and were the focus of government, business and retailing activity.

The commencement of iron ore mining in the Pilbara in the 1960s changed the function of Roebourne. When Dampier's growth outstripped its land area in the early 1980s, it forced the establishment of a new town, Karratha, 20 km away. Increased services, commercial activity and residential developments in Karratha forced the shire to relocate most of its staff there in 1975. This began a downward spiral of decline for Roebourne. Karratha now has approximately 10 000 people, the population having been considerably boosted

by Woodside Petroleum's multi million dollar gas project. The government sector has grown substantially and the recreational and community facilities in this town are considered to be the best in the north west. Contributions made by Woodside and, in the earlier days, Hammersley Iron have been a major factor in Karratha's superior infrastructure. Roebourne has been relegated to little more than a backwater suburb, primarily for Aborigines who number 800 of the 1 200 people left (Department of Community Services, Roebourne Office, pers. comm. 1988). The remaining 400 non-Aboriginal people are mostly there to service the Aboriginal population.

Robe River mining company's decision in 1972 to build a separate town, Wickham, just 12 km from Roebourne, did little to help Roebourne. Wickham with 2 445 people, attracts the major funds for government services. For example, the district high school is located in Wickham and the hospital services are superior - all of Roebourne's babies are delivered at Wickham Hospital.

Growth of another nearby town, in this case Kununurra, has steadily eroded Wyndham's function as a service centre. Dillon (1986, 3) noted that the expenditure on the Ord was to the detriment of Wyndham. In the 20 years to 1977/8, only \$753 000 was spent on upgrading Wyndham's port compared with \$97m on the Ord Scheme. With the closure of the meatworks in 1985 (with the loss of 200 jobs), the port's role has been reduced to an all time low. The only significant sources of employment remaining are the hospital and the prison. Rumours of the prison closing and the hospital being turned into a geriatric home have created anxiety as residents see how vulnerable their town is to government decisions. Resentment is high in Wyndham but it is mostly expressed against Kununurra.

Since the early 1970s, government departments have been slowly removing personnel from Wyndham and relocating them in Kununurra. The relocation of shire employees to Kununurra throughout the 1980s has been a key turning point, and continues to be a controversial issue as Wyndham fights to retain a proportion of the administrative workers.

Furthermore, Wyndham has had little benefit from Argyle Mines, located in the Turkey Creek area. Local Aboriginal people point out that Turkey Creek Aborigines came to Wyndham when they were displaced from the pastoral stations and hence have more claim to Argyle and other mining royalties than people in Kununurra. The Wyndham Gidja people receive \$40 000 a year from the Argyle Social Impact Fund but consider this to be an inadequate share of the annual \$1m paid to the various Aboriginal communities. They also point out that they and Wyndham have received little back from the \$50m royalty paid by Argyle to the state government.

Aborigines represent approximately 60 per cent of Wyndham's population and the majority are unemployed. Hence some describe Wyndham now as a social security town. The Aborigines seem less concerned about issues like the loss of shire workers because they see their future in terms of Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) and Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC) funding, which so far has enabled them to lease the caravan park, establish the Joorook Nami Aboriginal Resource Agency and they are currently negotiating to purchase a supermarket and the BP service station. Their objectives are more in terms of increasing their independence from non-Aboriginal society. However, they are heavily dependent on services administered by non-Aboriginal government employees in health, education and community services. The other side of the coin is that the presence of such a high proportion of Aboriginal people enables the current level of health and education services in Wyndham to be maintained. Local businesses are heavily dependent on Aboriginal trade. Thus, as in Roebourne, the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities are inextricably intertwined for the future of

Wyndham. Since the closure of the meatworks and the shift in population to a dominance of Aboriginal local people, some subtle processes are occurring in 'white thinking'. Not only do they feel betrayed as government continues to 'punish' them by taking away vital members of their community at a time when they are struggling for survival, they also feel somewhat threatened by their minority status. Fortunately, a relatively good relationship exists here between white and black people. 'Most Aborigines here are westernised'. They have been going to the local school for two generations and a few have positions in government, health, education and tourist services. Community spirit is regarded as good and like Derby, people return to this town because they enjoyed their first stay so much. The friendliness of the people is still very evident but they are hurting as they struggle together to keep Wyndham functioning.

Resentment against neighbouring towns is less evident in Roebourne. Residents seem to have resigned themselves to Karratha's domination and their present peripheral status. There are the usual anti-council feelings - criticisms about what council has done and should be doing for the residents. These are little different to similar situations in other local government areas (Hudson 1989). Aboriginal children are made to feel unwelcome at Wickham District School and this has an effect not only on their school attendance but on an anti-Wickham feeling which is triggered by a number of other factors.

Roebourne has lost more businesses than Wyndham but both business centres can only be described as small. Vandalism and crime is a serious problem for local businesses in Roebourne. Some shop fronts are protected by strong mesh in an effort to reduce losses. Just a handful of Aboriginal youths are seen as ruining the town for everyone else. In contrast, the crime rate in Wyndham is minimal and locals regard it as a safe town.

The future of Roebourne is uncertain. With its stone buildings and history, locals have a feeling of permanence about their town. Some consider the future could well depend on controlling some of the present crime and behavioural problems linked to a small minority of people. The public behaviour of heavy drinkers is seen as a disgrace to Roebourne and is considered to be detrimental to the establishment of alternative industries such as tourism. Others see a positive trend in the fact that Aboriginal people are beginning to take a greater control over their own affairs. But progress is being hampered by the drinking problem, which has led to a sharp division within the community between religious and non-religious groups, sometimes referred to as non-alcoholic and alcoholic groups. Arising from this, important processes of cultural and social change are taking place in Roebourne.

Although Wyndham is going through structural adjustment, the bond between the local people provides the basis for coping with change. A series of proposals for new industries, such as a prawning farm, have amounted to nothing and so residents are somewhat cautious in their optimism. However, the go ahead for a crocodile farm has just been received and a dynamic local entrepreneur has plans for Wyndham. There are proposals to set up a tanning factory, make products locally and incorporate Aboriginal labour where possible. Another element in this development will be tourism and low budget type accommodation is proposed. Wyndham offers a more remote and less structured type of environment than that found in the other centres under discussion and it is this potential which is the most exciting. Long term projects include better access to the Gibb River road, marine tourist trips up the Gulf and into the rivers, and horse and camping trips into the Cockburn and Durack Ranges. Some additional tourist business is presently coming from an overspill from Kununurra. Twice as many tourist buses are overnighing in Wyndham this year. An increase in port activity is also sought. A start has been made with Gulf Transport carting Cadjebut's lead and zinc from Fitzroy Crossing to Wyndham for shipping. They have located eight employees in Wyndham. A

future should lie in the shipment of agricultural products from the Ord, live cattle exports and other mining products. Wyndham may appear to be down, but it is far from out.

The main issues in relation to services

Education

The most serious educational deficiency in the north west towns studied is the lack of senior high schools (Table 3). This is particularly serious in the Kimberley which has none at all. Port Hedland (with a senior high school and Pundulmurra Aboriginal College) is the closest location for senior secondary education. Broome, although a town of 6 000 people, is still waiting for locally taught Years 11 and 12, but a state government commitment has been given for a senior high school by 1990. The very high drop-out rate after Year 10 mentioned by headmasters, indicates that the mixed mode system is unsatisfactory. Poor secondary education is an important factor behind migration patterns. It was the fourth most commonly mentioned disadvantage in the survey.

The education system faces difficult problems in trying to meet the needs of the schools in the north west. To be fair, many of the towns are growing quickly and the department has already put considerable resources into the regions to meet this growth. There are 17 schools in the Kimberley region alone. Another problem is that many parents of non-Aboriginal children are not happy with the education standard in schools which have a high proportion of Aboriginal pupils. Education is a major concern among United States residents in Exmouth. The US Navy has contributed \$385 000 to upgrade Years 11 and 12, as well as \$32 000 per annum for operational expenses and an education liaison officer. However there is still concern about the standard of the mixed mode course.

The Catholic church plays a significant role in educating Aboriginal children in the north west (Table 3). Four of the six towns with Aboriginal populations have Catholic primary schools and Broome has a Catholic college (a high school). Ninety per cent or more of the pupils in these schools are Aborigines. It is worth mentioning that the Holy Rosary School in Derby has trained eight Aboriginal teachers through correspondence courses from Canberra Signadou Catholic Teachers Training College. 'This has raised the morale of the Aboriginal people considerably due to the model these teachers provide'.

Health

In contrast to education, there were few complaints about the general standard of health provision (Table 4). All the Kimberley hospitals have been upgraded and further money is to be spent in Derby and Broome. The ability to obtain doctors has greatly improved because government salaried doctors now receive a salary of \$87 000 pa, a car and house and subsidised rent, electricity and water. From a doctor's point of view, not only were the financial gains significant, but some mentioned more professional gains than they had anticipated due to the variety of medical work encountered. Health service administrators noted that doctors were generally remaining longer.

An important point to stress when discussing health services in the north west is that all hospital medical treatment is free, including all specialist treatment and consultations as well as allied health services. A range of further recommendations and medical improvements were mentioned and these are summarised below.

Table 3
Comparison of educational characteristics in seven WA towns (1988)

	Kununurra	Wyndham	Derby	Broome	Roebourne go to Karratha	Onslow	Exmouth
State schools							
Senior high school							
Mixed mode for Y11 & Y12	8 pupils left	-	28 start 17 left	22 start 6 left		supervise a few only	20 start 15 left
No. secondary pupils	130	54	167	160	go to Wickham District High for Ys 7-10	18 (all Aborig)	91
No. primary pupils	411	128	367	500	180	104	380
No. Pre-schoolers	50	29	57	67	50	29	60
Total no. teachers	33	15	35	38	13	8	29
% Aboriginal (est)	30	50	62 in secondary	30	78	76	none
Catholic Schools							
	St Joseph's	St Joseph's Prim Sch	Holy Rosary School (to yr 7)	Nulungu College (incl. mixed mode) 150p 18t			
	110p 5t	70p 4t		(lost 50p)			
% Aboriginal	73	99	90	Catholic Primary School 320p			
				both			90

Notes:

Pupil numbers were as at end of 1988. Broome and Exmouth in particular experience seasonal increases during the winter months

p = pupils
t = teachers

Source: Principals of Schools

Preventative and environmental health budgets should be expanded. Savings on the expensive curative health system as a result of more effective health education and environmental measures are undeniable. It is not just Aboriginal health education which should be the focus of these budgets, the attention given to the effects of alcohol is grossly inadequate in view of the enormous expense of alcohol related illnesses and the early deaths of Aborigines arising from high alcohol consumption. Drug and alcohol workers are a vital component of preventative health and they are sadly lacking in the north west.

Continuation of the assured present policy of spreading health services throughout each town is essential. Centralising health services in key locations is not only detrimental to the clients, it is not as economical as calculations sometimes show (Hudson 1986, 435-443). Primary health care should never be cut to make way for the ever expanding specialist care which serves a smaller proportion of the population at considerably greater expense.

Extended care nurses (attached to hospitals) to provide assistance to elderly or ill people in their homes is desirable. Community health is supposed to deal with preventative health and in view of the importance of this work, particularly among the Aborigines, their task should not be sidetracked by being drawn into the curative health system.

Only one of these towns has a nursing home - Derby. Since the proportion of elderly people in the north west is slowly increasing, more infrastructure will be needed to accommodate these residents. Broome hospital has had \$4m earmarked for an 'elderly package' for seven permanent care units with an activity centre and a hostel for about eight people with a caretaker. This will be built on separate land but next to the hospital for ready access to medical services. An extension of this concept to other town hospitals will be a necessary part of any long term planning. In some towns local shire councils have built pensioner units so a coordinated approach between government sectors is required to address this need.

The lack of coordination between the hospital, Aboriginal medical services and, often, community health also leads to duplication of services and wastage of the health budget. Greater decentralisation of power is suggested in all medical systems. Much hope is being placed on the forthcoming appointment of a Regional Health Director but the success of this is seen as largely dependent on whether the Director is given enough local autonomy.

A local doctor is needed at Onslow. This would assist Exmouth's present restricted access to a doctor during the tourist season as the Exmouth doctors would no longer be required to travel to Onslow twice a week. Both these towns have heavy demands on their medical system arising from the large transitory population which settle during the winter months. Onslow has also had an influx of WAPET employees living in the town and 45 per cent of its population is Aboriginal.

Doctors and administrators both recommend more regular visits by specialists. In Exmouth, for example, the hospital spends \$10 000 a month transferring patients to Perth. The administrator considers that there is sufficient work for specialists to come once every six weeks.

Planning and design for medical facilities should take into account local advice. The omission of verandahs at Kununurra hospital was a prime example. Aboriginal patients do not like being confined inside airconditioned buildings.

Table 4
Health services and facilities in seven WA towns (1988)

	Kununurra	Wyndham	Derby	Broome	Roebourne	Onslow	Exmouth
Hospital							
Beds	26	38	107	36	14	12	15
Nurses	25	23	99	41	12	8	11
Doctors							
Hospital	3	3	3	3	1	-	2
Private	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Aboriginal MC (see below)					(deliveries at Wickham)	(del. at Exmouth or Camarvon)	(2 US)
Specialists							
Surgeon	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Gynaecologist	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Paediatric (reg)	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
GP/Anaesthetist	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Visiting specialists from Perth (Paediatrician & physician come more regularly)	2/year: Ortho Opthal Derm Phys Paed ENT	2/year: Ortho Opthal Derm Phys Paed ENT	2-3/yr: Ortho Opthal Phys Paed ENT Eye	2-3/yr: Ortho Opthal Derm Phys Paed ENT	Go to Karratha for specialist visits from Perth 3-12/yr	3/year: Ortho Opthal Derm Phys Paed ENT	3/year: Ortho Optha Derm Phys Paed ENT
Visiting specialists from Pt Hedland	Radiologist 6/yr + when necessary	when necessary	Radiol. when necessary	Radiol. when nec.	Go to Karratha for Obst 6/yr Paed. 1/m gyn/obs 1/m surgeon 1/m physician 1/m	-	-
Visiting specialists from Derby	Surg 1/ft Gynae 1/m Psych 1/m	Surg 1/m Gynae 1/m Psych 1/m	Surg 1/ft Gynae 1/ft Psych 1/ft	Surg 1/ft Gynae 1/ft Psych 1/ft			Visit surg from Carn. 1/ft for consult only. Operates in Carn.

Physio	1	1 arriving	2	3	visits from Wickham at Karratha	-	from Carn 1/w
Occup therapist	-	-	2	visit from Derby 1/f	-	-	-
Speech therapist Radiographer	1	visits from Kununurra 1+1 assist	2	1	at Wickham	-	from Carn 1/m X-Ray US base at Carn.
Pathology tech	1+2assist	1+1 assist	3	1+2assist	at Karr.	-	Done at US base or Perth
Dentist	1	1	2	2	at Karr.	-	1 1 for US only

Community Health Centre
 Doctors - Regional office
 1 Psych
 1 STD dr

Nurses 2
 Health workers 4

Aboriginal Medical Centre
 Doctors 1

Nurses 5
 Health workers 4

Royal Flying Doctor Service
 Flight sisters link into Wyndham base

Pilots 1.5
 Planes 1
 1

Nursing Home
 Beds 60
 Nurses 23

Drug & Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre

1
 2
 3
 1 visiting private doctor from Wickham

1
 6

link into Carn base
 link into Carn base

Accomm. 21 staff, 11 funded by DAA & Ab Hostels
 Aboriginal run on outstation. Accom. as many as will come

Source: Hospital Administrators/Medical Officers, Community Health Sisters and other health workers.
 NB: All government health services are free to the patient including specialist treatment

Welfare

Welfare assistance is distributed between federal and state government bodies such as the Departments of Community Services, Social Security and Aboriginal Affairs, local government bodies to a much lesser extent, and various religious and voluntary organisations.

Generally, the towns are well provided for in terms of recreational facilities but they are lacking in welfare type facilities such as youth crisis accommodation, youth centres, women's refuges and alcohol rehabilitation places. There is also a great need for qualified people to deal with social and welfare needs. Skilled counsellors for family and marital problems are not found in these towns in spite of local acknowledgement of this problem. Domestic violence is found in all towns but only Roebourne has a women's refuge. Broome has just received approval for funding but the other towns were still filing submissions. Usually the only trained social workers are found in the Department of Community Services and their work revolves around statutory requirements related to children. They state that 80 per cent of their work is with Aboriginal people. Financial assistance is given to destitute people and very needy families, but there are limited resources for this.

Alcoholism is considered to be the number one social problem in these towns yet there are few drug and alcohol counsellors. The hospitals and doctors are stretched into the social as well as the health realm in these locations. It was pointed out that 'every major organisation needs an added people worker there are too many administrators and not enough grass roots workers'.

Local government councils in these towns are reluctant to move into welfare provision. In view of their financial situation (discussed below) this is understandable. Table 6 outlines the facilities supported by councils. This usually involves maintaining buildings funded by other government bodies for day care, family support workers and pensioner units.

The Catholic church has played a major welfare role in some of these towns through their education and health programs among Aborigines. More recently, Aborigines who have adopted Christianity for themselves are having an impact in welfare provision. This is evident in Roebourne where they play a role in the women's refuge, the day care centre, meals-on-wheels, the Aboriginal Culture Camp, the rehabilitation centre, a second-hand clothing shop, and distribution of clothing to outstations. A government field officer stated that the Aboriginal church 'provides a peer group of Aborigines who they can socialise with and avoid grog. Social work institutions cannot demonstrate the same degree of success in turning people's lives around like the church here'. The influence of charismatic Christianity in Aboriginal settlements has largely been ignored by modern academic writers on Aboriginal issues.

Welfare is also provided by small groups of hard working residents who voluntarily give their time and help to the needy. Every community can cite people falling within this category. Unfortunately, this group has been steadily shrinking as the voluntary ethic changes throughout our society. One reason given was the resentment expressed by non-Aboriginal people who claim Aboriginal handouts have made people sour and they feel they 'should not have to do things for themselves when the Aborigines don't'. Affluence seems to affect participation in voluntary work now. In Onslow for example, residents are considered to be not very well off. 'Few earn over \$25 000 a year'. All committees here are battling to get a quorum. A stark contrast is found in Exmouth which is considered to be an affluent community with 'no poor or needy people'. Here the survey found that respondents were active members in an average of four organisations.

A more objective analysis of welfare needs indicates that, in spite of money being poured into Aboriginal communities and services, their overall lifestyle has not improved greatly. Aborigines still have appalling health problems compared with non-Aboriginal people. They are still living in overcrowded and unclean conditions, even in their new houses, and the vast majority are unemployed. Alcohol is destroying their race as the number of deaths between the ages of 15 and 30 increases to alarming proportions. In Roebourne, in the last six years one pastor has buried over 60 people in their mid 20s to 30s from alcohol related causes. Figures from the Department of Community Services (Roebourne Office, pers. comm. 1988) suggested that Aboriginal people between the ages of 15 and 35 have a 46 per cent greater chance of dying if they have been drinking since 15. 'The intermediate generation is being lost, usually the men, leaving the women to bear the major responsibility of raising the children. It has become a matrifocal society'. This merely substantiates what many have been writing and saying for decades. Money and subsidies have not provided the answer.

Commercial issues

Retailing employs between 11 and 15 per cent of the workforce (Table 2). Local business people in these towns indicate that over the past ten years there has been a slow growth in the number of businesses in Kununurra, Derby, Exmouth and Onslow. Rapid expansion has occurred only in Broome. Business activity in Wyndham has changed little but Roebourne has experienced decline.

Two phases of business activity were identified. An earlier phase where some of the towns had car dealers, bakers, tea rooms, large general stores and a branch of Elders handling anything from rural properties to agricultural merchandise. Changes in marketing strategies, population mobility and personal taste caused the loss of these businesses. Then a second phase began during the last ten years with an increase in smaller specialist stores, the arrival of chain supermarkets and the proliferation of take-away food places and restaurants. A brief description of the second phase is provided below.

Although details of the expansion of Broome's commercial activity were not obtained on this visit, new commercial premises and shops are visible throughout the town. Seaview, Streeters and Fongs have all been modernised. The value of Farmers Department Store is indicated by its \$18 684 yearly rates. Service businesses have grown enormously, as have boutiques and other specialist shops. There is even a key cutting business and shoe repair store. There were comments made about some business people having problems because they have overcapitalised or 'been too greedy'. 'Some people have come here to ride on the back of the big developers and they are cutting each other's throats'. A key informant stated that 'if businesses are having problems, it is due to their own poor financial management'.

Kununurra has acquired a small range of more specialised stores over the past eight years including a pharmacy, fashion and shoe store, dress shop, photography shop, laundry and health food store. However, it was reported that 'business this year (1988) has been stagnant'. Tourism was down, possibly due to Expo, and businesses were reported to have found it hard to make ends meet. There is some criticism of the high commercial rates in Kununurra. An average commercial rate was calculated to be \$1 934.67 per year (Rates Clerk), compared with \$1 000 a year for a single shop in Broome. Single shops in Kununurra were about twice this amount. For some businesses, the biggest factor is the high leasing cost. For example, one leased take-away shop pays \$500 per week to the owner.

One key informant considers that 'Kununurra is not yet ready for big commercial developments'. A new shopping complex is to be built this year and some consider that the success of this will affect any future commercial growth.

Although shopping in Derby has improved since goods began arriving by road instead of sea, there has been little expansion into specialist stores. 'You still have to do your shoe and clothing shopping when you visit Perth'. When Woolworths bought Elders five years ago, competition improved and this helped to lower local prices. After a period of relative stability, there are more recent indications that Derby's business centre is 'picking up a bit' as the town grows. Generally, though, it is thought small business people here do not make much money.

Similarly, business growth has been slow in Exmouth. A major reason is the duty free shopping at the US base where US residents purchase most of their goods. The absence of a chain store here has been attributed to this. Some recent growth was noted, however, with the opening of a second supermarket, two fast food outlets, a video shop, Chinese restaurant, florist and toy shop, party decorations shop and the expansion of the liquor outlet. With the increase in tourist accommodation, eating out facilities have improved significantly.

Opinion on how well businesses are doing vary. There appear to be two groups. Those businesses which were established early and are owned and run by family concerns, and those which were bought or established by civilians who left their work at the Navy base and moved into business as entrepreneurs. Informants claim that those in the first group are sound but in the latter group, those who bought in over the last five years are estimated to be on a lower income now than they were being paid in their previous jobs. 'A group of six could close up anytime'. Some businesses are being restricted through a lack of available commercial sites.

The business centre in Onslow is reported to be slowly growing again after a period of contraction from its former status as a service centre to the surrounding rural properties. Woolworths came in 1983 but did not last long. Since then the supermarket has had four local owners. One family from the south first purchased the general store and later the competing supermarket. This has prompted a second discount supermarket to open in 1988 to break the monopoly. A series of other shops have opened over the last four years including a fish shop, a gift shop/information centre with some chemist items, and a new variety store. A take-away store has expanded by employing a baker and is now bringing in fresh meat and vegetables, and a nursery has commenced business. Some long term local residents consider the shops are better today. 'We now get papers on the same day'. There appear to be no long term business owners in Onslow. Regular buying and selling of retail outlets was a noticeable characteristic. Businesses had recently been purchased by people from Karratha, Pannawonica, Carnarvon, Perth and from a southern rural property.

The most negative picture of local businesses is found in Roebourne and Wyndham. Roebourne business centre is described as a shadow of its former self. Having developed as a support and business centre for the pastoral industry in the 1860s, it is the oldest town among the seven being discussed. 'In the past, business people in Roebourne made a lot of money'. Today, 'you wouldn't get your money back'. 'It is hard to sell a business here now'. It is said that crime is forcing the remaining businesses out. The image Roebourne has acquired has done little to assist the town.

The scene at Wyndham is very different in many respects. There is little crime and most of the long term residents are still in business, although the first crack in this past stable

structure has appeared. Wyndham has never had a large commercial centre. Pastoralists were few in number and the local population remained small. The early businesses were all located in the port but now the major centre is at 'the three mile'. The range has altered little with a general store, supermarket, butcher, newsagent, a few other food and clothing outlets, two take-away shops, only one hotel/motel which includes a restaurant and four garages. 'The town is now too small for four garages' and one service station is on the market. It is this which has created the first real crack in the business community. Wyndham will lose more than a long established family when this sale takes place. The owner has been a key personality in Wyndham for many years. In response to the declining population, other local businesses have contracted and reduced their staff. One store proprietor stated that business had dropped by 35-40 per cent over the last five years. There are signs that Aboriginal people will become a more important component of the business sector. The supermarket has been purchased by the local Aboriginal resource centre, Joorook Narni, and it is rumoured that they are negotiating to buy the service station. The caravan park is also leased by Joorook Narni. For the Aborigines, this is a positive sign because they are becoming more involved in their own community.

Local government issues

Shire populations range from 2 500 to 21 000 (Table 5). The importance of the study towns within their shires differs. Exmouth and Broome for example, are the focus of their shire councils, whereas Roebourne is just a peripheral small town in its shire. Onslow seems headed for a similar fate. Derby is the shire town but over half of its shire population live outside. Kununurra and Wyndham share shire staff but the balance is becoming increasingly weighted towards Kununurra.

Most of the shires obtain about one third of their operating budget from rates, with town rates providing the major share. Rural properties are not only few in number, but even the very large pastoral properties rarely pay more than \$2 000 annually in rates. Wyndham East-Kimberley shire has the highest revenue on a per capita basis (Table 5). Most shire clerks mentioned the trend of increased expenditure on recreation and parks (20-30 per cent) and less spent on roadwork and maintenance. In view of the enormous stretches of roads in northern WA, the long term consequences of this trend indicate a return to poorly maintained shire gravel roads as has happened in other rural areas.

Decreased road funding to local councils has been discussed by a number of authors (for example Mooney 1987) while Cutts (1987, 4) illustrated the financial vulnerability of local government by showing its diminished capacity to obtain an appropriate share of public sector resources. Its share of taxation has fallen from 6 per cent in 1961 to 3.6 per cent in 1986. Other issues such as the impact of rate exemption of government properties on local government revenue are dealt with by Atkins (1979). This last point is particularly relevant to Exmouth shire as the defence base is not rateable and the US houses are charged only a minimal *ex gratia* payment. Furthermore, over half the land in Exmouth shire is owned by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM). Exmouth therefore has a very small income base and the Australian residents pay particularly high council rates - an average of \$620-\$1 216 if water and sewerage are included.

Local shire councils are under pressure from every direction. Residents are demanding better services and facilities yet they do not wish to pay higher rates. Local governments are responding to this by becoming community negotiators for government funding for various projects. In some cases they enter tripartite arrangements such as the forthcoming recreation centre in Broome where council contributed \$300 000 and the state departments

**Table 5
Comparison of six WA shire councils, 1988**

	Wyndham- East Kimberley	Derby West Kimberley	Broome	Roebourne	Ashburton	Exmouth
Shire clerk located at		Derby	Broome	Karratha	Onslow	Exmouth
Distance from Perth	3636km	2366km	2260km	1640km	1408km	1270km
No employees	81	42	58	42	85	32
No ratepayers	837	400	n.d.	1037	2180	451
No dwellings	1400	1300	1450	6000	2469	680
Shire pop	6500	8000	6000	21000	9297	2500
Revenue \$	7m	4m	4.5m	11m	6.8m	1.6m
*Average yearly rate + garbage fee	Kununurra \$748 Wyndham \$410	\$370	\$450	Roebourne \$400	\$350	\$620
Area ('000 sq km)	121	103	56	15	106	6
Length of roads (km)	618 sealed(s) 92 unsealed(u/s)	1591	695s 48u/s	155s 347u/s	2149	69s 231u/s

Sources: The WA Municipal Directory 1988-1989
*Shire Clerks information

of Sport and Recreation, and Education, contributed \$122 000 and \$370 000 respectively. In other cases, council may provide the land and install the services on the block, such as for Day Care Centres. Here the Commonwealth pays for the building and operational wages and council usually maintains the building. Councils compete with each other for this type of funding. One concern raised is the limited say a local council may have in some joint decisions. For example, a council may be contributing over 50 per cent of the cost of a building but the state government reserves the right to decide where it is to be located.

The variation in community facilities is presented in Table 6. This result is affected not only by successful grant applications but by other factors such as council priorities. Compare, for example, Broome and Kununurra. Broome is considered to be poorly served in terms of community facilities in relation to its population size, whereas Kununurra has been described as 'being flush with community oriented facilities'. In Broome, council's funds have been channelled into servicing developments and only now, largely due to community pressure, are more resources being spent on community facilities. This year \$1m of loan funds will be used to build a swimming pool. Recreational facilities are also being upgraded. Kununurra was fortunate enough to receive funds from Argyle for community improvements. In contrast to financial arrangements with mining companies, tourist developers are not required to contribute to community facilities. A councillor in Broome suggested that developers should be required to make a one per cent contribution into a community fund so that residents can also benefit from development.

Another town with good community facilities is Exmouth, because the Commonwealth and state governments provided a range of community facilities (including a 50m swimming pool and a community hall completed in 1967) when the town was established. The shire has only been administered by an elected local council since 1979. Prior to that a single Commissioner was appointed to control the shire - 'a kind of dictatorship'. A turning point in the town came with the beginning of local government - 'it gave people confidence that they would now have a say in the future of Exmouth'. Other facilities were added - squash courts, bowling green and a recreation centre which cost \$425 000, to which the Department of Sport and Recreation contributed \$100 000.

The declining towns which are peripheral to the main shire town are not as well looked after in terms of community facilities. Wyndham is fortunate enough to have a swimming pool but this was built in 1965 with funds donated by Reverend Watts who stipulated that it must be kept open to the Aborigines (Keene and Moussalli 1985, 43). Like Roebourne, it was originally the shire town. It has not kept pace with community improvements since most of the shire administration has moved out. To some extent this is more a problem of size than level of council expenditure. Wyndham residents were quick to point out that their community hall and day care building only had evaporative coolers which were ineffective in the humidity. Both these facilities are airconditioned in Kununurra. In addition one might get the impression from Kununurra's well watered and tree-lined centre that the town's appearance has been accorded higher priority than Wyndham's airconditioning.

The kinds of standards now set by councils limit improvements on a small scale. A good example is the new community hall in Roebourne. This building cost \$800 000 and is considered a wonderful gift to Roebourne by shire councillors and employees. Locals consider they could have had both a swimming pool and a hall instead of the expensive 'Taj Mahal' as some locals have called it. It is rarely used because it is too expensive to hire.

Table 6
Comparison of council facilities, recreational facilities and other services (1988)

Facilities/Services	Kununurra	Wyndham	Derby	Broome	Roeboume	Onslow	Exmouth
Council	25m	25m	25m	-	-	-	50m
Swimming pool	1 a/c	1 evap.	1 a/c	1 a/c	1 a/c	-	1 a/c
Community hall	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Library	2	1	1	1	1	1	3
Ovals(s)	27ha	2 parks	4 parks	1 park	1 park	1 park	3 parks
Parks & gardens	8	2	4	6	4	2	2
Tennis courts	3	1	1	-	-	1 leased	1 leased
Squash court(s)	1	1 leased	1 leased	1 leased	not used	1 leased	1
Caravan park	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Baby health	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Day care centre (no. of children licensed for)	38	28	29	32	14 (not council building)	-	19
Pensioner units	-	1	12	12	-	-	6
*Recreational Golf course	18 hole	9 hole	18 hole	9 hole	-	-	18 hole (dir)
Bowling greens	1 being built	-	2	2	-	-	1
Showground	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Racecourse	1	1	1	1	1	-	1
Pony Club grounds	1	1	1	1	-	1	1
Other Services Banks	2	1	2	3	-	Manager visits 1/ft from Karratha	1
Solicitor	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Accountant	1	-	p/t Arriving	2	-	-	visiting 1/m
Veterinary surgeon	2	-	-	1	1/w visit	-	visit from Carnarvon
Local newspaper	1	1	1	1	-	-	1
Taxis	4	4	5	6	4	4	2
Air services	Ansett (daily) 4 private chart.co.	Charter service only	Ansett (daily)	Ansett (daily)	-	Skywest 1/w	Ansett daily to Perth
Bus services	3 (daily) (interstate co.)	Thorleys only when booked	3 (daily) (interstate co.)	3 (daily) (interstate co.)	3 (daily) (interstate co.)	-	1/w to Karratha 2/3 tourist season
No. Police	9 +2 aids	6 +2 aids	13	21 +2 aids	8+2 aids	4	4

Source: Shire clerks/local residents

* In most cases Council owns these facilities but they are maintained by local clubs

Roebourne council staff reject residents' complaints that council does little in their town. Both have their examples. Relations between Wyndham and Kununurra are even worse. There is considerable animosity over the removal of council staff from Wyndham because it is still going on. A proposal to relocate the assistant shire clerk to Kununurra caused an intense reaction in Wyndham at the end of 1988.

The types of decisions made in council are largely dependent on its structure, that is, the characteristics and locations of the councillors. Table 7 shows that all these councils are predominantly male. Ashburton shire council has no female or Aboriginal representative. Women are best represented in the shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley, not only in proportion but also in power. This is because the shire President is female. An increasing proportion of women in local government in the NT has been noted by Loveday (this volume). Most of these councils conform with this trend. Another change is the increasing proportion of townspeople at the expense of rural people. At one time pastoralists dominated local government where shires incorporated rural properties (Gordon 1976, 23) but nowadays most shires have had rural wards either eliminated or reduced to one ward only. There were only four councillors from agricultural properties out of 56 councillors - two from Kununurra, one near Onslow and one near Karratha.

The entry of Aborigines into local government is even more recent. This is having a mixed effect. On the one hand it is providing some representation for Aborigines and coloured people but on the other hand their influence in council is often minimal due to their minority status on council. Furthermore, some newly elected Aboriginal councillors have difficulty in handling procedures at local council meetings. Others, it seems, are really not very interested. For example, Wyndham has recently lost a representative because their only Aboriginal councillor did not attend three meetings in a row. The Aboriginal agenda in Wyndham is more in terms of gaining their own independence rather than influencing non-Aboriginal politics and resources.

Another significant characteristic is the high proportion of councillors from the private sector and the low representation from public sector employees. This is understandable in view of the tendency for public servants to be in the area for comparatively short periods compared with self employed people or individuals who work in private enterprise. The exceptions are nurses or teachers who are married to long term residents and Aborigines who are employed in a government capacity. Hence local councillors also tend to be longer term residents. Some are accused of having vested interests. In support of councillors, residents tend to criticise their councillors but fail to acknowledge the considerable time and effort they give to the community. Councillors in WA are not paid while shire presidents receive a small allowance of \$1 500 pa.

Housing and land issues

A critical shortage of land and housing was mentioned in all towns except Wyndham and Roebourne. The inability of local councils to obtain the prompt release of Crown Land in response to demand has not only constrained growth, but also contributed to increasing costs in the north. The Department of Regional Development and the Northwest and the WA State Planning Commission have drawn attention to this in their Kimberley Regional Planning Study Series where they write 'The Department of Land Administration is criticised for creating an artificial shortage by arbitrarily holding back the release of unserviced land' and 'Land that is made available is usually expensive and carries restrictive conditions regarding development' (1987, 5).

Homeswest also reports long delays in obtaining land. In Broome there is a strong feeling that development of accommodation for tourists took precedence over residential housing

Table 7
Characteristics of councillors in six WA shire councils, 1988

Shire Council	M	F	Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal	Councillor from			Employed in		
				Main Shire Office Town	Another Town(s)	Rural Area	Private enterprise selfemployed	Govt. employed	Other
Wyndham E Kimberley	6	3	1(m)	3 Kununurra	4	2	7	1	-
Derby W Kimberley	8	3	1(m)	6 Derby	2	1	5	2	1
Broome	8	1	2(m)	6 Broome	-	1	3	4	-
Roebourne	8	3	1(f)	5 Karratha	5	1	6	4	1
Ashburton	9	-	-	1 Onslow	7	1	8	1	-
Exmouth	5	2	-	7 Exmouth	-	-	4	2	1

Source: Shire Clerk/Councillor

for new employees and existing local residents. The Kununurra experience is different. There is now an over-supply of residential land but tourist growth has been stifled by lack of suitable land. With the release of the Foreshore Study this problem may be solved shortly.

Exmouth residents report an even more critical situation. Private residents have to wait two to three years to buy a block of land. When land does finally become available it seems first preference is given to government needs. In one land release, all of the 57 fully serviced blocks of land went to government departments. After a two year delay, when another 32 blocks were made available for sale in 1987, one third went to government. This year 31 of the 64 blocks coming onto the market have already been reserved for government use. The time factor is not the only problem, when land does become available the quantity is too small for current demand. Presently there is no land available for the expansion of light industry. The 'Exmouth Development Strategy' (Department of Regional Development and the Northwest 1988, 18) indicates that the reason behind the Department of Land Administration's inability to release further land in Exmouth relates to its own financial constraints. The report acknowledges the lack of available land for commercial, industrial and residential development in Exmouth and suggests that the possibility of involving the private sector in providing housing accommodation be explored. Similarly in Onslow residents are highly critical of the lack of available residential land. It appeared that not one block of land was available for sale at the end of 1988 and efforts to release more land have so far failed. Perhaps councils do not request large enough parcels of land for release and a more entrepreneurial approach is required.

Some councils have supported rural subdivisions and these blocks sell very quickly. In Broome, one purchaser paid \$50 000 for a five acre block and \$100 000 for another one. Derby rural blocks sell for \$4 000 but purchasers have to fence, put down a bore and build within two years. Councils are concerned about established resident's future demands for improved roads and other services. Derby shire council is already under pressure to upgrade the roads for the 50 blocks in the rural subdivision. For this reason some councils have deliberately avoided exploring this land option. Perhaps a solution would be to include a clause in the purchase to the effect that if owners wish to have a better road, they meet the expense themselves.

The extent to which growth in these small towns is being limited by land shortage cannot be properly estimated as there are no records of demand for land or housing. One thing that is obvious, however, is the extent of building on every available block of land, despite exorbitant building costs. A house in the north west cannot be built for under \$100 000. Even a transportable brought to Exmouth, the closest to Perth of any of these towns, costs \$90 000. Housing and land costs are considered perhaps the most damaging and expensive factor in establishing a permanent population base (Table 8). This is the subject of a present construction cost inquiry being undertaken by the Kimberley office of the Department of Regional Development and the Northwest.

A more economical solution to accommodation is to purchase an existing house as these are usually older often ex-government homes. Unfortunately, few become available and those that do are snapped up quickly. The range of house prices is shown in Table 8. Prices tend to reflect the fortunes of the towns with housing being expensive in the growth towns, reasonable in Exmouth and Onslow, and cheaper in Wyndham and Roebourne. Rents do not follow the same pattern. Rental accommodation in most towns is very expensive. This, combined with the lack of accommodation, was reported to be restricting service postings and the ability of businesses to obtain staff.

Table 8
Rental accommodation costs, house and land prices
in seven WA towns (1988)

Town	Average Rents (non-government) \$	Housing Prices for existing stock \$	Land Prices ^a (cheapest block available) \$
Kununurra	225/w	100000-200000	20000
Wyndham	120/w	40000-80000	5000
Derby	110/w	30000-60000	11000
Broome	250/w	100000-300000	33000
Roebourne	150/w	50000-60000	5000
Onslow	150/w	55000-65000	15000
Exmouth	200/w	55000-68000	20000

^a Broome land is serviced with underground electricity wires

Source: Recent sale prices, information from Shire Clerks

One group whose housing situation has improved is the Aborigines but of course their previous housing was deplorable. New houses have been built on most reserves. For example, in Onslow 32 new houses have just been completed on Bindy Bindy reserve and new Aboriginal houses were evident throughout the Derby reserve. The new Roebourne village is less of a success because the authorities did not consult with the local Aborigines and built it on the site of an Aboriginal cemetery.

Overcrowding in Aboriginal housing is still a major problem and land constraint is also a factor here. In some Aboriginal houses in Roebourne there are up to 29 people in one house. Another problem is the design. Closed-in houses with inadequate verandah space are not conducive to Aboriginal lifestyles. This has been reported so many times that it is surprising to find these types of houses are still being constructed.

Conclusion

An overview of seven north Western Australian towns indicates noticeable diversity between them, whether one considers population change, economic base, local facilities and services, or community relations. This paper has presented a description of the changes taking place in these towns and discussed some of the main issues highlighted by local people. The discussion has related to the local perspective only and no attempt has been made here to link this to broader national issues. Instead a series of emerging themes and some future lines of investigation are presented below.

For too long there has been a preoccupation with numerical population changes and insufficient attention given to quality of life issues in small towns. Growth and development are still seen primarily in positive terms and stability or decline in negative terms, in spite of Schumacher's (1973) efforts. The inaccuracy of these perceptions has been alluded to in this paper, exemplified in the social tension and financial strain being experienced by Broome residents, and to a lesser degree in Kununurra, compared with the satisfaction with the community spirit and friendliness found in Derby and Wyndham. Perhaps the impact of tourism on fragile physical environments attracts more attention than its impact on the social environment.

Certain questions need to be asked: who benefits from boom growth and are controls necessary on the rate of change within a community? An early appraisal indicates that Broome is being turned into a playground for rich visitors while the majority of locals struggle to survive. A similar situation has occurred on the eastern seaboard resort centres. It is important to note that unlike mining or pastoral developments, 'mega' tourist development is being built on existing towns and invades a local community which valued its previous way of life. Smaller scale tourism or slower development allows local people a greater chance to direct the change and spread the benefits to the community as a whole. It also gives more opportunity to prevent any one individual or group gaining too much power and control over a community.

At the other end of the scale we have decline. In the eyes of some external analysts, this seems to mean 'ready to be written off'. Some policies appear to be assisting this process. Regionalising key centres at the expense of small towns is one example. Again there is a failure to understand the local environment. Enquiries revealed that declining Wyndham is highly valued by both local residents and others who had lived there in the past. Too often one hears derogatory comments about this town, usually made by people who have had a superficial look and then passed on. To appreciate the quality of local life you have to be part of a community. If this is not possible, then you have to accept what rural town residents tell you is valuable to them.

Good community spirit and social cohesion is something a lot of urban analysts do not understand or even value because urban environments are structured very differently. They do however understand crime figures and domestic violence statistics. Some more links need to be made in this line of reasoning. Exmouth, Wyndham and Onslow were reported to be very safe communities. Social relationships are an important aspect of any community study. Some aspects identified for future investigation include: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships; rural and town relationships; tourist and local interaction; public servant and local, or public and private division; and in one town, US and Australian relations.

The size of the town is also significant. Exmouth and Derby residents stated that their town was large enough to have a good range of local facilities and services, yet small enough to have a relaxed and close rural life style. The smaller towns such as Roebourne and Wyndham are more at risk as, like so many other towns around the 1 000 or under population mark, they are in constant danger of having services withdrawn or downgraded, particularly when cost assessments are being done within compartmentalised departmental frameworks.

The 'user pays' philosophy is especially relevant to small towns when it is used to justify service withdrawals. Writers such as Holmes (1981, 101) have given added weight to such decisions arguing that 'An efficient rural settlement and land use pattern is one which is capable of sustaining its own infrastructure costs'. This line of reasoning fails to account for the economic value which flows out of rural regions and its importance to the

nation as a whole. As Lea (1988, 29) points out 'Critics of government subsidies designed to maintain these (infrastructure) assets and services tend to ignore the fact that little of the national wealth generated from these regions remains at its source'. Holmes (1988) has continued to question the transferral of public funds to remote areas. Again his arguments place service provision within a narrow economic framework and ignore the more recent policy of social equity developed within the Social Justice Strategy.

It is relevant to note the influence of writers who focus on negative aspects of rural change and who support policies for reducing government investment in rural centres. Like some government departmental heads, they often fail to realise the impact of decisions to remove personnel from small towns. The savings achieved may leave behind a more serious social dependency situation than before. Furthermore, those who make the savings do not bear the costs transferred elsewhere. Often the rural people have to bear increased expense as they travel further to reach a service or do without. Other government departments, such as social security, may have to bear some of the costs too. Structural adjustment takes time, so too do new ventures to replace failed schemes. It is wasteful to keep moving infrastructure and services when circumstances often change within a short time.

Some policies which have received particular mention because of their effect on small towns include: lack of decentralisation of power and little local empowerment; shrinking of local government budgets; and inflexible government structures which cannot cope with horizontal coordination at the small scale service delivery level. In north Western Australia the land supply issue, cost of construction, excessive planning regulations and expensive government building programmes are additional. Greater attention needs to be given to the effect of these policies on the quality of life in rural areas.

To summarise, generally academics, urban planners and the media have failed to consider the positive changes which have taken place in rural Australia or to include the economic value of rural industries in evaluations. For too long the rural sector has been the focus of narrow cost saving exercises, particularly where public services are concerned. A broader and more equitable analysis between rural and metropolitan environments is called for. An attempt should be made to assess the value of small towns, quality of life issues, the often conflicting themes of preservation versus development and the relative importance of the remote areas of Australia.

Appendix: Results of questionnaire survey of 99 local residents¹

Towns by occupation of respondents (No)								Total No Respondents
	Kununurra	Wyndham	Derby	Broome	Roebourne	Onslow	Exmouth	
No interviewed	12	13	12	8	11	23	20	99
Occupations (No)								
Admin	5	1	3	2	1	1	3	16
Business	2	3	1	1	3	13	2	25
Service	2	5	4	1	5	5	6	28
Profess	1	2	2	2	2	0	0	9
Councillor	1	1	1	1	0 ^a	1	4	9
Other	1	1	1	1	0	3	5	12
Sex (No)								
Male	9	8	4	6	6	11	13	58
Female	3	5	8	2	4	12	7	41
Advantages (%)								
Close/friendly	7	41	23	15	19	24	15	21 ^b
Relaxing	11	14	14	8	6	10	11	17
Safe	7	7	14		6	10	23	12
Outdoor life	19	7	18	15	19	5	6	11
Good job	11	14	5	8	25	12	2	10

Notes:
 a Shire President from Wickham interviewed
 b 3 options allowed

¹ These results are not statistically relevant as proper sampling procedures were not observed

The first table outlines the five most important advantages mentioned. The close and friendly community atmosphere was particularly evident in Wyndham and also in Derby and Onslow. The safety of living in Exmouth came through very strongly, affecting the aggregated total. The remaining advantages were very diverse, ranging from people in Exmouth stating they lived in 'utopia/paradise' to just liking their towns for various specific reasons.

The three main **disadvantages** mentioned were: isolation from good shopping, specialist services and culture (16 per cent); cost of living (16 per cent); and climate (11 per cent).

Isolation from family and other centres (distance) was also mentioned and if all forms of isolation are aggregated together, this accounted for 28 per cent of the responses. Dislike of the climate related to the summer climate only. Others had mentioned the advantage of the winter climate. The other disadvantages related to more specific matters relevant to the individual town. For example, in Broome, people spoke of the invasion of their community by the 'supermarket city culture', of the conflict between the old and the new with too much pressure too quickly. 'The nature of change is out of control'. In Kununurra, negative comments about social stratification were made. A few referred to it as being a 'smug town', 'a racist town'.

Poor education was mentioned by 7 per cent of respondents. This was affected by the fact that only some of the respondents had school aged children. Shortage of land and housing was widespread concern but all those being interviewed had accommodation, so it was not their prime personal concern. A few interviewees focused on the insular nature of living in a small community while others expressed the need to get away for a break once a year.

Town by length of residence (%)

Length of (years)	Kununurra	Wyndham	Derby	Broome	Roebourne	Onslow	Exmouth	Total No Respondents
<5	58	53	50	38	45	56	35	48
5-14	17	15	42	13	18	22	25	22
15-19	17	8	0	13	0	4	10	7
20+	8	23	8	38	36	17	30	22

Town by expected length of stay (%)

<5	50	31	34	38	45	39	25	36
5-9	0	0	33	0	18	0	15	9
Indefinitely	25	39	25	38	27	49	25	33
No plans	25	31	8	25	9	13	25	19

Length of residence. Although in four towns, the majority interviewed had been there less than five years, longer term respondents were interviewed in Exmouth and Broome. This was even more evident in the less than two year category where only 5 per cent and 13 per cent respectively had lived there for that length of time. A total of 19 people had lived in their towns less than two years, that is, one fifth of the sample. Half had lived there less than five years.

Expected length of residence. One quarter of respondents were leaving their communities within the next two years. Generally these were the short term public servants who moved on in their promotion cycle. Over half had no plans to leave.

Migration patterns. The predominant movement into these northern towns is from Perth. Of the 99 interviewed, 27 came from a metropolitan centre (mostly Perth). The next two most common previous places of residence were the smaller places, towns with populations between 1 000 and 6 000 (24 respondents) and villages, that is, settlements with between 200 and 1 000 people (13 respondents). Over three quarters of the movement took place within WA.

When asked where they would expect to move to, 38 per cent said they were not leaving, 16 per cent would go back to a metropolitan area, 15 per cent did not know, 8 per cent would go south, 7 per cent to a small town and 5 per cent to a small urban place. The major reasons for moving were for work reasons (13 per cent) and for education of children (12 per cent).

Involvement in local organisations. The average number of organisations respondents were involved in were: Exmouth (4); Broome (3); Kununurra, Wyndham and Derby (2.5); Onslow and Roebourne (1).

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GOVERNING REMOTE AREAS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Michael Wood

This conference provides an opportunity for a report on work in progress to be made to a group of participants with an interest in the problems of small towns in northern Australia.

The focus of this brief paper is on the governing of remote areas in Western Australia and is based on a project undertaken by the Ministers of Local Government and Aboriginal Affairs in Western Australia and supported by the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Its report is in preparation.

However before the project is discussed a pen portrait of northern towns in Western Australia is offered. The towns range from isolated and remote communities inland in pastoral and desert country to relatively less isolated urban communities on the coast. There is a diversity in the levels of revenue dependence in these towns. For example at Wiluna between four and seven per cent of its total revenue comes from rates whereas in Roebourne the comparable figure is 75.7 per cent. The coastal towns have a more diverse economic base than the more remote inland towns although the present goldmining boom is revitalising a number of them.

Alterations are occurring in the power arrangements on councils following changes to ward representation and the introduction of adult franchise in 1985 and the relationships which local governments have with the government itself are changing. For example, state-wide planning has been introduced via the State Planning Commission and the Local Government Grants Commission is emerging as an important funder of local governments. The Commission allows for the distance, isolation and climatic factors which affect the capacity of local governments in northern towns to raise revenue. A number of new towns in the north are company towns, many undergoing a process of normalisation. This too has an impact on revenue raising capacity. In general terms, health, water and transport services are delivered better to urban northern areas and towns than to areas of smaller population.

It is against this background that I now turn to the project on local governments and Aboriginal communities.

Objective

The objective of the project is to develop appropriate structures for local government and Aboriginal communities in Western Australia. The terms of reference for the project are to: assess models already operating in the Northern Territory and Queensland; investigate structures existing overseas; develop new models; recommend on training and management options for these models, and address issues related to community assets and rateability.

The project was undertaken in anticipation of greater interest being shown by Aboriginal people in self government and in their relationship with local governments. This follows the election of Aboriginals to a number of remote local governments in Western Australia

after amendments to the Local Government Act in 1984 resulted in the provision of adult franchise.

There was also some dissatisfaction with what appeared to be a lack of commitment by local governments to provide services such as roads and recreation facilities to Aboriginal communities. The local government perspective on service provision is affected by its legal relationship with the land occupied by Aboriginal people and by the scarce resources available for the provision of facilities and services. The Country Shire Councils' Association has displayed a high degree of goodwill towards the project and towards its members fulfilling their responsibilities as far as the law allows.

Contemporary debate

As one might expect there is a growing official interest in the governing of remote Aboriginal communities and their relationship to local governments. Mick Miller chaired an inquiry into Aboriginal employment and training programs in 1985 and considered it desirable for Aboriginal communities to maintain their distinctive character but have access to the benefits local governments provide to members of non-Aboriginal communities (Miller Report 1985).

Peter Self and the committee inquiring into local government finance in 1986 argued that the Commonwealth should adopt guidelines covering the provision of Commonwealth assistance to local government in areas of significant Aboriginal population (Self Report 1985).

The Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs produced a policy document in 1987 titled 'Proposed Policy for Aboriginal Participation and Equity in Local Government'. The document stated that in general terms Aboriginals in remote and rural areas did not receive an equitable share of services provided by local authorities. It further commented that appropriate structures did not exist to enable the situation to be improved. A federal interdepartmental committee consisting of representatives from the Office of Local Government, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Finance undertook a project called Grants Determination Research Project in 1988. This was aimed at ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities received an equitable share of Commonwealth general revenue assistance provided to local governments.

The Legislative Council of Western Australia examined the delivery of services to Aboriginal communities and stated that Aboriginal people should have more input into policy development and also recommended that greater recognition be given to local authorities in providing services and that stronger links with Aboriginal people be encouraged (Select Committee into State Funding for Aboriginal Programs 1988).

Finally, the Australian Parliament through the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs is examining issues related to local government and the provision of services to Aboriginal communities. Local government people believe that they are the most investigated and probed sector of government. If all this committee work continues Aboriginal people will take the crown.

Methodology

The Western Australian project adopted a process approach involving local government and Aboriginal people themselves in the generation of ideas and the consideration of options with a strong and implicit sub-text underlining the need to focus on change.

Aboriginal communities in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia were visited and data gathered on resources, funding, community facilities, rating, training and employment of Aboriginal people by local governments.

Remote areas

The area which is the concern of this paper is north of the 26th parallel. This conforms with Zone A, a remote area for the purposes of the Australian Taxation Office. This part of Western Australia contains 13 of the state's 138 local governments. About 40 per cent of the state's 38,000 Aboriginals reside in these local governments, 44 per cent of the population in the northern part of the state (ABS 1986). The estimated residential population of Western Australian local governments above the 26th parallel in 1987 is shown in Table 1.

There are 11 Aboriginal councillors elected to these local governments and another six are on the Shires of Wiluna and Laverton.

Table 1
Western Australian local governments above the 26th parallel

Councils	Estimated residential population at 30.6.87
Ashburton	8658
Broome	6505
Carnarvon	7590
Derby-West Kimberley	7138
East Pilbara	9902
Exmouth	2505
Halls Creek	2918
Meekatharra	1654
Port Hedland	13623
Roebourne	17741
Upper Gascoyne	256
Wiluna	1832
Wyndham-East Kimberley	6180
	<hr/>
	86502

Sources: ABS, 1987. Estimated Resident Population by Age and Sex in Statistical Local Areas, WA, Catalogue No 3203.5, Perth.

Resources

Aboriginal communities living in these local governments are funded through the Community and Management Service (CMS) program and received \$20m in 1987. Facilities have been built with CMS funds in Aboriginal communities at Turkey Creek, One Arm Point, Jigalong and Kalumburu.

The Western Australian Local Government Grants Commission (1988) distributed \$59m in financial assistance grants to all local governments in 1987/88. The Commission is concerned with the equitable provision of municipal services to remote Aboriginal communities as well as to residents in all other local government areas in the state.

Local governments have felt constrained by legal advice they have received which has deterred them from expenditure on roads and provision of community facilities on land which is not under their care and control. Access to most Aboriginal communities in remote areas is difficult and staffing and maintaining facilities is also seen as an important issue by local governments.

Financial resources are limited and also constrain what local governments can do. One aspect of the problem is the rating of land which has no economic rent. Another is the related difficulty of valuing such land. There are a number of legal issues to be clarified as well and these will be discussed in the report which is being prepared.

Developing policy

The options which have been developed by the review committee are based on principles of citizen participation, cultural requirements, efficiency and democracy. The committee found that a uniform approach to the provision of municipal services to remote areas was inappropriate and that a range of options was preferable.

Where Aboriginal communities choose to operate under one of the options to be covered shortly it will be necessary for an assessment to be made of staff needs, staff training and funding. It seems desirable to develop a mechanism for the delivery of services which will balance the policy positions of Commonwealth and state governments with the capacity of local governments to deliver services. One possible approach would be for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Local Government to share the transfer of funds and the enhancement of expertise for the delivery of municipal services in remote areas. One might anticipate the usual advantages of community participation in decision making at the local level and the benefits of cost effective administration in the delivery of services to Aboriginal communities. The goal of the policy would be the maintenance and development of community management and self help.

The Committee is considering recommendations related to the raising of rates, the imposition of levies, ex-gratia payments, grants and charges in order to deal with the range of opportunities for revenue raising which might be anticipated.

Conclusion

The committee is considering six options in the preparation of its final draft.

Mainstream option

This option proposes that existing local governments continue to provide municipal services within and to remote Aboriginal communities. The committee believes this option is particularly appropriate for urban and remote areas. The whole population within a local government can participate and demand equitable service provision. This option can be implemented without legislative amendment provided Ministerial approval to expend municipal funds on reserve lands is obtained.

Modified mainstream option

This option proposes that the first option be amended to operate without the need for Ministerial approval. Some legislative amendment will be necessary.

Contractual option

The third option proposes that municipal works be contracted to either the local government or the remote community. The local government might purchase services from the community or the community might purchase them from the shire. From the perspective of Aboriginal communities this option is preferred as it retains autonomy and involves them in the implementation of their own priorities.

The decision making process would require the provision of an advisory committee allowable under existing legislation although some extension of legislative powers might be necessary to permit the implementation of decisions.

Community option

This option is based on a unit of delivery which has some of the local government powers delegated to it. It seems an appropriate structure for local participation in urban and remote areas for a variety of services. In the case of remote Aboriginal communities the cultural requirements might be met and the development of municipal services might be achieved under the administrative umbrella of the shire and its employees.

General option

This option allows for the formation of local governments whose constituents may be Aboriginal. The existing provisions of the WA legislation provides for the formation of separate shires and could be introduced if any specified number of petitioners seek separation. This option would suit larger communities with economies of scale comparable to other similar sized populations. Communities on the Dampier Peninsula sought information about this option some three years ago. No action has been taken to date.

Regional option

This final option is based on the need for coordination and the possibilities of developing joint cooperative arrangements between a regional body and Aboriginal communities in local government. The regional body might be an umbrella Aboriginal organisation or a group of local governments or a combination of both. Delivery would involve resources

through block grants and allocations based on need within the region. The composition of the regional body and the appropriate balances of power and resources are yet to be considered by the committee.

When the report is finalised and released by Ministers, further discussion with interested parties will take place. Implementation of any options which are agreed on requires the preparation of legislation which is flexible so that the law becomes an enabler rather than an enforcer. The law must meet the diverse practices and traditions which are found throughout Australian society so that the purposes of governing locally can be met in a variety of ways and thus permit the delivery of similar functions at standard levels of service.

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COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT MODELS FOR SMALL TOWNS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Graham Phegan

The Northern Territory was granted self government by the Commonwealth on 1 July 1978. Only one month later, on 3 August 1978, the Northern Territory government approved amendments to the *Local Government Ordinance* and the *Associations Incorporation Ordinance* as part of its policy of decentralising authority. This in turn led to the inclusion of Part 20 of the Local Government Ordinance and to the community government program, a form of local government incorporation in the Northern Territory under which 16 small and remote Northern Territory communities have developed their own local government constitutions called 'schemes'; many others are in the pipe line.

This movement, encompassing an increasing number of local government authorities, is against the trend in the states where amalgamations throughout this century have led to a reduction of 21 per cent in the number of local governments - a figure which would be much higher had the Victorian government achieved its aim in 1986. Much of what has already been written about the community government program has been coloured by various philosophical preconceptions. In this paper, I assume that local government in the Territory will follow the Australian norm in order to explain the reasons for and characteristics of the community government program. I examine briefly the political setting within which community government has evolved and review the legislation explaining why the Act is the only appropriate legislation for local government incorporation of small towns in the Northern Territory. Finally, some ideas for future small town incorporation are explored. Financial aspects of community government administration are dealt with in a separate paper by Nichols in this volume.

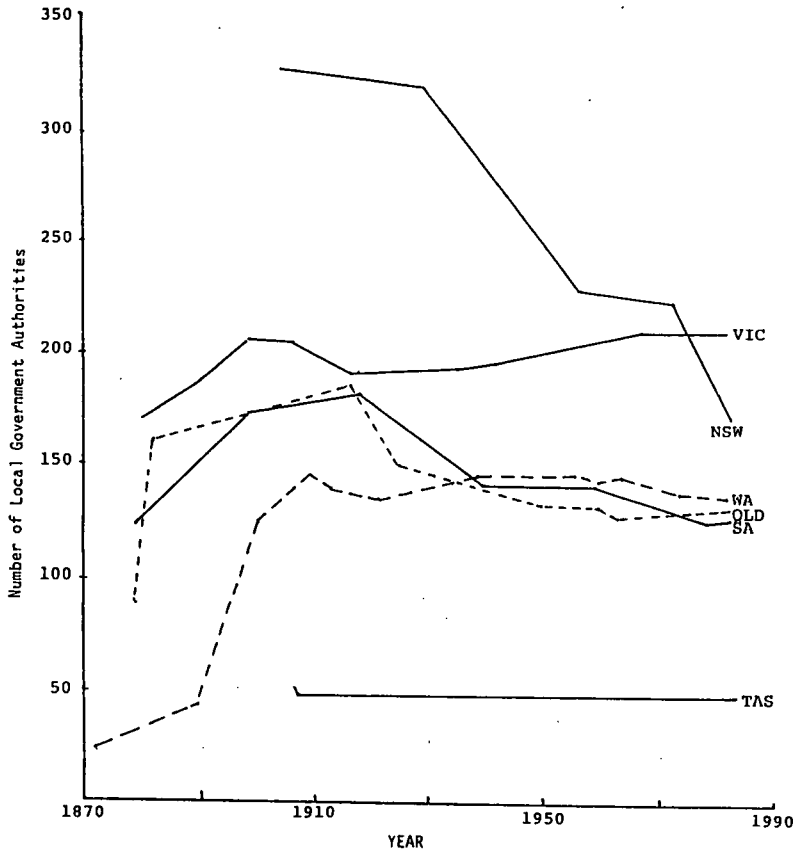
History

Prior to 1978, Northern Territory towns, which were generally quite small at the time of incorporation, had no choice in the form of local government incorporation available to them. It was conventional Australian municipal-style government or nothing. Darwin failed twice with the conventional model before its present incorporation in 1957. Alice Springs incorporated in 1971 but had previously exercised the only choice available to Territory towns when it refused local government in 1968. Katherine and Tennant Creek held out until 1978.

Throughout this period of early development of local government within the Northern Territory, state governments, acting on the belief that there were too many local governments, 'the majority of which are too small to be viable economic and functional units of government' (ACIR 1981, 56), set about reducing the number of local governments through boundary commissions, voluntary amalgamations and legislation. The result was that from an all-time high of 1067 in 1910, Australia had 839 such authorities in 1981 (Figure 1).

There is evidence supporting the claim that larger authorities have the advantage of economies of scale in the provision of municipal services. Easton and Thomson (1987, 293) concluded that 'larger councils not only offer more services to ratepayers than smaller councils' but can achieve significant decreases in unit costs of some services (for

Figure 1 Number of local government authorities in each state, 1870-1981



Source: ACIR 1981

example they observed a decrease of 91 per cent in the annual per kilometre cost of road maintenance from a doubling of total road length). However since 1978, local government has taken on the appearance of the Northern Territory's fastest growing business (Figure 2) based on small town incorporation. From two local governments prior to self government (Darwin and Alice Springs) there are now 20 such authorities.

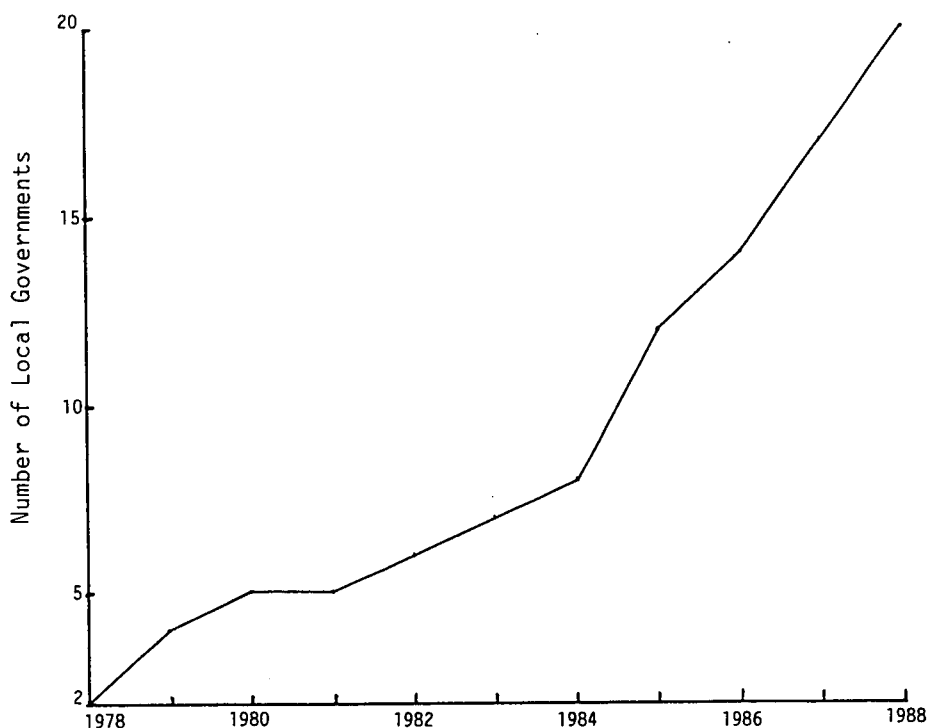
Government policy

Why has the Northern Territory government allowed this development in local government, against the national trend, particularly when 'state and Commonwealth governments can expect to allocate more grant support (per capita) to smaller councils' (Easton and Thomson 1987, 297)? Some academics and other cynics might agree with Knox (1982, 209) that:

the formal recognition of participation merely helps to legitimise the activity of planners, reinforcing the myth of civic democracy whilst in

reality providing the means by which the public can be 'managed' more effectively.

Figure 2 Local government - the NT's fastest growing business



Source: NT Office of Local Government

This control/dependency rationale has found favour with some of yesterday's commentators on Northern Territory community government. It is further argued by proponents of this view that the Northern Territory government introduced community government as a deliberate counter to effective Aboriginal self determination which was available to Aboriginal communities under the Commonwealth's *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act*.

A less fanciful and more accurate explanation for the expansion of local government in the Northern Territory is that at self government there was, geographically at least, little local government to speak of and that with an increasing population and changing attitudes towards local self determination, regardless of culture, it was only natural that local government would grow in the Territory. Certainly the attitudes prevailing in the years immediately preceding self government provided the basis for a policy of decentralised

authority. In its 1965 report on the desirability of extending local government in the Northern Territory, the Select Committee of the Legislative Council noted the need for:

the examination of the desirability of introducing some form of local government in developing communities in the Northern Territory such as those on missions and settlements and in particular those on which industrial developments are taking place such as Groote Eylandt (Kilgariff 1965, 12).

In a sense, the new self governing Northern Territory in 1978 put into practice what its predecessors in the Legislative Council days had preached. Territorians, like most people, did not want to be controlled by remote bureaucracies. Walker (1986, 36) describes the bitter opposition, particularly from Alice Springs, to the Bill, in 1958, providing the Commonwealth with power to levy rates in communities without local government.

The result is that the governing Country Liberal Party's platform on local government supports government action to 'encourage developing and isolated communities to adopt a local government role commensurate with their abilities and resources, and at the pace decided by the residents of these communities.' This policy is further reinforced in the second reading speech of the Minister, Jim Robertson, introducing the Amendment Bill providing for community government. The speech is well known to players in the community government debate and the following extract serves to highlight the prevailing sentiment of self government:

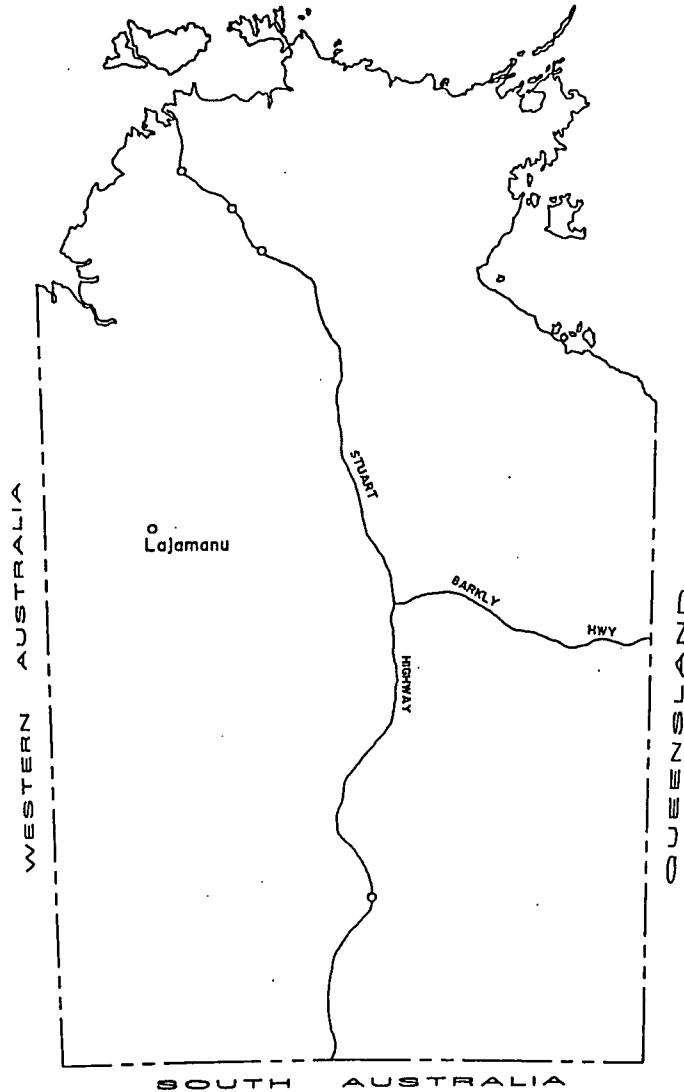
The purpose of this Bill is to provide by amendment to the Local Government Ordinance a simplified alternative form of local or community government than that which now operates in the major population centres under the municipal or corporation system. Consistent with the determination of Territory people as a whole to obtain self government or self management from federal control, there remains a determination amongst many communities, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to obtain a greater degree of local control in respect of matters over which they have the greatest knowledge and in respect of which they have the most acute and intimate concern. This government accepts and indeed endorses that determination and in our turn we are happy to offer the greatest possible devolution or handover of those functions of government which are of principal or immediate concern to the residents of those smaller and in many cases remote communities (NT Parliamentary Record, 20 September 1978, 234-5).

More recently, John Lea (1987, 53) in his paper on the introduction of local government to Jabiru, refers to 'the general desire of the Territory government to encourage physical and administrative responsibilities'. The record appears to sustain a view that the Northern Territory government has been genuinely disposed to devolution of authority in the introduction of its local, including community, government program. Of particular significance is the bi-partisan support which the community government program receives in the Northern Territory. The South Australian government's consultant on Aboriginal community government (former South Australian Premier Don Dunstan) has recently visited the Territory to consult with community government councils and other interested parties. The Western Australian Department of Local Government has recognised that the Northern Territory model has influenced local government interest and developments in Aboriginal communities in the northwest. While the program has its detractors, there is wide interest and support for this style of small town management.

Introducing community government

The Northern Territory government does not force communities to incorporate as community governments. Although the *Local Government Ordinance* was changed in 1978, the first application for community government was received from Angurugu the following year, on 23 April 1979. The first community government scheme to be approved (Lajamanu, see Figure 3) was gazetted in May 1980, but only after one year of

Figure 3 Establishment of community government 1980



Source: NT Office of Local Government

community consultation. Of the 35 communities which have expressed an interest in community government, 26 have lodged applications and 16 have approved schemes. (Barunga/Wugularr and Daguragu/Kalkaringi respectively are incorporated under single schemes.) The average period of community consultation leading to the 14 approved schemes is three and a half years with the shortest consultation being at Lajamanu and the longest, eight years and eight months, at Daguragu/Kalkaringi. Clearly, the consultation period for some communities still considering their schemes will be even longer.

Opponents of community government refer to the pressure placed by the Northern Territory government, particularly on Aboriginal communities, to accept community government. Such claims are patently absurd in light of the previous figures. The NT government's approach is more acceptable than that of one Aboriginal organisation, purporting to promote the interests of Aboriginal people, which recently pressed for incorporation of a community under the Commonwealth Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act after two secret meetings in one week, without consulting community leaders.

Far from applying pressure, the Northern Territory government lacks the resources to respond in a timely way to the number of community requests for advice and assistance in moving towards community government. It has stated this in its first submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee for its current 'Inquiry into Support Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Communities'. If it is to be criticised at all, the government is at fault for not providing enough resources to assist incorporations requested under the *Local Government Act*, or for sustaining it once a scheme is introduced.

What then are the models for community government in the Territory? Well there is no model, at least not in the sense of a blueprint. The *Local Government Act* allows the Minister to approve a set of model provisions for community government schemes but successive Ministers have preferred custom designed schemes.

Some early community government schemes tended to follow the conventional local government model, as it applies to such municipalities as Alice Springs, Darwin and Katherine. This provides little flexibility in such matters as application for incorporation, form of representation and elections, and the early schemes perhaps reflected the conventional local government background of the field staff and legislative draftsmen who assisted with their design. However, the flexibility available to each community under the Act is considerable. Figure 4 lists the discretionary functions available to a community for inclusion in its scheme. It is left to each community to decide the range, level and timing of the functions it wishes to perform. The Act also provides for changes to a scheme to meet the changing needs on the community and this provision was made less cumbersome under amendments passed in the Legislative Assembly on 13 October 1988. Several communities are now seeking changes.

A matrix showing the variation in features of community government schemes adopted by communities to date is included in Appendix 1. It shows extensive flexibility and, in the case of Aboriginal communities, reflects the capacity of the Act to accommodate Aboriginal needs in such matters as representation, elections and residential qualification. For example at Borroloola representation is from five wards. Two representatives are elected from each ward giving a total of ten councillors. Elections are held every three years. Candidates for election must be on the electoral roll and have lived in the community government area for three months preceding the election.

Figure 4 *Community Government Councils - List of functions*

- . Commercial development
- . Communications
- . Community amenities
- . Education or training
- . Electricity supply
- . Garbage Collection and disposal
- . Health
- . Housing
- . Relief work for unemployed persons
- . Roads and associated works
- . Sewerage
- . Water supply
- . Welfare
- . Raising of revenue in accordance with Part Eight of the Local Government Act
- . Such other matters as are approved by the Minister.

At Barunga/Wugularr the community government area consists of two wards. Nine councillors are elected from the Barunga ward and six from the Wugularr ward, giving a total of 15. A candidate must be a member of a language group to stand for election and have lived in the community government area for 12 months. Elections are held every two years.

At Ngukurr, the Yugul Mangi scheme allows for representation from the seven language groups. Two councillors from each language group are elected by consensus following a month long selection process. Councillors must have lived in the community government area for a minimum of 12 months. The term of office is three years.

Some of you may have seen the ABC 7.30 Report coverage of the Daguragu elections by secret ballot. In this scheme the subsection or skin system is used with the addition of a new subsection called 'Kartiya' or 'whitefella'. Both males and females of each skin nominate their candidates. All the male residents vote for a candidate in each of the nine male skins and the females do likewise. In all, there are 18 councillors who hold office for two years. Election to the council is first past the post and candidates must have lived in the community government area for a minimum of six months.

Pularumpi on the other hand is similar to conventional local government. There are 11 positions on council and a conventional election is held with ballot boxes and papers. The 11 candidates receiving the highest number of votes win office and can hold office for up to three years. Candidates for council must have lived in the community government area for a minimum of five years (Figure 5).

This flexibility in structure and process is community driven. A scheme is only drafted after at least ten community residents have applied in writing to the Minister. There is no

coercion from OLG field staff as to what a scheme should contain. Indeed, field officers assist community residents through many drafts of their scheme before it is finalised. Where possible, discussion at community meetings is assisted through an interpreter. Plain English versions of each draft scheme assist comprehension and, of late, the Parliamentary draftsman has been visiting communities to promote mutual understanding on the finer points of incorporation. The Office of Local Government has initiated translation of some schemes into an appropriate local language. Prospective communities are encouraged to visit existing community government councils, to 'get it from the horse's mouth', so to speak.

Figure 5 Examples of variation in community government schemes

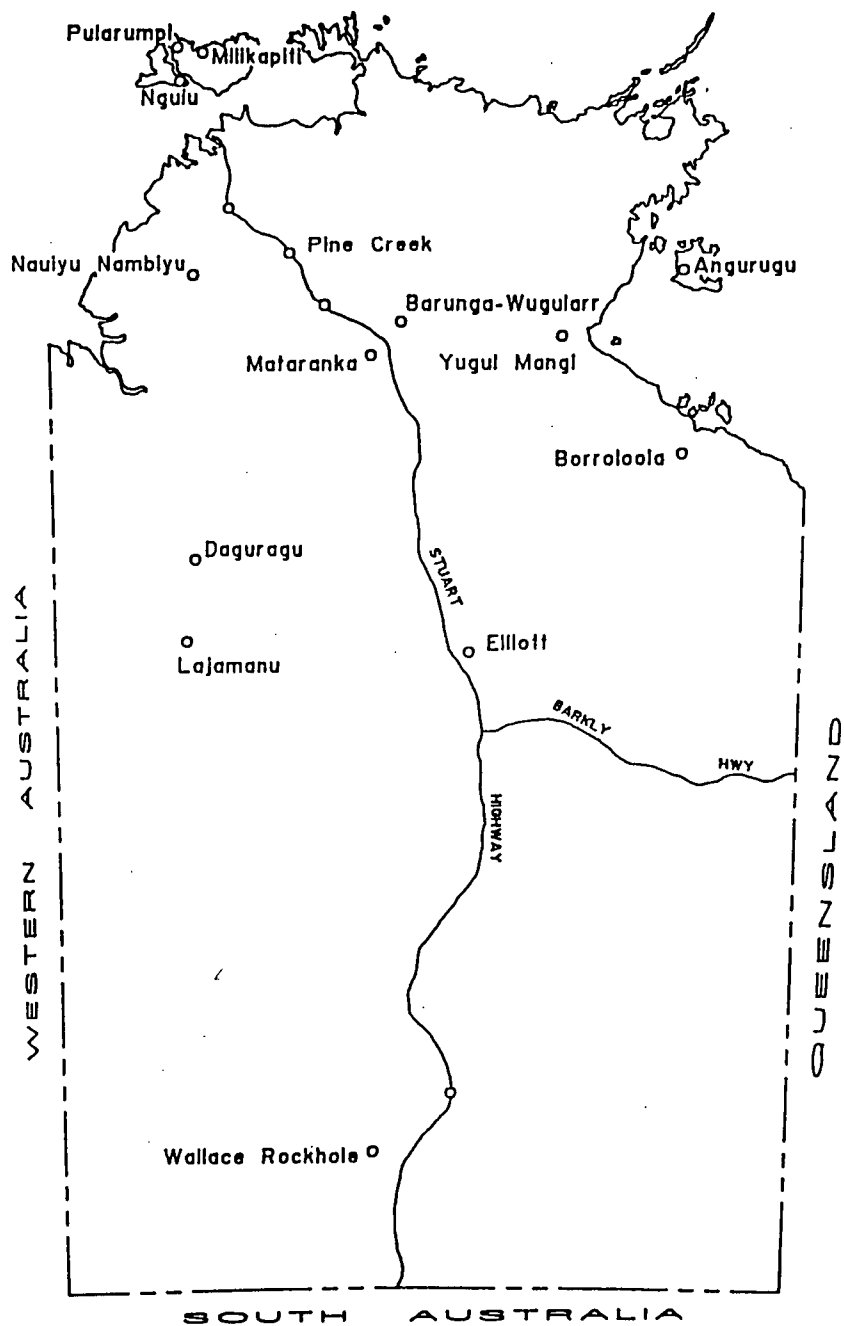
	Wards	Members	Term	Residence
Borroloola	5	10	3 yrs	3 months
Barunga/Wugularr	2 towns	15	2 yrs	language group 12 months
Yugul Mangi	7 language	14	2 yrs	language group 12 months
Daguragu/ Kalkaringi	9 skin groups	18	2 yrs	6 months
Pularumpi	-	11	3 yrs	5 years

Is community government working?

Developing a community government scheme is not necessarily easy for community residents. In addressing such matters as name of council, residential qualifications, boundaries, nomination and election procedures, election of office bearers, selection of council functions and location for the council office, many differences of opinion emerge. Some of these touch on old wounds and generate deep feeling in the ensuing debate. However, partly through the process of participative community consultation, partly due to the flexibility in the legislation and partly through the advice and patient assistance of OLG field staff, final schemes receive general community support. In fact, it is a statutory requirement that the Minister satisfy himself 'that a substantial majority' of residents is in favour of the scheme before he approves it. He does this after assessing progress reports and in many cases by visiting the community himself, and finally after considering any submissions made to him following exhibition of the final draft scheme. It is worth noting that there have been no submissions with respect to the 14 schemes approved so far! (Figure 6).

The Northern Territory government assists all municipal and community government areas with establishment grants so that each council is able to perform its chosen functions at a level commensurate with its needs. With community government councils, establishment grants have been made for office extensions, furniture, communications equipment and municipal plant. These grants are in addition to annual operational subsidies from the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments as recommended by the Local Government Grants Commission, and capital grants for upgrading and maintaining plant and equipment.

Figure 6 Establishment of community government in 1988



Source: Office of NT Local Government

Community government councils in the Northern Territory provide an essential operational and developmental agency for their residents. They should operate well and the evidence to date is that despite entrenched disadvantages they do. All 14 community government councils enthusiastically engage in the recognised major roles of local government, namely as:

- an informed and responsible decision-maker,
- a provider and coordinator of services,
- a catalyst and resourceful initiator of local effort, and
- a representative of the local community to other governments (Task Force of the Joint Officers' Committee 1987, 12).

You may recognise the similarity between those roles of local government and the characteristics of community development quoted by Jane Stanley (see Stanley J, this volume).

With these attributes, community government councils are well placed to provide opportunities throughout the Northern Territory for local enterprise and regional development. Many communities currently undertake construction and maintenance contracts and their potential as bases for further development, outside the two main population centres, has been recognised (NT Government 1988b, 8 and 27).

Community government association

Community government councils have formed their own Community Government Association (CGA) which in turn has been granted full status as a member of the Australian Local Government Association. This gives each council access to the same membership benefits enjoyed by municipalities and shires throughout Australia.

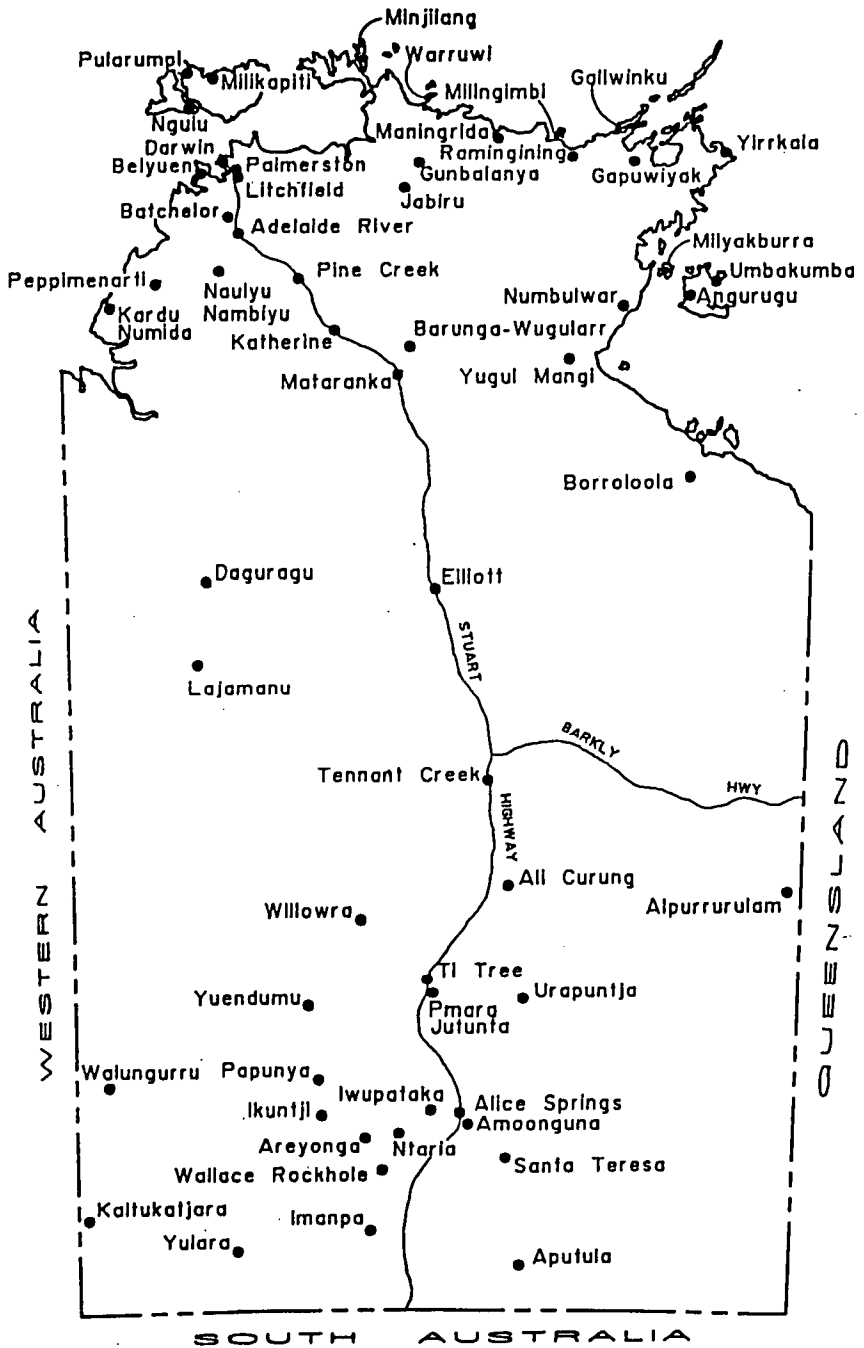
The CGA plays an active role in representing its members to governments. At the Commonwealth level it has successfully applied for and coordinated a Local Government Development Plan project to identify computer accounting systems for communities. At state level, it has for example contributed to the development of a new local government land tenure policy approved by government on 17 February 1989. Of its own initiative, the Association has launched an 'Innovations in Community Government' program to promote initiatives in community government.

There appears to be considerable potential for the CGA to further promote the interests of its member communities.

Models for the future

Most of the candidates for community government to date have been single communities and the community government map would look something like Figure 7 if all of the current major communities were incorporated as single towns. The Barunga/Wugularr scheme is an exception to the single town model, incorporating the two towns of Barunga and Beswick, as well as Eva Valley. Similarly, the Daguragu scheme incorporates both Daguragu and Kalkaringi. In the near future, the two towns of Adelaide River and Batchelor will incorporate under the Coomalie community government scheme covering

Figure 7 Proposed Northern Territory local community government areas



Source: NT Office of Local Government

approximately 1434 sq km. This type of regional or shire incorporation of more than one town may well increase as the economies of scale in regional amalgamations become both attractive and functional.

One possible catalyst for the regional or shire form of incorporation under community government may well be the move to separate land councils. Although local government has no functional jurisdiction in the area of land rights, there appears to be emerging a correlation between community government and separate land councils. A nexus between autonomous community government, either alone or collectively, and separate land councils is not illogical. Just as communities are averse to the provision and administration of their municipal services from remote bureaucracies, they are similarly averse to land issues being administered centrally. Just as importantly, because remote Aboriginal communities have limited numbers of people qualified in managerial and administrative skills, it makes sense to pool available resources for such local functions as local (community) government and local land administration matters. The precedent exists for such arrangements. The Bathurst and Melville Island lands are administered under a separate land council, the Tiwi Land Council, and the three Aboriginal communities have adopted community government schemes. The president of the land council is also president of his community government council!

Not all Territory Aborigines can avail themselves of coincident land and community government administrations because of the limited application of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. In the case of the Pintubi, whose lands straddle the Northern Territory/Western Australia border, the Commonwealth legislation is not imposed on the western constituents. However, it is quite feasible for a community government arrangement which could provide coordinated local government services to the Pintubi residents. A joint scheme could well see 'pooled' resources and operations funded through both the Western Australia and Northern Territory local government grants commissions.

Other variants of the regional model have been proposed. One long-standing suggestion is that the whole of the Northern Territory be incorporated under local government by extending existing municipal boundaries of Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs (Figure 8). That could see the end of community government as such. It is a subdivision which takes little cognisance of geographic, cultural, social, economic and other variables and probably deserves little more attention. Similarly, the proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Communities (ATSIC) boundaries in the Territory (Figure 9) have all the angular characteristics of uninformed and insensitive draftmanship. One might just as well support Graeme Campbell's proposal to divide the Northern Territory up between Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia and extend their respective local government systems! These three models share equal billing as being most unlikely to eventuate.

On a more realistic basis, proposals for small communities to enter existing schemes or for small, non contiguous communities to incorporate on the basis of community of interest, warrant further consideration. An example of the first proposal is for Duck Creek, with a population of 170, to enter the Barunga-Wugularr scheme. Duck Creek is only 20 km downstream from the scheme boundary. There are traditional ties between all three communities and since it is unlikely that Duck Creek could incorporate in its own right, amalgamation would provide some mutual benefits.

On a broader scale, it has been suggested that Jurnkurakurr Resource Centre in Tennant Creek might incorporate its several outstation centres throughout the eastern Barkly. This proposal 'shocked the socks off' traditional local government practitioners when first

Figure 8 Extension of municipal government

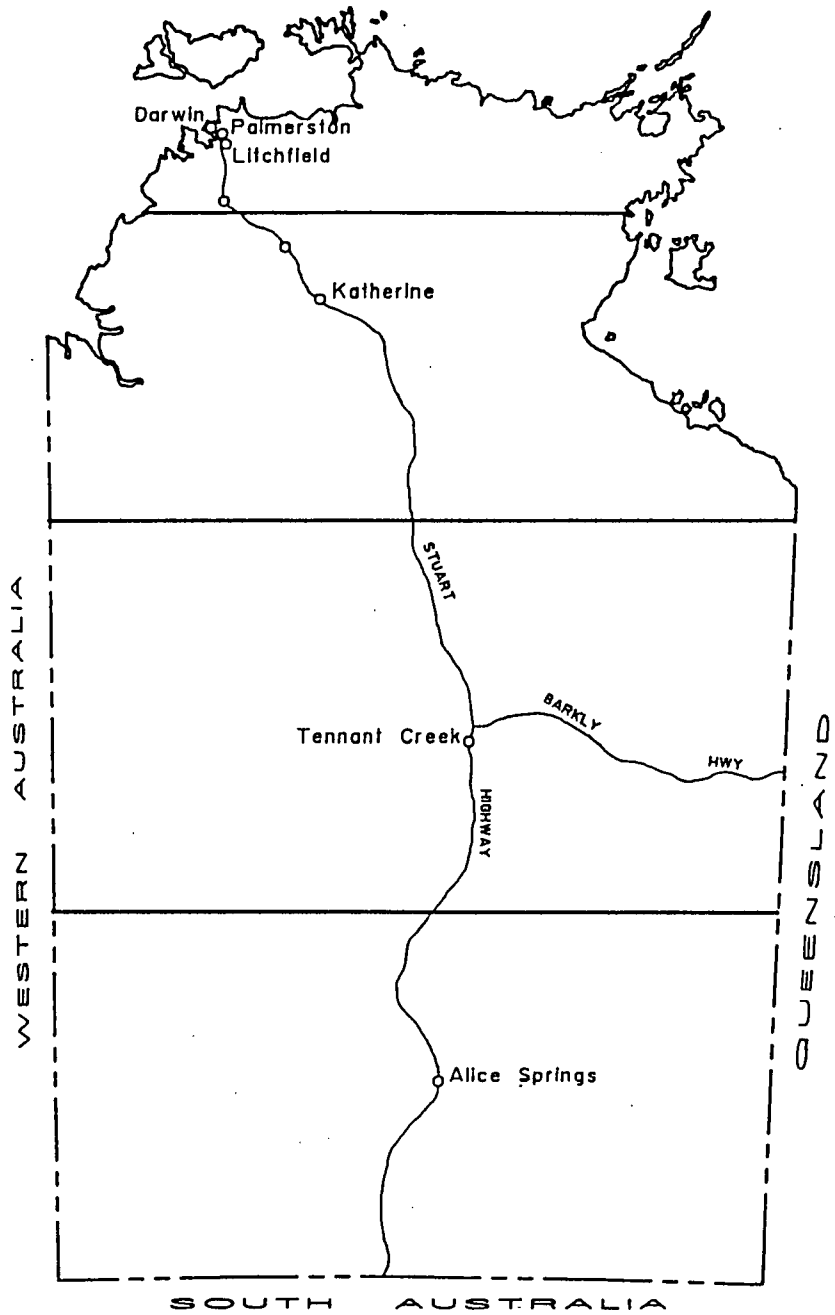
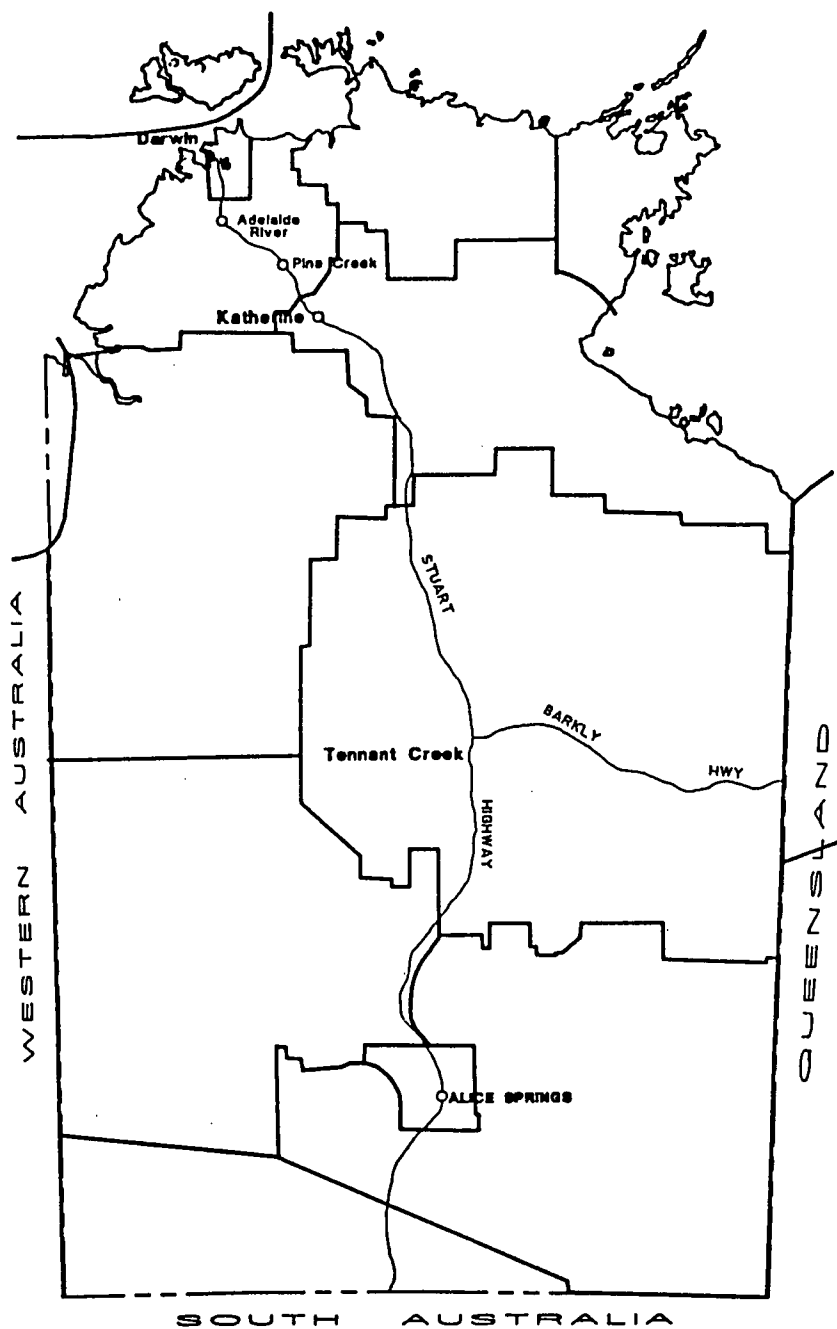


Figure 9 Northern Territory ATSIC boundaries



mooted but this might be a good reason for pressing ahead with it. There is a traditional community of interest between the Barkly locations which have about 1,000 residents in total. A single administration based in a resource town could provide municipal services and the wide range of benefits available through local government incorporation to many remote centres which could not expect local government incorporation on an individual basis.

This proposal is not so far fetched when compared with the existing Yugul Mangi scheme which covers eight non-contiguous areas (Figure 10).

Aboriginal Local Government

As stated earlier, the Northern Territory *Local Government Act* does not discriminate on racial grounds. Community government is not aimed principally at Aboriginal communities, but at small/remote communities whatever their characteristics. In the past 12 months, there has been a move to incorporate some Aboriginal communities as councils under Part Three of the Commonwealth *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976* (1537-1574). This is an unfortunate development which can only lead to a delay in the provision of legitimate local government to the communities concerned and further dissipates the limited resources available for the betterment of Aboriginal people.

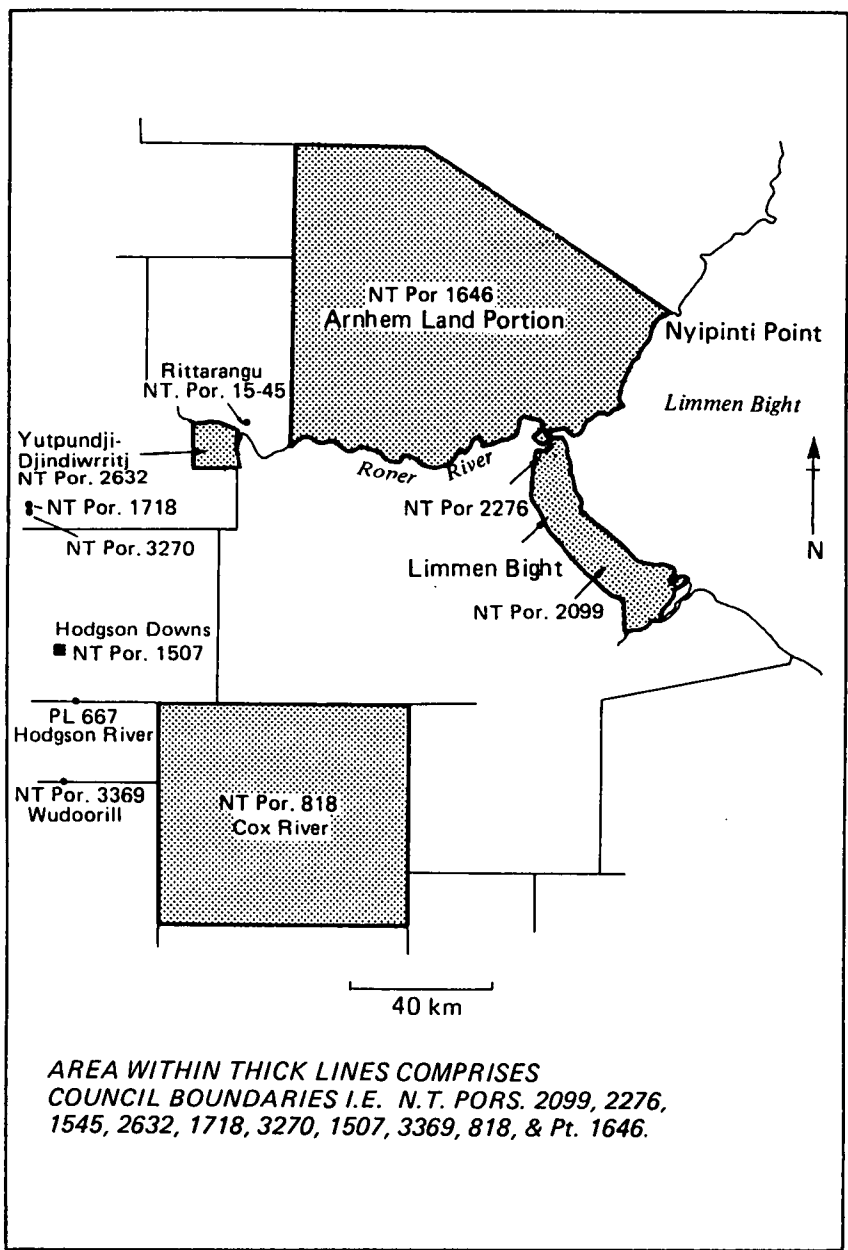
A detailed comparison of the Northern Territory *Local Government Act* and the Commonwealth *Councils and Associations Act* reveals that the latter is quite inappropriate as a statute for local government incorporation. It is interesting to note that in the 12 years since its enactment no council has been constituted under Part Three of the Commonwealth Act. It was never intended as an alternative to local government.

In his second reading speech (House of Representatives Parliamentary Debates, 3 June 1976, 2947), the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs emphasised that 'there will be no conflict between the establishment of an Aboriginal council in that area and any future proposals for the development of local government'. The Act states that the Registrar may constitute an area as an Aboriginal council only after he is satisfied, inter alia, that the area 'is not, and does not include, an area to which local government extends, or to which it is proposed to extend local government, by or under a law of a State or Territory'. Further, the Act requires that the Minister may not direct the constitution of a council, in an area covered, or intended to be covered by local government, without prior consultation with the state/territory local government Minister.

Given that the Commonwealth Act is racially discriminatory and heavily paternalistic (by-laws apply only to Aboriginal residents and are subject to scrutiny and approval by both houses of Parliament) it is quite inappropriate to the Northern Territory local government setting.

It is difficult to imagine the Commonwealth government approving the constitution of an Aboriginal council under its Act. It would involve the first tier of government entering into this sphere of second tier government responsibility - a proposition which was soundly rejected by the Australian people at the referendum of 3 September 1988. It would present a federal government with the difficult task of administering Commonwealth local government responsibilities through two of its administrations, Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Immigration, Local government and Ethnic Affairs. Not to mention what the Commonwealth and/or the Territory would then do to provide local government services to non-Aboriginal residents in such areas. It would be contrary to the Commonwealth and Northern Territory government's respective

Figure 10 Yugul Mangi community government scheme



Source: Northern Territory of Australia 1988

policies of mainstreaming, as new and overlapping funding and staffing arrangements would have to be established. Apart from the inappropriateness of separate Aboriginal local government under the Commonwealth Act, the challenge to the government in becoming controversially innovative in both the Aboriginal affairs and local government portfolios in an election year, if ever, is hard to comprehend.

Part Three of the Commonwealth legislation is anachronistic and the Northern Territory Minister has requested that it be repealed. It is understood this has also been requested by South Australia. Its continuing existence provides a medium for mischievous intervention by individuals and organisations who disguise their ulterior objectives behind a move for pseudo-local government at the expense of the majority of Territory Aborigines in the communities concerned. Such action runs counter to the agreement of the Local Government Ministers' Conference, which includes the Commonwealth Minister for Local Government, endorsing Aboriginal participation within existing local government.

Conclusion

Community government had its genesis in the desire of Northern Territory people to provide for local government decision making and service delivery to be undertaken at the community level. From a slow start and through a thorough and extensive consultation period, 16 (or more than one third of) likely communities have gained incorporation under custom designed community government schemes. Almost 85 per cent of the major communities in the remote areas of the Territory have to date applied for or are considering community government.

Community government is available to all small towns in the Territory with a viable population and administrative structure, whether they are Aboriginal communities or 'open' towns. The local government legislation is sufficiently flexible to provide schemes which meet individual community needs including traditional and cultural requirements of Aborigines. Alternative pseudo-local government incorporation under the Commonwealth *Councils and Associations Act* is inappropriate because it is racially based, discriminatory, paternalistic and limited in application.

Changes in population composition, distribution and attitudes towards local government could lead to regional arrangements which build on community of interest and take advantage of economies of scale. Community government accommodates such changes and is providing a viable form of local government and focus for community development for Territorians in small towns well into the future.

Appendix 1
Office of Local Government
Comparison of community government schemes in the Northern Territory

	LAJAMANU	ANGURUGU	MILKAPITI	PULARUMPI	MATARANKA	ELLIOTT DISTRICT	WALLACE ROCKHOLE
Date of Establishment	16.05.80	27.08.82	17.06.83	03.10.84	23.05.85	06.11.85	29.10.86
Area Km2	7313		27		2.5	0.3 plus Town	3.5
Community Government Area Type	AL Plus	Aboriginal Freehold	Aboriginal Freehold	Aboriginal Freehold	Town	Town	Aboriginal Land (AL)
Population	605	613	412	260	140	422	100
Number of Councillors	9	12	11	11	7	7	8
Councillors per Population	67.22	61.08	37.45	23.63	20.00	60.28	12.5
Nomination Basis	N/A	Clan Groups	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Representation Basis	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Notice of Elections	8 weeks	8 weeks	8 weeks	8 weeks	28 days	28 days	28 days
Term of Office	1 year	3 years	2 years	3 years	4 years	3 years	2 years
Election Voting Procedure	Secret Ballot by Name	Secret Ballot by Name	Secret Ballot by Name	Open Ballot by Photo	Secret Ballot by Name	Secret Ballot by Name	Secret Ballot by Name
Vote Counting Method	FPP	FPP	FPP	FPP	Prefer.	Prefer.	FPP
Day of Election	Council Decision	Council Decision	Council Decision	Council Decision	Saturday	Saturday	Thursday
Hours of Voting	8 - 6	8 - 6	8 - 6 3 periods of 2 hours	8 - 1	8 - 6	8 - 1	8 - 1

	LAJAMANU	ANGURUGU	MILIKAPITI	PULARUMPI	MATARANKA	ELLIOTT DISTRICT	WALLACE ROCKHOLE
Procedure for Tied Ballot	Candidate Draw Lots	Candidate Draw Lots	Candidate Draw Lots	Candidate Draw Lots	NIL	NIL	Clerk Draws Lots
Election of President	Council Members	Electors	Electors	Council Members	Electors	Electors	Electors
Election of Vice President	N/A	Electors	Electors	N/A	Council Members	Council Members	Council Members
Waiver of By-Election	4 months before next election	8 months before next election	4 months before next election	6 months before next election	1 year before next election	1 year before next election	6 months before next election
Method of Filling Vacancy	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Residency of Voters	3 months out of last 6	6 months	6 months out of	6 months	3 months	NT Roll	NT Roll plus N/R T/O
Residency of Councillors	5 yrs or 5 out of last 10	6 months	5 years	5 years	6 months	6 months	6 months or N/R T/O
Meeting Frequency	Weekly	2 Weeks	2 Weeks	Monthly	2 Weeks	Monthly	2 Months
Voting at Meetings	Council By-laws	Unanimous of Members Present	Majority of Members Present	Unanimous of Members Present	Majority In Office	Majority In Office	Majority In Office
Council Meetings Open/Closed	Council By-law	Closed	Open	Council By-law	Open	Open	Open
Notification of Special Meeting	24 hours	2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days
Quorum	Council By-law	6	7	7	Majority (4)	Majority (4)	Majority (5) from each Ward
Specific Functions and Powers (sec. 270 LGA)	a,b,c,d,f,g,h,k,m,n,r,	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,j,k,m,n,p,r	a,b,c,e,f,g,h,k,m,n,p,q,r	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,k,m,n,p,r	a,b,c,e,f,g,h,k,m,n,p,r,	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,k,m,n,p,r	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,j,k,m,n,p,q,r

	BARUNGA WUGULAR	NGUIU	BORROLOOLA	PINE CREEK	YUGUL MANGI	NAUIYU NAMBYU	DAGURAGU
Date of Establishment	29.10.86	20.02.87	08.04.87	15.05.87	25.05.88	01.06.88	14.10.88
Area Km2	3783	2071	11.3	400	12269	42.62	43.2
Community Government Area Type	ALT Plus	Whole Island Aboriginal Freehold	Town	Town and Surrounds	Excisions, Aboriginal Land & a Pastoral Property	Aboriginal & Church Lease hold Land	Town and Aboriginal Freehold
Population	742	1,111	659	500	800	280	630
Number of Councillors	15	18	10	7	14	7	18
Councillors per Population	49.46	69.45	65.9	71.42	57.14	40.00	35.00
Nomination Basis	Language Groups and 2 Wards	No Nominations	5 Wards	N/A	Language Groups	N/A	Skin Group
Representation Basis	Language Groups and 2 Wards	Four Language Groups	5 Wards	N/A	Language Groups	N/A	Skin Group
Notice of Elections	28 days	28 days	28 days	28 days	1 month	28 days	28 days
Term of Office	2 years	2 years	3 years	3 years	3 years	2 years	2 years
Election Voting Procedure	Secret Ballot by name	Secret Ballot for Anyone Eligible In Skin Group	Secret Ballot by Name	Secret Ballot by Name	Consensus within language Group	Secret Ballot by Name	Secret Ballot by Name and Sex
Vote Counting Method	11 X FPP from Language Groups and 4 X FPP from Any Language Groups	FPP	FPP	Preference	Consensus	FPP	FPP
Day of Election	Thursday	Tuesday Councillors Wednesday President	Thursday	Saturday	All of September	Wednesday	Saturday
Hours of Voting	8 - 4	8 - 1	8 - 6	8 - 1	N/A	8 - 1	8 - 1

	BARUNGA WUGULAR	NGUIU	BORROLOOLA	PINE CREEK	YUGUL MANGI	NAIYU NAMBYU	DAGURAGU
Procedure for Tied Ballot	Draw Lots arranged by Clerk	Draw Lots arranged by Clerk	Draw Lots arranged by Clerk	NIL	NIL	Draw Lots arranged by Clerk	Draw Lots arranged by Clerk
Election of President	Council Members	Council Members	Council Members	electors	Council Members	Council Members	Council Members
Election of Vice President	Council Members	Council Members	Council Members	Council Members	Council Members	Council Members	Council Members
Waiver of By-Election	6 months before next election	6 months before next election	6 months before next election	6 months before next election	6 months before next election	6 months before next election	6 months before next election
Method of Filling Vacancy	A	A Councils B President/ Vice President	B	B	B	B	B
Residency of Voters	NT Roll plus 12 months	NT Roll plus N/R T/O	NT Roll plus 3 months	NT Roll	12 months	6 months	1 month
Residency of Councillors	NT Roll plus 12 months	5 years and N/R T/O	NT Roll plus 3 months	NT Roll plus 12 months	12 months	3 years	6 months
Meeting Frequency	Monthly	2 Months	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly
Voting at Meetings	Majority in Office	Majority in Office	Majority in Office	Majority in Office	Majority in Office	Majority in Office	Majority in Office
Council Meetings Open/Closed	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open
Notification of Special Meeting	2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days	2 days
Quorum	Majority plus 1	7	Majority (5)	Majority (4)	Majority (8)	Majority (4)	Majority (10)
Specific Functions and Powers (sec. 270 LGA)	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h, j,k,p,q,r	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h, j,k,m,n,p,q,r	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h, j,k,m,n,p,q,r	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h, j,k,m,n,p,q,r	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h, j,k,m,n,p,q,r	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h, j,k,m,n,p,q,r	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h, j,k,m,n,p,q,r

Notes:

Community Government Area Type
Vote Counting Method
Method of Filling Vacancy

Residency of Votes

Date prepared: 4 January 1989
Prepared by: Doug Fitzjohn

AL = Aboriginal Land
FPP = First past the post
A = Appointed by Council resolution
B = By election to be held
N/R = Non residents
T/O = Traditional owner

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FINANCING LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SMALL TOWNS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Peter Nichols

This paper will review the recent history and present situation regarding the financing of local government services in small towns in the Northern Territory of Australia. I will take small towns to be those of 5 000 people or fewer.

The diverse methods of financing local government services will be addressed, covering both the differences between towns themselves and recent program changes of the two levels of government. Similarities and differences between the Northern Territory situation and that in other parts of tropical Australia will also be mentioned. Possible future scenarios will be touched upon.

Definitions

The topic of this paper requires some clarification by way of definition. Local government, or local government functions, can mean different things to different people, based primarily on their location and experience. For example, in most parts of Australia, the public utility services of water, sewerage and electricity are a local government function. This is not the case in the Northern Territory.

Another instance is housing. The Australian experience is that housing is principally a state government function, with some local government involvement, often for special needs groups. There is also Commonwealth involvement. The extent of local government provision or involvement in housing services varies according to socio/economic location, and also with time, especially related to the national economic situation. Nevertheless, local government involvement in Australia is generally far less than, say in England where local government is the primary housing agency and in fact housing is often the largest single functional component of local government budgets, at around 50 per cent of expenditure (Hawkins 1988).

Local government functions in smaller Northern Territory towns vary, and depend on the town's local government status. Definitions will be given of six different types of status, four of which will be considered in detail.

In the Northern Territory, schedule 2 of the *Local Government Act 1985* now lists 54 functions of municipal councils. It comprises Table 1.

Under section 84, the Administrator may declare that each municipal council has such functions as are identified. These declarations have not yet been made for the five longer established municipal councils, of which only Tennant Creek falls within my ambit of 'small towns'. Local government services within the Tennant Creek municipality are therefore those performed by the council under the transitional provisions of the present Local Government Act, and are all of those in schedule 5 of the former, now repealed, Local Government Act.

Table 1
Municipal council functions, Northern Territory

General public services

- 1 Fire protection
- 2 Local emergency services
- 3 Animal control
- 4 Animal impounding
- 4A Control of public places

Health services

- 5 Infants and mothers
- 6 Preventative services
- 7 Health inspection
- 8 Ambulance

Social security and welfare services

- 9 Child care
- 10 Aged and disabled persons

Housing and community services

- 11 Cemeteries
- 12 Council houses
- 13 Aged and disabled persons homes
- 14 Stormwater drainage
- 15 Foreshore protection
- 16 Land development schemes
- 17 Public conveniences
- 18 Sanitation and garbage
- 19 Street cleaning
- 20 Town planning

Recreation and related cultural services

- 21 Halls and public buildings
- 22 Swimming pools
- 23 Sport and recreation
- 24 Parks, gardens, reserves and cycle tracks
- 25 Libraries and museums
- 26 National estate

Roadworks - construction

- 27 Roads - sealed
- 28 Roads - unsealed
- 29 Bridges
- 30 Kerb and water table
- 31 Footways
- 32 Traffic control

Roadworks - maintenance

- 33 Roads - sealed
- 34 Roads - unsealed

35	Bridges
36	Kerb and water table
37	Footways
38	Traffic control

Other services

39	Street lighting
40	Parking - off street
41	Parking - on street
42	Aerodromes
43	Tourism
44	Caravan parks
45	Building
46	Markets
47	Saleyards
48	Environmental control
49	Zoos
50	Public entertainment
51	Municipal administration
52	Public transport
53	Commercial undertakings

The 16 small towns incorporated as community government councils, have the functions set out in the individual community government scheme. They are not necessarily the same from one community government council to another. Table 2 lists the local government functions of the most recent community government council, Daguragu. It should be noted that with both municipal and community governments, local government functions are discretionary, not mandatory. It is a matter for the council of the day to determine whether or not a particular function will be provided, and at what level.

Table 2
Daguragu community government council functions

The Council may perform the following functions:

- (a) the establishment, development, operation and maintenance of communication facilities for the community government area and in so doing the council may enter into a contract with the Australian Telecommunications Commission to act, for reward, as the agent of the Commission;
- (b) the establishment and maintenance of parks, gardens and recreational areas and carrying out landscaping and other associated works;
- (c) the establishment and maintenance of sports facilities, libraries, a cinema, community halls and public toilet and ablution blocks;
- (d) the provision of a service for the collection and disposal of garbage, the maintenance of a particular place where garbage is to be dumped, and the control of litter generally;

- (e) the provision and maintenance of sanitation facilities and the removal of health hazards;
- (f) the provision and maintenance of sewerage, drainage and water supply facilities;
- (g) the supply of electricity by contracting with a government department or statutory authority responsible for providing electricity, and acting, for reward, as an agent in respect of the collection of electricity charges;
- (h) the provision of adult education and vocational and other training;
- (j) the provision and maintenance of housing for residents and their families on such terms and conditions as the council thinks fit (this clarifies a misunderstanding expressed when a questioner from the audience stated incorrectly that community government councils cannot perform the housing function);
- (k) the provision of relief work for unemployed persons;
- (m) the promotion and provision of community welfare, health and care facilities for all age groups within the community government area and the provision of appropriately trained staff to provide counselling or temporary assistance;
- (n) the maintenance of a cemetery;
- (p) the control or prohibition of animals within the community government area;
- (q) the development and maintenance of roads within the community government area (including the provision of street lighting and traffic control devices) and, for reward, the development and maintenance of roads outside the community government area;
- (r) the maintenance of the Kalkguring airstrip and facilities related thereto;
- (s) the hiring out, for reward, of any plant, appliance or equipment belonging to the council and the repair and maintenance, for reward, of any plant, appliance or equipment not owned by the council;
- (t) the contracting of works projects, within or without the community government area;
- (u) the establishment and operation of pastoral and commercial enterprises;
- (w) the selling of petroleum products;
- (y) the establishment and maintenance of a fire-fighting service, including the acquisition of property and equipment and training of personnel for the service, and the protection of the community government area from fire;
- (z) the promotion and development of tourist attractions and facilities within the community government area;
- (za) the production of and selling of artifacts and souvenirs;
- (zb) the management and control of sites of historic interest;

- (zc) the maintenance and preservation of Aboriginal law and custom; and
- (zd) the support and encouragement of artistic, cultural and sporting activities.

The third category comprises the many more small towns in the Northern Territory with what are generally known as 'association' councils. Thirty six of these are recognised as local governing bodies for the purposes of receiving untied local government financial assistance from both the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments. The fact that these association councils are recognised for local government funding counters Dr Mowbray's claims that the Northern Territory government pressurises Aboriginal communities into community government. The government could readily legislate to force community government on all communities and could have done this at any time in nearly 11 years since self government. When the idea of declared local governing bodies was generated in early 1986, it was the Commonwealth which proposed the three year 'sunset' eligibility for these association councils. This is why the 'sunset' provision is identified in an appendix to the 1986 Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission Report. Subsequently, the Commonwealth moved away from its idea, and the three year limit has been dropped. The list of the 56 local governing bodies in the Northern Territory is evident from the reports of the Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission 1986 to 1988. Of these 36, 33 are incorporated under the Northern Territory Associations Incorporations Act 1963 and three are incorporated as Aboriginal associations under the Commonwealth's Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976. It should be emphasised that these three, Alpurrurulum (Lake Nash), Kaltukatjara (Docker River) and Walanguru (Kintore) are incorporated as associations under this Commonwealth legislation; none of the small towns in the Northern Territory are incorporated as an Aboriginal council under Part Three of that Commonwealth Act, and I believe that there have been no such incorporations anywhere in Australia.

I understand one or two applications for such incorporation are current in the Northern Territory at the moment. Some people see a conflict between local government status and this Commonwealth council incorporation. The Commonwealth Minister of the day in 1976, Ian Viner, made it clear in his second reading speech that the Bill was worded to 'ensure that there will be no conflict between the Bill and any future proposals for the development of local government' (CPD,R, 3 June 1976, 2947). There are also special consultative provisions in the legislation relating to incorporation where local government exists or is proposed. A major limitation of an Aboriginal council is that its membership and controls are limited to Aboriginal people. This means non-Aboriginal people within the area are not bound by by-laws. Indeed, it is argued that such a limited representation cannot constitute even functional local government, and it clearly is not statutory local government which is a matter for the states/Territory. Dr Mowbray had said in response to my question that this was a limitation and there might be a need for legislative amendment so that non-Aboriginal people could be included in an Aboriginal council. If this were to happen, such an Aboriginal council would then be ineligible for enterprise funding from the Aboriginal Development Commission, following the definition of its Act of 'Aboriginal body' and the Ralkon decision in South Australia. These incompatibilities in the Commonwealth legislation further demonstrate its difficulty in endeavouring to usurp states' rights of local government. Issues of Aboriginal participation and equity in local government were addressed in a paper of that name from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (1987). The Local Government Ministers of Australia and New Zealand, including Senator Margaret Reynolds, considered this paper at their annual conference in Brisbane in June last year. The conference decided to promote and achieve many of the recommendations of the paper, provided it was within the existing framework

of local government. However, a full examination of those issues could constitute a paper in its own right.

My fourth category of small towns in the Northern Territory comprises those places, generally smaller Aboriginal settlements, which are not declared 'local governing bodies'. They receive various forms of Territory government operational funding under its minor communities program.

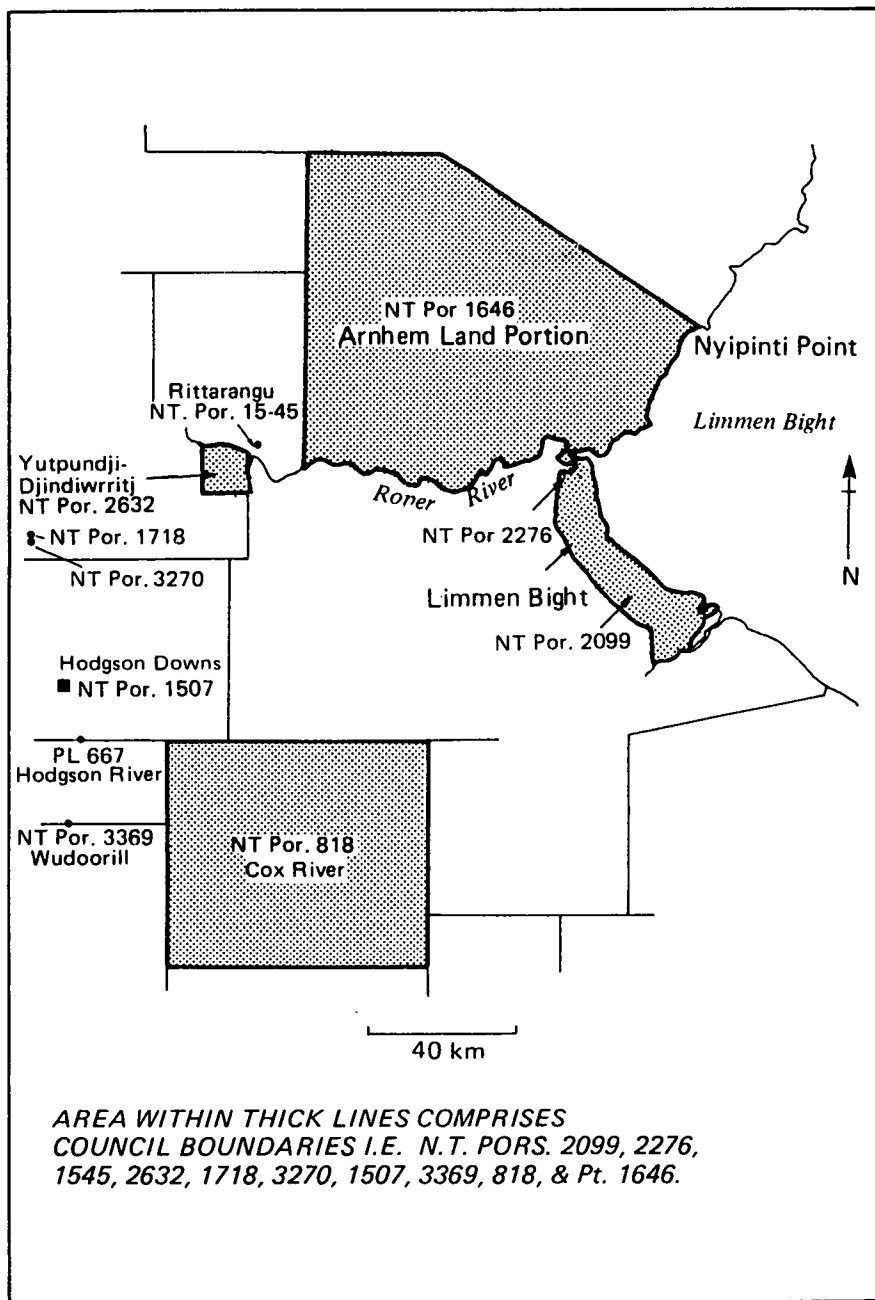
The fifth category of small town in the Northern Territory is the special purpose town, generally created by specific legislation. The most obvious ones are Nhulunbuy, Jabiru and Alyangula, all mining towns; and Yulara, a tourist resort with its local government within the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Conservation. The 'normalisation' of the small towns in this group into mainstream local government provisions is a matter under consideration. The Western Australian experience in 'normalisation' of its northern mining towns may provide a model. However, there are many complexities over and above the Western Australian experience which include: that the Northern Territory does not own uranium mineral rights; that there are Aboriginal land rights involved; that the Territory has a different status as regards the federation compared with Western Australia; that there is no existing mainstream local government; that world heritage areas are involved in most of the Northern Territory locations; that Commonwealth national parks are involved in two of the four Territory locations, and so on. Each of this fifth group has wide differences from the others in terms of financing in local government, and because of their individual nature will not be addressed further in this paper.

A sixth category to some people is town camps, but these are not towns and are within the existing local government structure, and for this reason, they will not be considered further in this paper.

Additionally, it should be noted that there is no Territory wide coverage of local government administration, as there is in the other states in northern Australia. Generally in the Northern Territory, the local government council (or other body providing local government services) covers only a fairly small area which generally encompasses the population centre. There are, of course, exceptions. At Tennant Creek, the municipal boundary covers less than the population centre and a boundary extension there is likely in conjunction with the finalisation of the Waramungu land claim. On the other hand, the Yugul Mangi community government council area at Ngukurr on the Roper River covers an extensive area, and in a non-contiguous way. Figure 1 shows the boundary of the Yugul Mangi community government area.

In summary, it is evident that the range of local government services provided in small towns in the Northern Territory varies widely. It can be seen that the Northern Territory array of local government provision models has both similarities and differences from the remainder of northern Australia.

Figure 1 Yugul Mangi community government area



Source: NT Office of Local Government

Sources of local government finance

Generally, the sources of local government finance in the Northern Territory are similar to those in the rest of Australia. They are rates, charges, general and specific purpose grants and loans. Each of these sources will be dealt with in more detail, as they vary according to the four groups of small towns defined and also as regards towns on Aboriginal land.

The issue of the financial relationships between the three spheres of government, including the states' unused power to raise personal income tax, is complex and changing. The relationship has been addressed by many authors, including the Grants Commission (1975), the Advisory Council for Inter-Government Relations (1981, 1982, 1985), Morse (1983), Hawke (1979, 1988), Jones (1977, 1981) and the report of the National Inquiry into Local Government Finance (Self Report 1985).

Rates

Turning firstly to rates, the normal Australian local government experience is that rates are raised on the valuation of land. This may be on either unimproved, improved or annual (rental) values, or on combinations. Various other parameters, including local, differential and minimum rates, are also involved. Nevertheless, the value of land is taken as being the fairest way of local government raising revenue for the services required by its community.

That is generally the situation in the Northern Territory to date. Municipal councils have the choice of raising rates on any of the valuations of land provided by the Valuer-General. To date, no council in the Northern Territory has used improved capital value, which many argue is the most equitable basis of rating, particularly in commercial centres. The general rate by a municipal council may be raised on a single percentage rate throughout the municipal area, or it may be raised on a differential basis. The differential rate can be on a specified ward, town, part of a municipality including a lot, or a zone within the meaning of the *Planning Act* (section 114(2), *Local Government Act*).

This provides a great deal of flexibility to a municipal council. In 1988/89, the Katherine Town Council has used this differential rating method to impose what is commonly known as a 'flat per parcel' rate in its recently extended rural area. Each of the parcels of land in the extended rural area has been made the subject of a separate differential rate to result in a rate payment per assessment of \$150. The 'flat per parcel' rate also operates in the Litchfield Shire from its first financial year starting 1 July 1986 to 30 June 1989, by virtue of rate cap legislation (*Shire of Litchfield [Transitional Rating] Act 1986* and *Shire of Litchfield [Validation of Rates] Act 1987*). By a recent amendment under the *Local Government Amendment Act 1988*, this new rating option has been created so that all municipal councils will have the choice of raising revenue by the 'flat per parcel' rating method from 1 July 1989.

The capacity of community government councils to raise rates is a matter for each community government scheme. Generally, the land-based rating principle is applicable where there is individual title to land. The Mataranka, Elliott District, Pine Creek and Borroloola community government schemes provide for rating on the valuation of land, although this option of local revenue raising has not yet been utilised by any of these councils. The concept of individual land value based rating assessment is not readily applicable to Aboriginal land where the title is communally held by the land trust. No land value based rates have yet been imposed by a community government council on Aboriginal land.

This is not to say that Aboriginal land under the Commonwealth's *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* cannot legally be rated; rates are imposed on such land in the Litchfield Shire. Additionally, advice from the Commonwealth Solicitor-General to the Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs by letter in October 1987 expresses the legal view that such land is rateable. It appears that any rates imposed would be payable by the land trust holding the title. It further appears that under section 26 of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, which states 'a land council shall pay or discharge any administrative expenses, charges or obligations incurred or undertaken by a land trust that holds, or is established to hold, land in its area', that the land council is financially responsible for the payment of rates. Such payments would represent an interesting new indirect special purpose transfer payment from the Commonwealth-funded land councils to the third sphere of government in the Northern Territory.

Land value based rating is not empowered and does not take place in the third and fourth categories, association councils and minor communities. We can therefore pass on to the next category of local government financing, namely charges.

Charges

In the municipal context, charges are generally levied for specific services provided. Generally, these are optional services where residents may decide to use them or not to use them, and where the charges are on a part or total user pays basis. Child care services provide one example where a partial payment towards the costs is usually required from users. The garbage service provides another widespread example of a local government service. It is normally operated on a full user pays basis, where the cost of collection and the operation of the disposal area is fully funded by the domestic garbage charge and tip entry charges on commercial disposal businesses. Dog control should also, in the view of many, be a full user-pays operation. Such local government charges for services rendered are common in municipal government and are similar to the situation in other parts of northern Australia. They exist, but are less common, in community government council areas.

However, the difficult application of land value based rates to raise local government revenue on communally owned Aboriginal land has led to the resurgence of the poll tax concept for local revenue raising. Most community government schemes for communities on Aboriginal land enable a poll or per capita charge to be levied, although no such charges are imposed to date under the statutory provisions of the schemes. However, a number of both community government and association councils impose a non-statutory per capita charge on residents. The level at which this charge is based arbitrarily varies between the small towns concerned. In some instances it is as high as \$20 per adult per week, although some small towns impose a differential charge according to whether the adult concerned is of employed or unemployed status. Additionally, some small towns impose the charge on a per capita basis and others on a per dwelling basis. As a further complexity, in some places to date this service charge has included not only financing for local government services, but also components of housing rent and, at least before individual electricity metering was recently introduced, payments towards privately consumed electricity as distinct from the local government consumption of electricity.

It is therefore not a straightforward comparison to compare revenue raising levels between municipal rates and per capita charges in some small towns. However, on a subjective basis and making some allowances for comparative disposable income after earning capacity and local costs (Young 1984, 98) have been taken into consideration in some of

the remote small towns, it would appear that some of the higher charges are several times in excess of the average residential rate in towns under municipal administration.

The difference between land based rates and per capita charges as distinct from service charges is perhaps best ignored when we are considering financing local government in small towns. Table 3 sets out some data and comparative analysis of revenue raised by the 56 local governing bodies in the Northern Territory on a regional basis. A comparison of columns 6 and 7, or columns 5 and 8, shows that a number of small towns, such as Areyonga, Numbulwar and Tennant Creek, are making a revenue raising effort above the average of the five municipal councils excluding Litchfield. The table includes no weighting for local costs or disabilities of remoteness and freight costs.

Table 3
Revenue raising analysis, Northern Territory local governing bodies

Notes

1. Population 1988/89 (column 2) is a calculated figure of population served, as used by the Grants Commission in its 1988 report.
2. Columns 3 and 4 are from ABS 1986 census information.
3. Average rate (column 5) is the ratio of total municipal rate take (\$16 185 000) divided by total municipal personal gross income (\$1 282 656 735). (Except Litchfield, excluded because its rate is pegged at a low level.)
4. Column 7 information is taken from audited 1986/87 financial statements for local government councils. For other local governing bodies, the figures are the best available.
5. Column 9 is column 2 times the standard per capita rate of \$134.37. The standard rate is total Northern Territory actual rate take (\$17 634 183), divided by the total rate contributing population of 131 239.
6. The table contains no weighting for local cost differences.

1 Name	2 Pop 88/89	3 Per cap inc inc \$'000	4 Gross pers inc 1987 est \$m	5 Ave rate rate %	6 Poss rate rev (5x4) \$'000	7 Actual rate rate \$'000	8 'Tax' rate (7x4) %	9 Per cap std rate rate \$'000
Alice Springs Region								
Alice Sp	25400	15	284.9	1.26	3590	3744	1.31	3413
Amoonguna	258	5	0.8	1.26	10	7	0.85	35
Aputula	216	9	1.3	1.26	16	13	0.97	29
Areyonga	177	7	0.9	1.26	11	14	1.64	24
Ikuntji	174	8	1.0	1.26	12	0	0.00	23
Imanpa	150	9	0.9	1.26	11	0	0.00	20
Iwupataka	72	8	0.3	1.26	4	0	0.00	10
Kaltukatj	280	6	1.1	1.26	14	16	1.38	38
Ntaria	655	7	3.0	1.26	37	2	0.08	88
Papunya	327	9	1.7	1.26	22	4	0.23	44

Pmara Jut	175	10	1.3	1.26	17	0	0.00	24
Santa Ter	483	8	2.2	1.26	27	19	0.89	65
Ti Tree	64	13	0.6	1.26	7	0	0.00	9
Urapuntja	650	7	3.0	1.26	37	0	0.00	87
Wallace R	105	10	0.7	1.26	9	0	0.00	14
Walanguru	448	8	2.0	1.26	25	0	0.00	60
Willowra	393	6	1.5	1.26	19	0	0.00	53
Yuendumu	890	8	4.5	1.26	56	0	0.00	120
Yulara	600	23	12.3	1.26	156	0	0.00	81

Barkly Region

Ali Curung	395	8	2.0	1.26	25	0	0.00	53
Alpurrurul	245	10	1.7	1.26	22	3	0.14	33
Elliott D	525	11	4.0	1.26	51	11	0.27	71
Tennant Ck	3300	14	35.5	1.26	448	633	1.78	443

Darwin Region

Adel R/Bat	850	15	8.4	1.26	105	0	0.00	114
Belyuen	220	8	1.0	1.26	12	4	0.44	30
Darwin	68400	16	807.3	1.26	10172	9940	1.23	9191
Gunbalan	840	8	4.1	1.26	51	1	0.02	113
Jabiru	1400	18	18.0	1.26	226	767	4.28	188
Kardu Num	1106	6	3.5	1.26	44	0	0.00	149
Litchfield	8100	15	90.0	1.26	1133	383	0.43	1088
Maningrida	1280	11	8.6	1.26	109	0	0.00	172
Milikapiti	412	7	2.0	1.26	26	23	1.11	55
Minjilang	130	8	0.7	1.26	9	7	1.04	17
Naiyu Nam	303	9	1.4	1.26	18	20	1.44	41
Nguiu	1250	8	6.3	1.26	79	76	1.21	168
Palmerston	7000	13	60.4	1.26	761	919	1.52	941
Peppimen	185	7	0.8	1.26	11	10	1.21	25
Pularumpi	300	10	1.9	1.26	24	12	0.63	40
Warruwi	333	10	2.3	1.26	29	3	0.11	45

East Arnhem Region

Angurugu	823	5	2.9	1.26	36	0	0.00	111
Galiwinku	1350	7	5.4	1.26	68	0	0.00	181
Gapuwiyak	458	9	2.2	1.26	28	0	0.00	62
Milingimbi	755	11	4.7	1.26	60	8	0.17	101
Milyakbur	60	9	0.4	1.26	5	0	0.00	8
Numbulwar	484	6	2.0	1.26	25	44	2.25	65
Ramingini	471	9	2.5	1.26	31	0	0.00	63
Umbakumba	320	12	2.4	1.26	31	0	0.00	43
Yirrkala	841	10	5.1	1.26	64	0	0.00	113

Katherine Region

Barunga/Wug	857	8	4.1	1.26	52	0	0.00	115
Borroloola	745	9	4.2	1.26	53	0	0.00	100
Daguragu	601	8	2.9	1.26	36	0	0.00	81
Katherine	8200	15	94.5	1.26	1190	949	1.00	1102
Lajamanu	701	9	3.9	1.26	49	0	0.00	94
Mataranka	200	13	1.7	1.26	22	0	0.00	27
Pine Ck	750	14	8.4	1.26	106	0	0.00	101
Yugul Mangi	1061	7	4.3	1.26	54	4	0.09	143
Total	146768		1535.0		19341	17634		19721

Turning now to grants, these will be considered in separate categories of tied and untied, and by source of government, either Commonwealth or Territory. The recent history and current situation will be identified.

Commonwealth untied grants

Nineteen eighty five was the last year of the 'old' arrangements in Commonwealth local government funding. Under paragraphs 34 to 38 of the 1978 Memorandum of Understanding at Self government (Commonwealth of Australia 1978), the Northern Territory shared in the personal income tax sharing system with the Commonwealth in respect only of the then four municipal councils and their population at that time. The \$2.43m was shared amongst those four councils on the recommendations of the NT Local Government Grants Committee (1982).

The National Inquiry into Local Government Finance (Self Report 1985) in October 1985 proposed several changes. Recommendations 23 to 26 were of particular interest to small towns in the Northern Territory. The Local Government Ministers of Australia put forward the positions of their governments at a special conference in Brisbane on 13 December 1985. The then Commonwealth Minister for Local Government, Hon Tom Uren (MHR), announced on 10 April 1986 the Government's new initiatives in this field which led to the enactment of *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act, 1986*, (Cwlth) effective from 1 July of that year.

This Commonwealth legislation impacted on the local government financing of small towns in the Northern Territory in a number of significant ways. Firstly, it required an acceptable Grants Commission, and not the Grants Committee which had been operating previously. The Northern Territory responded with amazing speed by enacting legislation and creating a seven member Grants Commission operational from 1 July 1986 (NT Local Government Grants Commission 1986).

Secondly, the Commonwealth Act extended the entitlement to financial assistance to all local governments. There were, at 1 July 1986, six municipal and six community government councils, one covering two towns. Additionally, both the Commonwealth and Northern Territory legislation enabled 'local governing bodies' to be declared on the proposal of the Northern Territory Minister. This was to recognise that elected organisations in many small towns were providing local government services, and in some cases were moving towards local government incorporation. Forty four local governing bodies were declared in August 1986 as eligible for receipt of these untied Commonwealth funds. In the last three years, the number of declared bodies has dropped, simply because eight more have taken up community government status. These eight now have an entitlement to this financial assistance as of right, rather than by declaration. Apart from

this change of status, the 56 recipient towns have remained constant over the three years. There are some objections to this concept. Arguments have been raised that local government finance should only be available to statutory local government; the phasing-in of this concept was clearly behind the Commonwealth's original proposal of the three-year 'sunset' period. It may be that these arguments will gain strength in the future as the present situation deprives statutory local government of some funds.

Thirdly, the Commonwealth legislation recognised the whole of the Northern Territory population as eligible for this local government assistance. Under the previous arrangements, the population base had been fixed at that of the municipalities only at the time of self government. The consequence was an increase in Federal funds from \$2.43m to \$5.43m, although it was to be shared amongst 56, rather than only four recipient bodies.

The task of the Local Government Grants Commission is, briefly, to achieve horizontal equalisation. Much discussion hinges around this term and section 9 of the Commonwealth legislation is the starting point. It requires a comparable data base between all recipient bodies, capable of mathematical analysis and standardisation (which arguably does still not exist in the Northern Territory) and a methodology to utilise the data. Interstate Grants Commissions, in operation for over a decade and with a much more comparable, established and uniform systems of local government bodies, still find difficulty in this process.

Incidentally, there is a hypocrisy in the present system. In the mid 1970s under its *Grants Commission Act 1973*, the Commonwealth referred the distribution of its untied grants between regional associations of Australia's 850 local governments to the Grants Commission, so there was an effort at national comparability. Under current methods, we have regressed. Commonwealth financial assistance is now shared between the states and the Northern Territory on a flat per capita basis, with no attempt at horizontal equalisation between them. The Commonwealth makes no attempt to achieve between the states what it requires them to do between their local governments. Put another way, the Commonwealth government believes that local government cost equalisation needs are the same in Walanguru as they are in St Kilda, Peppermint Grove or Woollahra. Horizontal equalisation by each of the states' (including the Northern Territory) Local Government Grants Commissions is solely on an intra-state basis. The Northern Territory Minister for Local Government announced in September 1988 that he had invited colleague ministers for local government in other parts of northern Australia to join in a consultancy to demonstrate the inequity of the present Commonwealth legislation (McCarthy 1988, 74).

The task before the new Northern Territory Grants Commission, to obtain data and devise a methodology which equitably compared such diverse towns as Darwin and Docker River in the short period available, was daunting. Because of this, the two governments agreed in 1986 on a 'two pool' or 'global split' approach. This divided the Commonwealth funds into two parts. One part was for division amongst the six municipal councils. It was calculated on the 1985 amount increased by population growth and an inflation factor of 7.5 per cent. The balance was for distribution amongst the 50 new recipient small towns. This global split was utilised for the first two years, 1986/87 and 1987/88. It was reviewed by a Commonwealth consultant, Morton and Associates, in early 1988 and for the first time in the current financial year, a 'one pool' principle was applied (see the Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission Report 1988 for more detail). Basically, half of the impact of the 'one pool' principle was applied this year, and there was approximately a 10 per cent increase in funding in the non-municipal group, at the expense of the municipal councils. (These facts show that there is recognition of some of the points made by Martin Mowbray yesterday. The new Aboriginal Community Infrastructure Program and the Territory Local Government

Minister's initiative of the six year, \$12.5m capital grant program are 1988 recognitions of some of the infrastructure deficits he mentioned. I am the first to agree that the size of these programs do not yet match the need, but the creation of two new programs in declining financial circumstances is a significant achievement.) As the current year was also, coincidentally, the first year of abolition of the Northern Territory operational subsidies to municipal councils after a three year rundown, there is no doubt that small towns in the Northern Territory under municipal administration are having a particularly difficult financial year. This is evidenced in part by the 25 per cent rate increase at Palmerston.

Most small towns envisaged that their new access to Commonwealth untied assistance for local government in 1986 would provide an additional source of money. However, at a very late stage in the process, the Commonwealth announced that its general assistance to the Northern Territory would be reduced by the amount that its local government assistance increased. The Northern Territory government's response was, understandably I think, to reduce this amount from its untied assistance to the same groups. In short, there was no additional money. Simply, part of the amount now came from the Commonwealth rather than the Territory. Many small town communities felt they had been deceived. Table 4 shows the Commonwealth untied financial assistance to some selected small towns in the Northern Territory over the three years since 1986.

Table 4
Selected small towns, Commonwealth
untied financial assistance 1986-89

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Warruwi	40306	46038	52780
Nguiu	92942	106724	128011
Ramingining	37816	39760	48396
Katherine	456030	518324	564068
Walanguru	36037	42376	51534
Kaltukatjara	42906	55978	59196
Yuendumu	78876	88414	103884
Tennant Creek	334399	378488	316379

It should be noted that Commonwealth untied grants fell by 4.2 per cent this year in real terms. Also, the value of this financial assistance is now down to 1.66 per cent of personal income tax. This follows the Hawke government's breaking the originally bi-partisan two per cent hypothecation which applied, after a build-up starting in 1976-77, from its full achievement in 1980-81 until 1984-85. I have described a number of incompatibilities in Commonwealth legislation, and reducing funding by the Commonwealth (including to town camp organisations at short notice) which make the Commonwealth a much less reliable benefactor of small town local government than Martin Mowbray's paper would have us believe.

Commonwealth tied grants

A major program of Commonwealth tied grants for local government is road grants. In the Northern Territory, municipal councils receive almost \$2.6m in this way. However, as most small towns in the Northern Territory are not responsible for the construction and maintenance of local roads (a responsibility of the Department of Transport and Works),

this type of tied grant will not be dealt with in detail. Briefly, the Australian Bicentennial Road Development and the Australian Land Transport Program schemes finished at the end of 1988 and have been replaced by the Australian Centennial Roads Development program. Generally, road funds have been fixed at 1983-84 dollar levels for the last five years, and, following the Cameron report (1986) the Northern Territory is likely to receive a smaller proportion of that declining amount for roads, a basic local government function.

I will not attempt to identify exhaustively all other tied or special purpose grants available to small towns for various local government functions. Numerous programs under Aboriginal affairs administration may provide available funding. Particularly, the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) and other aspects of the Aboriginal Employment Development Program (AEDP) or 'work for dole' provide substantial benefits in local government services. The small town of Barunga near Katherine, now administered by the Barunga/Wugularr Community Government Council, has been on the CDEP scheme for 11 years and was the first community in Australia to take it up. Its benefits there, both in local government services and community attitudes, have been substantial. Generally, remote small towns in northern Australia are said to have requested CDEP schemes faster than the program administrators have been able to provide them, particularly in recent years.

Skill at 'grantsmanship' and a bold approach in local government administration are valuable attributes and can significantly benefit the small town concerned.

It should be mentioned that local government throughout Australia is now suspicious of accepting government grants for new facilities unless their contribution is secured by binding contractual arrangements. This has arisen from the concept of 'seeding' grants from other spheres of government, which have then ceased once a new service is established. Local government has then been required by its community, or the vociferous users of the service, to continue to fund it without grant aid.

Northern Territory annual untied subsidies

As regards municipal councils, the Northern Territory provided a program of untied operational subsidies since self government. This has no parallel in the states. In 1985 it provided \$2.5m, slightly more than the Commonwealth personal income tax sharing funds, to the four municipal councils.

Because of the substitution mentioned, this program dropped to \$1.987m in 1986-87. The Commonwealth then cut a further \$104m from Territory funding (*NT News*, 26 May 1987), which led to a further cut to \$987 000. Possibly as a component of the move towards statehood, the program was discontinued as from 1 July 1988. Northern Territory government operational subsidies for non-municipal councils have taken place since either self government or since the handover from the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs in respect of Aboriginal small towns in 1980. This program was known as the Town Management and Public Utilities (TMPU), a title still used in some quarters. Tracing the relative value of this program over the last decade is not easy, as the basis has changed in a number of ways. However, following unpublished work by Battersby, there appears to be general acceptance that in real terms it has halved since 1980, and is now \$10.3m (NT Local Government Grants Commission Report 1988, 1).

In each of the three years since the creation of the Local Government Grants Commission, the Minister of the day has required it to recommend to him on the allocation of the Northern Territory government operational subsidies. Table 5 shows the distribution of the Northern Territory operational subsidies to selected small towns over the last three

years, and also shows the combined effects of Commonwealth and Territory government subsidies. In practice it is clear that, as both sources of grants are untied, the recipient small towns do not distinguish between sources and are effectively interested only in the total amount.

Northern Territory government special purpose grants

In 1985, the Northern Territory government's dollar-for-dollar program of special purpose grants to municipal councils ceased. In my view this was regrettable because a 'dollar pro quo' grant system encourages local effort and helps create some local ownership of the facility provided.

Special purpose grants have continued since self government and the amount of funding is a matter for budgetary decision by government each year. Major contributions have been made to the malls at Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs, and to the regional facilities for waste disposal and a cemetery for the Darwin region.

Many other special purpose grants are available from the Northern Territory government for a wide range of local government services. I have already mentioned the 1988 initiative by Local Government Minister Terry McCarthy of a local government capital grant program. Other programs include libraries, health inspection, youth, sport, recreation, and arts grants too numerous and perhaps too variable to mention here. Explanatory booklets are issued each year by the Department of Health and Community Services about its available grants programs. There is generally no distinction between the type of small town which may benefit from these grants.

Loans

The availability of loans as a source of finance for local government services depends on the incorporated status of the small town in question. Municipal and community government areas can raise loans under the provisions of the Local Government Act. This is a common practice with municipal councils, but not yet utilised by community government councils to any extent. Loans are, of course, a valid method of financing major capital projects which will be of benefit over a substantial period of time and to the future residents of the local government area. However, they should not be used to finance current operations, and monitoring may be necessary against the possibility of overburdening with loan repayments.

The Northern Territory government is in the process of working out guidelines for loans by community government councils. This is desirable not only for the reason given above but also because, under section 47 of the *Northern Territory (Self Government) Act 1978* loans from one financial year to another by either form of local government council constitute a loan which requires the approval of the federal Treasurer. This is a further administrative burden not experienced by the states.

Those small towns under Northern Territory associations incorporation may raise loans under section 11 of the relevant Act. Section 51 of the Commonwealth legislation permits loan raising in similar terms by those few Territory associations thereby incorporated. Little use has been made of loans for local government services by these groups of small towns.

Table 5 shows the various sources of income for a variety of Northern Territory local governing bodies in the small towns category in 1987/88. Commonwealth untied grants never exceed 20 per cent and are generally closer to 10 per cent. On the other

hand, Northern Territory untied subsidies are 40 to 50 per cent of total income, except for the municipality of Tennant Creek. Contracting is a significant source of income, averaging over 20 per cent, for all other than Tennant Creek. The only municipality in the table, Tennant Creek, raised almost 38 per cent. Halls Creek in Western Australia raises only 12 to 13 per cent of its own revenue (see Rumley, this volume). For those of you who wish to consider this further, the Queensland Local Government Department has recently issued its financial model for local government. This work was developed by Queensland University with funding from the Commonwealth's Local Government Development Program. One aspect of the model involves financial stress prediction, and one of the stress indicators is less than one-quarter self-raised revenue. The model is of limited use in the Northern Territory because of the great divergence in the type and scale of local government units, and because of their short data history. However, it should be valuable in most of the states.

Table 5
Income sources 1987-88 for selected Northern Territory local governing bodies

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Rates %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	695996 32.52
Charges %	3667 0.88	85987 8.62	79680 14.36	586 0.18	10506 2.68	11791 1.67	116554 5.45
C'wealth untied grants %	46038 11.11	106724 10.70	39760 7.16	42376 12.89	55978 14.26	88414 12.56	387488 18.10
NT untied grants %	184545 44.52	389519 39.04	144451 26.02	154367 46.94	256070 65.24	322615 45.82	113053 5.28
Other specific purpose grants %	38210 9.22	48164 4.83	9344 1.68	94346 28.69	nil	107881 15.32	322127 15.05
Contract/hire %	93325 22.52	256035 25.66	163459 29.45	23101 7.02	55745 14.20	167404 23.78	105808 4.94
Invest/interest %	1075 0.26	19378 1.94	2077 0.37	3263 0.99	3856 0.98	511 0.07	22451 1.05

Interstate comparisons

Table 6 shows the percentages of local government finance raised through rates and charges. The figures are expressed as percentages of total revenue for each of the six states and Northern Territory for the last six years, with 1973/74 added for comparison.

There is substantial indication that the locally raised proportion of Northern Territory small towns' municipal income is increasing quite rapidly. More recent data will show this trend continuing. In contrast, several other states including New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia are comparatively stable.

Table 6
Local government finance sources; self-raised percentage
of revenue 1973-74 and 1981-87

	73-74	81-82	82-83	83-84	84-85	85-86	86-87 P
NT	N/A	48	51	48	45	50	58
NSW	56	56	54	50	52	51	51
Vic	63	60	61	60	57	58	62
Qld	49	40	49	45	45	46	45
SA	65	68	66	63	64	64	65
WA	45	55	56	52	53	52	54
Tas	63	53	51	48	49	46	48
All	57	56	55	53	53	53	54

Source 1973-4: Commonwealth Grants Commission Second Report 1975, 116

Source 1981-7: ABS 1987 State and Local Government Finance, Australia 1986-7, Cat No 5504

P = projected

As Table 7 shows, this Territory change is offset (and probably caused) by grants decreasing as a percentage of total revenue.

Table 7
Local government finance sources; grants percentage of
revenue 1973-74 and 1981-87

	73-74	81-82	82-83	83-84	84-85	85-86	86-87 P
NT	N/A	45	43	46	47	42	31
NSW	18	22	21	24	23	22	21
Vic	18	29	31	31	34	30	27
Qld	14	25	23	28	26	22	22
SA	17	24	27	31	30	28	26
WA	24	32	33	40	37	36	34
Tas	11	24	28	30	28	29	27
All	18	25	26	29	29	26	25

Sources: As Table 6

P = projected

Table 7 confirms that Northern Territory local government has suffered an especially severe decline of grant income. Again, subsequent data will show this trend continuing for municipal councils; despite its title, the ABS publication deals only with municipal councils in the Northern Territory (ABS 1987). The degree of declining importance of grants has been much less marked in most states.

I believe a word of caution is necessary here. Although the title of the relevant Australian Bureau of Statistics publication mentions 'local government', in the Northern Territory only municipal government is included. Whilst this may be understandable in statistical terms for comparison with the remainder of the country, the omission of the more numerous part of Northern Territory local government does not facilitate research or comparative analysis, including by both the Northern Territory Local Government and Commonwealth Grants Commissions.

Turning now to an international comparison, the United Kingdom has recently examined the financing of local government services (HMSO 1986). Whilst two of that paper's concerns were the adequacy and equity of funding local government services, it was also very concerned with the accountability of local government financing. This is an area where the Thatcher government has been faced with major political and financial problems from left wing councils in major metropolitan areas. For example, in England in 1984/85, only 36 per cent of municipal rates came from domestic rate payers, and only 34 per cent of the electorate were householders paying full rates. By contrast 57 per cent of the municipal electorate did not pay any rates at all.

The outcome is that from 1 April next in Scotland, and a year later in the rest of the United Kingdom, rates on domestic property will be abolished. In their place will be a community charge or poll tax on every resident, at a flat rate struck by each local authority and levied regardless of income, though with pensioner subsidies. The rates for commercial properties will be retained, but at a standard rate across the country fixed by the national government, and distributed to local authorities in proportion to the number of adults in their areas.

Possible scenarios

Whilst the United Kingdom 'back to the future' revenue rearrangement has undoubtedly had significant political motivation, it is another change supporting a belief that western world communities are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with big government, and its big expenditure, at all levels. Proposition 13 in California in 1978 was an early example. Over the next decade, I envisage a continuation of this trend. One result is, obviously, that local government authorities will face significant financial restraint.

It is possible that this trend may be offset by increased payments from either state or federal government, probably the latter, wishing to further its own political aims in a scenario of the likely abolition of one of them as excess to Australia's needs and finances (Hawke 1980). The rejection of the constitutional recognition of local government in the Australian constitution on 3 September 1988 is a further factor of the power play for survival between Australia's three spheres of government (Hawke 1988). I believe the emergence of some of these new factors in the last few years is part of the changing perspective on financing local government.

A declining financial base for local government in small towns in the Northern Territory will be brought about by a number of causes. These include the declining real terms amount of Commonwealth financial assistance already mentioned; the declining real terms road grants mentioned; the allegedly declining population of the Northern Territory which will further reduce financial assistance under section 7(4) of the Commonwealth's 1986 legislation; the Commonwealth assistance to be shared by an increasing number of recipients as local governments and their populations increase in the Territory; and greater financial constraints as the Commonwealth further cuts its real terms general purpose assistance to the Northern Territory government. For instance, my view is that a

special grant of \$44m to the Northern Territory is not likely to be the outcome of the 1989 Premiers' Conference, as it was in May 1988 after the report of the Grants Commission on the tax sharing relativities of the states earlier that year. An additional cause of declining services is likely to occur if most small towns continue to make their present below average revenue-raising effort.

Consequences of these factors are likely to include pressure for local communities to raise a greater proportion of their own income. This pressure will be generated in a number of ways, including a real terms continuing decline in the amount of grants, particularly untied grants, available from the other two levels of government; and an increasing recognition by local government of the benefits of equity and independence in raising a higher proportion of their own revenue. Some communities have discussed whether they should charge fees for marketing cultural data, such as for sociological, anthropological or linguistic research, rather than continue to provide this knowledge as a freely available research laboratory. These approaches are likely to be more apparent in the Northern Territory than in the other states which have already, largely because of their longer history of local government, moved further in some of these directions.

Secondly, I agree with Morse (1983) and many other commentators that local government will need to continue to 'do more with less'. It will need to consider sharing of expensive capital resources, greater coordination on a regional basis such as in the Darwin region cemetery and waste disposal facilities, improved management, electronic office aids, etc. Aggregations of small towns into single community government units may be a future development. While northern Australian distances do not assist this model, it may be feasible for a region west of Alice Spring, for southeast Arnhem Land, and for many small localities in the Barkly, centred on Tennant Creek.

Thirdly, local governments will be required to respond to increasing community pressures to curtail expenditure. This is likely to mean privatisation and/or a reduction in the range of services, with the retention of basic and widespread services, and the reduction or cessation of services to minority groups, including human service areas which have expanded in the last fifteen years often with 'seeding' grants from government. Greater application of the 'user pays' principle can be anticipated, especially as regards recreation. From both a financial and political point of view, this is likely to be a difficult move, but nonetheless inevitable. Whilst preparing this paper, New South Wales local government is examining just these cost cutting measures in response to declining grants (*Daily Telegraph*, 5 January 1989). It is not unknown already for local governments to practise a policy that no proposal for a new or expanded service will be considered unless it contains a proposal for a reduction or cessation of an existing service to the same value. More sophisticated budgeting techniques including program and zero based will increasingly apply to help local government and their communities to assess the true costs of services, and away from the incremental inertia of traditional public sector budgets.

I would like to conclude with my suggestion, derived from the facts and thoughts in this paper, that small towns in the Northern Territory are likely to best serve their local government needs by securing their legislative and financial position by local government incorporation. Small towns in the Northern Territory not incorporated under the local government system only share in government grants by discretion, rather than by right. They may have a more difficult financing future than their incorporated counterparts.

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THE TREATY OF WAITANGI AND ITS STATUS: MAORI ISSUES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

John Paki

Local and regional government plays a large and vitally important role in the daily lives of most people in our countries. It touches on almost every aspect of our lives and provides for some of society's most fundamental needs.

A review of local and regional government is currently taking place in New Zealand. Dr Michael Bassett, Minister for Local Government, in the foreword to 'Reform of Local and Regional Government, Discussion Document' February 1988 stated that:

We must ensure that local government is attentive and responsive to the needs of the communities it sets out to serve, and that the needs of those communities are met in the most appropriate and effective manner.

Today I propose to deal with the three components of this topic, namely the Treaty of Waitangi, its current status and Maori issues in local government.

The Treaty

The Treaty of Waitangi (1840) marks the beginning of constitutional government in New Zealand. It is by reference to the Treaty that British authority, government and rule was established in New Zealand. The Treaty played an important role in Britain's colonial expansionist policies, because it served three basic needs - legal, diplomatic and humanitarian.

Legal

There were legal impediments to Britain asserting sovereignty over New Zealand. The right of 'discovery' was not available as Maori tribes had settled in New Zealand well before James Cook arrived in 1769. Cook's 'discovery' had also not been secured by occupation. Conquest was not viable either as Maori people greatly outnumbered the early settlers and were the dominant society. Accordingly the only option available to assert sovereignty was a treaty of cession. This was necessary because in 1835 a group of northern chiefs signed 'A Declaration of Independence of New Zealand' (see Appendix 1) which was accepted by Britain and recognised internationally. British law also acknowledged that New Zealand was outside its dominion. It is probable that this legal factor was the primary reason for entering into the Treaty.

Diplomatic

This was also an important need. The Treaty gave Britain an entitlement to peaceful settlement. It secured New Zealand as a British possession at a time when the French and the United States of America were showing an interest in settling the colony.

Humanitarian

During the 1830s the humanitarian movement was increasingly influential in Britain. The humanitarians had sought better treatment of indigenous people in British settlements. They were concerned to see that the Maori did not fare as badly as, for example, the Indian in Canada and the USA or the Aborigines in Australia. The Treaty, in which the Queen extended her royal protection and conferred all the rights and privileges of British subjects on the Maori, was seen to herald a new dawn in colonial settlement.

The Treaty was entered into in 1840. The Maori text was signed at Waitangi on 6 February and over the next six months the Waitangi text or copies of it were signed by over 500 chiefs in about 50 locations around the country. The English text was signed by only 39 chiefs in the Manukau Harbour area, south of Auckland.

Interestingly enough on 21 May 1840, British sovereignty was formally proclaimed and the national governance of New Zealand began before all signatories had signed the Treaty. It should be noted that some *iwi* (tribes) did not sign or refused to sign the Treaty, and that the English text (which was drafted first) and the Maori text are not literal translations of each other. It is more in the nature of an interpretation done by the Reverend Henry Williams in Maori cultural terms using concepts which the Maori would understand.

The Treaty itself is quite brief (see Appendix 2). It comprises a preamble, three articles and an epilogue. The preamble sets out the reasons for the agreement: to provide for settlement; to secure 'peace and good order'; to protect the 'just rights and property' of indigenous people; and to establish 'a settled form of civil government'.

To that end sovereignty, or the right of national governance, was ceded to the Crown in Article the First (see Appendix 2: The Text in English).

Article the Second of the Treaty guaranteed to the Maori 'the full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their lands and estates, forests, fisheries and other properties' for so long as they wished to retain them. The Article also gives to the Crown the 'exclusive right of pre-emption over such lands' as the Maori were prepared to sell. The Maori version is differently expressed (see Appendix 2: English Translation of the Text in Maori). While it incorporates all in the English version it goes somewhat further. It preserves the Maori '*tino rangatiratanga*' or full authority over their lands. It gives the Maori the right to hold the property in their customary and traditional way if they so chose - to control and manage in accordance with their own preferences.

Article the Third of the Treaty extends to the Maori the Queen's 'royal protection and imparts to them all the Rights and Privileges of British Subjects'.

The British Crown was for the first decade generally supportive of the Treaty. It insisted that its representatives, the Governors, should observe the terms and conditions of the Treaty. Governor Grey in 1847 was directed that there be no violation of the Treaty. He had asked the Colonial Secretary how far he had to abide by the Treaty. Lord Stanley replied:

I repudiate with the utmost possible earnestness the doctrine maintained by some that the treaties which we have entered into are considered as a mere blind to amuse and deceive ignorant savages. In the name of the Queen I utterly deny that any treaty entered into and ratified by her Majesty's command, was or could have been made in spirit thus disingenuous, or for

a purpose thus unworthy. You will honourably and scrupulously fulfil the conditions of the Treaty of Waitangi.

The Courts of New Zealand also settled any doubts about the validity and force of the Treaty. In 1847 our Supreme Court in *Queen v Symonds (1847)* (NZPCC [1840-1932], 387) declared that Maori rights were protected by the Treaty and the Treaty was valid and binding.

From the 1850s onwards, however, the attitude to the Maori began to change. The responsibility for governing had passed from the British government to the colonists and European settlement had increased dramatically so that the Maori had become a minority. The demand for land grew. Maori land was tribally owned and settlers were not able to negotiate with Maori 'owners', since under the Treaty they were required to deal through the government. The settler government which was dominated by landowners was unable to resist these demands and legislation (the Native Land Acts of the 1860s) was enacted to break down customary law and individualise landholdings, contrary to the Treaty guarantees. By the 1860s race relations had soured and the government and the tribes were embroiled in the land wars.

There was also a shift in judicial attitude to the Treaty. Chief Justice Prendergast in *Wi Parata v The Bishop of Wellington (1877)* (3NZ Jur 72) described the Treaty as a 'simple nullity'.

From this time on the Treaty was to fade in political significance. It was ignored by all except the tribes. It did not diminish in importance to them and in fact the tribes relied on it even more. Tribal complaints, in the form of protest, petition, Commissions and Royal Commissions, that the Treaty was not being honoured date from at least 1847, and they have continued without abatement to the present day. Indeed since that time the Maori people have sought, in the face of massive indifference, to have the Crown meet its Treaty obligations.

Current status of the Treaty

The effect of the decision of *Wi Parata* was that the Treaty has no effect as an instrument of law. The Treaty can only be recognised to the extent that Parliament provides for it. The Treaty has never been passed into law as an Act of Parliament. Therefore any rights conferred by the Treaty cannot be enforced in the courts except where a statute expressly or impliedly recognises the principles of the Treaty. Such recognition breathes life into the Treaty.

At present there are four statutes which incorporate specific provisions dealing with the Treaty of Waitangi and its principles:

Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

This Act establishes the Waitangi Tribunal. It is able to make recommendations on claims relating to the Treaty and to determine whether certain matters are inconsistent with its principles.

State Owned Enterprises Act 1986

Clause S.9 of this Act provides that 'nothing in this Act shall permit the Crown to act in a manner that is inconsistent with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi'.

Conservation Act 1987

Clause S.4 requires that 'this Act shall be interpreted and administered so as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi'.

Environment Act 1986

This Act in its long title provides that in the management of natural and physical resources 'a full and balanced account is taken of the principles of the Treaty'.

Other legislative provisions and recent tribunal and judicial decisions have enhanced the impact of the Treaty and have done much to restore the *mana* and authority of the Treaty. A judicial decision of particular significance concerning Clause S.9 of the *State Owned Enterprises Act* was the Court of Appeal case of the *NZ Maori Council v Attorney General* (1987) (1NZLR 641, 656) where the President, Sir Robin Cooke, accepted the proposition:

that the Court will not ascribe to Parliament an intention to permit conduct inconsistent with the principles of the Treaty when interpreting ambiguous legislation or working out the import of an express reference to the principles of the Treaty.

Maori issues in local government

Traditional Maori system

The Maori, prior to and after the signing of the Treaty, had their own form of local government. This was based on the *iwi* (or tribe) whose members claimed descent from a common founding tribal ancestor. Each *iwi* controlled a defined geographical territory. Membership of the *iwi* ranged from a few people to many thousands. The *iwi* exercised exclusive control of their territory. This was required to ensure that both supply and demand for resources were kept in proper balance and future needs were provided for by conserving the resource. The maintenance of tribal authority was of fundamental importance to the Maori.

This measure of tribal autonomy or self government was recognised by the Waitangi Tribunal in the Muriwhenua Report (1988, 187). When considering what the Maori understood by cession of sovereignty as contained in the Treaty, the Report commented:

the Maori chiefs were trying to preserve a form of autonomy that did not amount to complete sovereignty but a kind of local self-government in Maori districts. This sort of demand for independent Maori control over Maori resources and people runs right through subsequent history [They were seeking] tribal management on lines similar to what we understand by local government (1988, 187).

The colonial era

In view of what the Maori chiefs thought they were signing under the Treaty, it was not unreasonable to expect that they would retain 'authority over their lands, villages and *o ratou taonga katoa*' (all their treasures). Moreover that they would have a primary role, as a Treaty partner, in the establishment of any form of government, be it central, provincial or indeed local government.

The years following the signing of the Treaty provided a glimmer of hope. In 1852 the British Parliament passed the *Constitution Act* by which a system of representative central government was established. The country was divided into six provinces, presided over by provincial councils. Contained in the Act was S.71 which acknowledged Maori *rangatiratanga* (Maori authority) at a local level thus:

and whereas it may be expedient that the laws, customs and usages of the Aboriginal inhabitants of New Zealand should for the present be maintained for the government of themselves, in all their relations to and dealings with each other, and that particular districts should be set apart within such laws, customs or usages should be so observed....

The provision of native laws to govern native people in native districts was of principal importance to the Maori. Native laws could have adapted and developed had tribal autonomy and native districts been allowed. Unfortunately for the Maori these powers were never exercised. The section remained in force until 1986 when it was repealed.

Further consideration was given to Maori involvement in government at central government level with the *Maori Representative Act 1867*. This act created four Maori electorates (which we still have today) as means of 'exfranchising' Maori voters who because of their communal ownership of land, 'failed' the property test (only males aged 21 and over who owned or leased land of a specified minimum value were entitled to vote). Despite this concession Maori were markedly under-represented with only four seats for a population of 50 000 compared with 72 European seats for a population of 250 000. While at least securing a degree of political representation to central government, the provisions contained in the Act hardly befitted a Treaty partner and moreover did not get duplicated at provincial or local government level.

Provincial government in New Zealand was abolished in 1876 and paved the way for the instigation of the local government system which we have today.

Maori issues and local government

The main issues raised by the Maori in their submissions on local and regional government reform were monoculturalism, partnership and power sharing, and the Treaty of Waitangi.

Monoculturalism

Criticism was focussed on what was seen as a strong monocultural basis in local, regional and central government. The criticism was that systems had been imposed on Maori society without regard for indigenous decisionmaking processes and values. There was perceived to be a danger that the present reform process may again impose a system without having regard to the established forms and processes of the Maori people. The

important point is that there is a need for the reform to recognise the values which guide the way Maori society is organised.

Partnership and power sharing

Submissions were forthright in their views about the need for local and regional government reform to provide for effective Maori input into and influence on planning and decision making, especially where interests are affected. This partnership and power sharing is seen as the fulfilment of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Treaty of Waitangi

The application and recognition of the Treaty is seen as providing the basis for meeting Maori aspirations in local and regional government reform. This view is supported by the New Zealand Local Government Association who suggest that legislation requires local authorities to recognise the Crown's obligations under the Treaty and to act accordingly. It is said that this is in line with the trend, as stated previously, of recent legislative developments and recent tribunal and judicial decisions, in enhancing the impact of the Treaty, and it is time for a government directive that local government legislation should include a section requiring all local and regional bodies to act in a manner consistent with the principles of the Treaty.

Principles of the Treaty relevant to local government

Partnership and the duty to act reasonably and in good faith

The Treaty was the foundation for a special relationship between the Crown and the Maori tribes. The Court of Appeal in the New Zealand Maori Council Case in considering that relationship concluded that the basic principle of the Treaty is one of partnership. It stated that:

the principle [of the Treaty] requires the Pakeha and Main Treaty partners to act towards each other reasonably and with the utmost good faith (Cooke).

One consequence of this principle is the obligation on the Crown to ensure that it is sufficiently informed about Maori concerns, priorities and values. Not only is consultation required but there is a need for Treaty partners to act reasonably towards each other. The Waitangi Tribunal pointed out in the Manukau Claim (1985) that failure to consult is an affront and would lead to a confrontational stance.

The Treaty is also meant to provide a direction for future growth and development. If a balancing of interests is required and a compromise is made then this is consistent with the principle of partnership.

Active protection

The President of the Court of Appeal in the Maori Land Case accepted that the relationship between the Treaty partners creates responsibilities analogous to fiduciary duties and that:

the duty of the Crown is not merely passive but extends to active protection of Maori people in the use of their lands and waters to the fullest extent practicable (Cooke).

It is apparent that the Crown has a duty to support the survival of Maori tribal identity and culture. Recognition and protection of rights also requires the Crown to establish and enforce appropriate procedures.

Retention of authority

This principle arises out of the Maori text of the Treaty, and stems from the expression *tino rangatiratanga* in Article II (see Appendix 2: The Text in Maori). It means full authority. The Treaty guaranteed to protect the continuation of *rangatiratanga*. Full Maori authority was not to be usurped by the Crown. Maori tribes were to continue to manage and control their land, villages and all precious things so that the authority of the Maori and the Crown would co-exist.

Freedom of government to govern

The Court of Appeal noted that the principles of the Treaty did not authorise unreasonable restrictions to be placed on government to pursue its chosen policies. To try and shackle the government unreasonably would itself be inconsistent with the Treaty.

In the recent Te Urupare Rangapu (Partnership Response) Policy Statement (Minister of Maori Affairs 1988) government reaffirmed its seven principal objectives in the Maori Affairs area. Three of these objectives are: to honour the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi through exercising its powers of government reasonably, and in good faith, so as to actively protect the Maori interests specified in the Treaty; to promote decision making in the machinery of government and in areas of importance to Maori communities, which provide opportunities for Maori people to actively participate, on jointly agreed terms, in such policy formulation and service delivery; and to encourage Maori participation in the political process.

It is obvious that government wishes to see active Maori participation in the political process. Therefore it is imperative that proposed local government legislation reform includes, within its principles, the requirement that local government accepts an obligation to put the Treaty of Waitangi into effect.

How then are we to provide for more effective Maori participation at local and regional government levels?

Before I discuss this issue, it should be stated that there is also objection to separate Maori participation. The Ministry for the Environment in conducting their Resource Management Law Reform Review identified two major objections to specific provision for Maori representation: it is inconsistent with democratic principles of open, contested candidacy and equal representation per elector to provide for representation based on race; and it enables privileged representatives to make decisions which have effect beyond the Maori constituency.

The Ministry responded with these points. Community of interests: Maori are a community with a collective identity as a people, and as a unique community institutional arrangements must provide for their representation. Protection for group rights of minorities (as distinct from rights of individual members of minorities): denial of group rights in the political sphere is a denial of Maori aspirations and Treaty entitlements. This

is because Maori identify as a group; the Treaty (Article 2) provided a bundle of rights to be exercised collectively by *iwi*; and the Treaty entails recognition of the rights of *Tangata Whenua* to exercise jurisdiction over defined interests.

The Royal Commission on the Electoral System (1986, 81) also examined this issue of parliamentary government and concluded in its report:

the status of Maori in our legal and constitutional arrangements differs from that of other minority groups in three very important respects. First, Maori are indigenous to New Zealand. They are Tangata Whenua. Second, Maori tribal leaders and the Crown entered into an agreement in 1840. That agreement - the Treaty of Waitangi - marked the beginning of constitutional government in New Zealand. Under the terms of the Treaty, the Crown formally recognised the existing rights of Maori and undertook to protect them. It is in this sense that Maori people have a special constitutional status, whatever recognition the Government and the legal system may have accorded to the Treaty at various times.

The Report also noted the need for:

a balance between the socio-economic and the cultural concerns of Maori, a balance which we believe cannot be satisfactorily achieved unless the special rights and interests of the Maori people are effectively represented in the determination of public policy

I now return to the issue of how to ensure that the Maori partner will be treated reasonably and able to meaningfully participate in the local government process. The present system of representation allows Maori to seek election through the normal election system (there is one exception). The following two examples highlight Maori concern about this system. A survey of the Auckland region showed that Maori people accounted for 12 per cent of the population but only seven per cent of the total elected members were of Maori descent. It also showed that 18 out of the 34 local authorities surveyed had no elected Maori members. A new Northland Regional Council was recently elected. The Maori population in this region comprised 25 per cent of the population. However, although a number of eminently suitable Maori candidates stood for election none were successful. From these experiences, and the Northland one in particular, Maori interests do not see themselves as enjoying any partnership or active protection; indeed the situation is hardly befitting that of a Treaty partner. There is also cause for concern in the instances where Maori candidates have been successful - because they are accountable to non-Maori voters, they are often unable, in the absence of legislative direction, to advocate satisfactorily for Maori interests if they wish to retain their positions. In New Zealand only the Auckland Regional Authority guarantees Maori representation (based on parliamentary electoral districts) at local government level. Two seats out of 28 are guaranteed. Once again this is hardly befitting the status of a Treaty partner.

Nevertheless this system is seen as providing a model for more Maori participation. Its advantages are: members are accountable to the Maori electorate; at least one Maori representatives should be elected to an authority; a clear basis is provided for the right to vote, and all Maori within each constituency are represented. Its disadvantages are: that in most areas there is only one Maori electoral district (in Auckland there are two), hence only one representative of the local Maori population; it is inappropriate for a member of one tribe to represent all tribes in the area, and the system is based on a *Pakeha* method of selection and election of representatives.

It is worth noting at this stage that Maori local government concerns maybe divided into two broad categories: control of Maori land and other general local government activities.

Another model which should be seriously considered is the role of the *iwi* (tribal) authority in the local government system. This is because the government, in its policy statement on Maori affairs, *Te Urupara Rangapu: Partnership Response* (Minister of Maori Affairs 1988, 12), sees the tribunal authority as playing a pivotal role in tribes becoming independent and self sustaining. The statement said:

that the iwi acquire the means to achieve social reliance and independence ... [and] that iwi acquire the means to determine their affairs in a way that respects Maori perspectives and aspirations.

Government proposes that *iwi* authorities will have legal status similar to a corporate body, and members would be elected by tribal members. It is through this vehicle that I believe more effective representation and participation of Maoris can be brought about. The *iwi* authority will become responsible for all activities of the *iwi* at local government level. Under this option tribal representatives would be guaranteed representation at regional and local government levels. The representatives will be selected by the tribe using traditional methods. The advantages of this model are that: a voice is provided for the tribe; representatives are selected by a Maori selection process and *tangataenua* (local or tribal people) are specifically represented. The disadvantages of this scheme are that representation of less than 50 per cent of the membership, without other measures to ensure Maori views are heard, is likely to reduce the Maori voice(s) to a minority status and the scheme may not accord with the principles of partnership and active protection.

In order that Maori views are heard and articulated, the Ministry for the Environment in its Resource Management Law Reform Review focussed on the development of *iwi* management plans. These are plans drawn up by the tribe and are seen as providing a means for more effective Maori participation in regional and district planning schemes. The plans would focus primarily on Maori land but would also take into account the effects of zoning and utilisation of adjacent resources.

However an issue which needs to be resolved is the status of these plans. Where do they stand in relation to the local authorities' plans? There are three options. First the plan is subordinate to, but taken into account by district/regional schemes; second, the plan is part of the district/regional scheme, and the final option that the plan is independent of but of equal status with the district/regional schemes.

Options

Subordinate status

Supporters of this option note that a subordinate lower tier plan allows for the ease of making changes to the plan and the capacity to include matters of detail not necessarily appropriate for formal district schemes. The disadvantages are seen as including the costs of preparation and a certain 'rigidity' of purpose which would not necessarily be desirable for private land under tribal control. From a Maori view point a plan that is clearly subordinate to a district/regional scheme is inconsistent with *tino rangatiratanga* or 'full authority to control or manage their lands'.

Part of a scheme

Under this option the tribal management plan would form part of the district scheme. The model allows tribal authorities to be in a joint combined approach with the local authority for resource use and policy development. The plans are part of the scheme and not subordinate to it. It allows for constant consultation and contact between the authorities so that areas of conflict can be addressed early. This option provides for elements of partnership, active protection and retention of authority of Maori land and resources as enunciated in the Treaty.

Parallel status

Under this option the tribal management plan is of equal status with the district/regional scheme but not absorbed into it. This is based on the view that the Treaty provides for the continuation of Maori sovereignty and that the *iwi* authority would regulate certain land use activities with formal status as a resource management body. This model is seen as achievable by those seeking Maori self government. These options are important because they provide the tribes with the means to exert control over what happens in their tribal authorities, a facility which presently they do not have.

Fundamental to any proposal for more effective Maori representation and participation in local government are effective legislative provisions to 'make it happen'. It would require acknowledgement of the Treaty first and foremost, and secondly, the recognition of *iwi* authorities as part of the local government system. Clear identification of *iwi* authority responsibility in the statutes would provide both direction and incentive for local government to have more Maori participation in their management and policy activities at the outset. This establishes clearly from the outset where all parties stand in relation to each other, be they for example conservationists, environmentalists or developers, thus ensuring a more effective and efficient system of local government.

New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange, when addressing a seminar held by the New Zealand Planning Council on the Treaty of Waitangi (October 1988) said:

Reformed administration must reflect the traditional structures of Maori society and not continue to reflect the traditional structures of European society.

In closing I have tried to reflect that Prime Ministerial statement in the issues that I have raised here. I should point out that these are my own personal views. Indeed other views prevail and there is growing support for Maori self government on a tribal basis in New Zealand which cannot be ignored.

I leave you to consider this passage in Justice Thomas Berger's book *Village Journey - The Report of the Alaskan Native Review Commission*:

Arguments for the rule of law in international relations can never be soundly placed until the nations that have dispossessed and displaced indigenous peoples acquire the precepts of international law that now require a fair accommodation of indigenous people in their own nations ... if governments continue in their efforts to force native societies into moulds that we have cast, I believe they will continue to fail. No tidy bureaucratic plan of action for native people can have any chance of success until it takes into account the determination of native peoples to remain themselves. Their determination to retain their own cultures and their own

lands does not means that they wish to return to the past. It means they refuse to let their future be dictated by others. Because native peoples have accepted a dominant society's technology does not mean they should learn in school no language except that of the dominant society; learn no history but that of the dominant society, and be governed by no institutions but those of the dominant society. The right of native peoples to their own distinct place in the contemporary life of the larger nation must be affirmed. At the same time they must have full access to the society, economic and political institutions of the dominant society (Berger 1985, 182).

Appendix 1

He Wakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī (A Declaration of the Independence of New Zealand)

Appendix 1: *He Wakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī (A Declaration of the Independence of New Zealand)*

1. Ko matou, ko nga Tino Rangatira o nga iwi o Nu Tirenī i raro mai o Hauraki kua oti nei te huihui i Waitangi i Tokerau i te ra 28 o Oketopa 1835, ka wakaputa i te Rangatiratanga o to matou wenua a ka meatia ka wakaputanga e matou he Wenua Rangatira, kia huaina, ko te Wakaminenga o nga Hapu o Nu Tirenī.

2. Ko te Kingitanga ko te mana i te wenua o te wakaminenga o Nu Tirenī ka meatia nei hei nga Tino Rangatira anake i to matou huihuinga, a ka mea hoki e kore e tukua e matou te wakarite ture ki te tahi huinga ke atu, me te tahi Kawanataanga hoki kia meatia i te wenua o te wakaminenga o Nu Tirenī, ko nga tangata anake e meatia nei e matou e wakarite ana ki te ritenga o to matou ture e meatia nei matou i to matou huihuinga.

3. Ko matou ko nga tino Rangatira ka mea nei kia huihui ki te runanga ki Waitangi a te Ngahuru i tenei tau ki te wakarite ture kia tika ai te wakawakanga, kia mau pu te rongo kia mutu te he kia tika te hokohoko, a ka mea hoki ki nga tauwi o runga, kia wakarere te wāwai, kia mahara ai ki te wakaoranga o to matou wenua, a kia uru ratou ki te wakaminenga o Nu Tirenī.

4. Ka mea matou kia tuhihia he pukapuka ki te ritenga o tenei o to matou wakaputanga nei ki te Kingi o Ingarani hei kawae atu i to matou aroha nana hoki i wakaac ki te Kara mo matou. A mo te mea ka atawai matou, ka tiaki i nga paketa e noho nei i uta, e rere mai ana ki te hokohoko, koia ka mea ai matou ki te Kingi kia waiho hei matua ki a matou i to matou Tamarikitanga kei wakakahoretia to matou Rangatiratanga.

Kua wakaetia katoatia e matou i tenei ra i te 28 Oketopa, 1835, ki te aroaro o te Riretneiti o te Kingi o Ingarani.

[There follow the marks or signatures of chiefs.]

Note: The original is held by National Archives, Wellington. This text and the English text below have been copied from Facsimiles of the Declaration of Independence and the Treaty of Waitangi, Wellington, 1976. The Declaration was first signed on 28 October 1835 by thirty-four chiefs. The last name was added on 22 July 1839, making a total of fifty-two chiefs.

A Declaration of the Independence of New Zealand (English text)

1. We, the hereditary chiefs and heads of the tribes of the Northern parts of New Zealand, being assembled at Waitangi, in the Bay of Islands, on

this 28th day of October, 1835, declare the independence of our country, which is hereby constituted and declared to be an Independent State, under the designation of The United Tribes of New Zealand.

2. All sovereign power and authority within the territories of the United Tribes of New Zealand is hereby declared to reside entirely and exclusively in the hereditary chiefs and heads of tribes in their collective capacity, who also declare that they will not permit any legislative authority separate from themselves in their collective capacity to exist, nor any function of government to be exercised within the said territories, unless by persons appointed by them, and acting under the authority of laws regularly enacted by them in Congress assembled.

3. The hereditary chiefs and heads of tribes agree to meet in Congress at Waitangi in the autumn of each year, for the purpose of framing laws for the dispensation of justice, the preservation of peace and good order, and the regulation of trade; and they cordially invite the Southern tribes to lay aside their private animosities and to consult the safety and welfare of our common country, by joining the Confederation of the United Tribes.

4. They also agree to send a copy of this Declaration to His Majesty the King of England, to thank him for his acknowledgement of their flag; and in return for the friendship and protection they have shown, and are prepared to show, to such of his subjects as have settled in their country, or resorted to its shores for the purposes of trade, they entreat that he will continue to be the parent of their infant State, and that he will become its Protector from all attempts upon its independence.

Agreed to unanimously on this 28th day of October, 1835, in the presence of His Britannic Majesty's Resident.

[Here follow the signatures or marks of thirty-five Hereditary chiefs or Heads of tribes, which form a fair representation of the tribes of New Zealand from the North Cape to the latitude of the River Thames.]

English witnesses –

(Signed) Henry Williams, Missionary, C.M.S.

George Clarke, C.M.S.

James C. Glendon, Merchant.

Gilbert Mair, Merchant.

I certify that the above is a correct copy of the Declaration of the Chiefs, according to the translation of Missionaries who have resided ten years and upwards in the country; and it is transmitted to His Most Gracious Majesty the King of England, at the unanimous request of the chiefs.

(Signed) JAMES BUSBY,

British Resident at New Zealand.

Appendix 2 Texts of the Treaty of Waitangi

(Note: italics have been added to aid in comparing major differences between the English and Maori texts. It is the Maori version that approximately 500 Maori chiefs signed.)

The Text in English

(Source: Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, First Schedule)

HER MAJESTY VICTORIA Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland regarding with Her Royal Favour the Native Chiefs and Tribes of New Zealand and anxious to protect their just Rights and Property and to secure to them the enjoyment of Peace and Good Order has deemed it necessary in consequence of the great number of Her Majesty's Subjects who have already settled in New Zealand and the rapid extension of Emigration both from Europe and Australia which is still in progress to constitute and appoint a functionary properly authorised to treat with the Aborigines of New Zealand for the recognition of Her Majesty's Sovereign authority over the whole or any part of those islands - Her Majesty therefore being desirous to establish a settled form of Civil Government with a view to avert the evil consequences which must result from the absence of the necessary Laws and Institutions alike to the native population and to Her subjects has been graciously pleased to empower and to authorise me William Hobson a Captain in Her Majesty's Royal Navy Consul and Lieutenant Governor of such parts of New Zealand as may be or hereafter shall be ceded to her Majesty to invite the confederated and independent Chiefs of New Zealand to concur in the following Articles and Conditions.

ARTICLE THE FIRST

The Chiefs of the Confederation of the United Tribes of New Zealand and the separate and independent Chiefs who have not become members of the Confederation cede to Her Majesty the Queen of England absolutely and without reservation *all the rights and powers of Sovereignty* which the said Confederation or Individual Chiefs respectively exercise or possess, or may be supposed to exercise or to possess over their respective Territories as the sole Sovereigns thereof.

The Text in Maori

(Source: Schedule to the Treaty of Waitangi Amendment Act 1985. Note: this Act corrected errors in the Maori text in First Schedule of the 1975 Act).

KO WIKITORIA, te Kuini o Ingarani, i tana mahara atawai ki nga Rangatira me nga Hapu o Nu Tirani i tana hiahia hoki kia tohungia ki a ratou o ratou rangatiratanga, me to ratou wenua, a kia mau tonu hoki te Rongo ki a ratou me te Atanoho hoki kua wakaaro ia he mea tika kia tukua mai tetahi Rangatira hei kai wakarite ki nga Tangata maori o Nu Tirani kia wakaaetia e nga Rangatira maori te Kawanatanga o te Kuini ki nga wahikatoa o te Wenua nei me nga Motu na te mea hoki he tokomaha ke nga tangata o tona Iwi Kua noho ki tenei wenua, a e haere mai nei.

Na ko te Kuini e hiahia ana kia wakaritea te Kawanatanga kia kua ai nga kino e puta mai ki te tangata Maori ki te Pakeha e noho ture kore ana.

Na, kua pai te Kuini kia tukua a hau a Wiremu Hopihona he Kapitana i te Roiara Nawi hei Kawana mo nga wahi katoa o Nu Tirani e tukua aiane, amua atu ki te Kuini e mea atu ana ia ki nga Rangatira o te wakaminenga o nga hapu o Nu Tirani me era Rangatira atu enei ture ka korerotia nei.

KO TE TUATAHI

Ko nga Rangatira o te Wakaminenga me nga Rangatira katoa hoki ki hai i uru ki taua wakaminenga ka tuku rawa atu ki te Kuini o Ingarani ake tonu atu *te Kawanatanga katoa o o ratou wenua.*

ARTICLE THE SECOND

Her Majesty the Queen of England confirms and guarantees to the Chiefs and Tribes of New Zealand and to the respective families and individuals thereof *the full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their Lands and Estates Forests Fisheries and other properties which they may collectively or individually possess so long as it is their wish and desire to retain the same in their possession*; but the Chiefs of the United Tribes and the individual Chiefs yield to Her Majesty the exclusive right of Preemption over such lands as the proprietors thereof may be disposed to alienate at such prices as may be agreed upon between the respective Proprietors and persons appointed by Her Majesty to treat with them in that behalf.

ARTICLE THE THIRD

In consideration thereof Her Majesty the Queen of England extends to the Natives of New Zealand Her royal protection and imparts to them all the Rights and Privileges of British Subjects.

W HOBSON Lieutenant Governor

Now therefore We the Chiefs of the Confederation of the United Tribes of New Zealand being assembled in Congress at Victoria in Waitangi and We the Separate and Independent Chiefs of New Zealand claiming authority over the Tribes and Territories which are specified after our respective names, having been made fully to understand the Provisions of the foregoing Treaty, accept and enter into the same in the full spirit and meaning thereof: in witness of which we have attached our signatures or marks at the places and the dates respectively specified.

Done at Waitangi this Sixth day of February in the year of Our Lord One thousand eight hundred and forty. [Here follows signatures, dates, etc]

KO TE TUARUA

Ko te Kuini o Ingarani ka wakarite ka wakaae ki nga Rangatira ki nga hapu ki nga tangata katoa o Nu Tirani *te tino rangatiratanga o o ratou wenua o ratou kainga me o ratou taonga katoa*. Otia ko nga Rangatira o te Wakaminenga me nga Rangatira katoa atu ka tuku ki te Kuini te hokonga o era wahi wenua e pai ai te tangata nona te Wenua ki te ritenga o te utu e wakaritea ai e ratou ko te kai hoko e meatia nei e te Kuini hei kai hoko mona.

KO TE TUATORU

Hei wakaritenga mai hoki tenei mo te wakaetanga ki te Kawanatanga o te Kuini ka tiakina e te Kuini o Ingarani nga tangata maori katoa o Nu Tirani ka tukua ki a ratou nga tikanga katoa rite tahi ki ana mea ki nga tangata o Ingarani.

(Signed) WILLIAM HOBSON
Consul and Lieutenant-Governor

Na ko matou ko nga Rangatira o te Wakaminenga o nga hapu o Nu Tirani ka huihui nei ki Waitangi ko matou hoki ko nga Rangatira o Nu Tirani ka kite nei i te ritenga o enei kupu, ka tangohia ka wakaetia katoatia e matou, koia ka tohungia ai o matou ingoa o matou tohu.

Ka meatia tenei ki Waitangi i te ono o nga ra o Pepueri i te tau kotahi mano, e waru rau e wa te kau o to tatou Ariki.

Ko nga Rangatira o te wakaminenga.

English Translation of the Text in Maori

(Source: adapted from; Royal Commission on Social Policy 1988, 'June Report', Vol III part 1, pp. 211-212)

Victoria the Queen of England in her gracious recollection of the chiefs and tribes of New Zealand and her desire that they and their chieftainship be secured to them, and a peaceful state also, has deemed it a just act to send here a chief to be the person to arrange for the native people of New Zealand to agree to the governorship by the Queen of all places of that land and of the islands. Already many of her people have settled in this land or are coming there. Now the Queen desires that the governorship may be settled to stem the evils that would come upon the native people and the British who dwell there in lawlessness. Now therefore it is good that the Queen has sent me, William Hobson, a captain in the Royal Navy as governor for all areas of New Zealand that are given over to the Queen now or later. She gives to the chiefs of the Confederation of Tribes of New Zealand, and to the other chiefs as well, these laws which will be spoken about now.

THE FIRST

The chiefs of the Confederation and all the chiefs who have not joined that Confederation give absolutely to the Queen of England forever *the complete government over their land.*

THE SECOND

The Queen of England agrees to protect the Chiefs, the sub-tribes and all the people of New Zealand in *the unqualified exercise of their chieftainship over their lands, villages and all their treasures.* But on the other hand, the Chiefs of the Confederation and all the Chiefs will sell land to the Queen at a price agreed to by the person owning it and by the person buying it (the latter being appointed by the Queen as her purchase agent).

THE THIRD

For this agreed arrangement therefore, concerning the Government of the Queen, the Queen of England will protect all the ordinary people of New Zealand and will give them the same rights and duties of citizenship as the people of England.

(Signed) WILLIAM HOBSON
Consul and Lieutenant-Governor

We, the chiefs of the Confederation of the Tribes of New Zealand who are gathered here at Waitangi, and we also the Chiefs of New Zealand, understand the meaning of these words which we have accepted and totally agree. Thereby we have marked our names and our marks.

This has been done at Waitangi on the sixth day of February, in the year of our Lord 1840.

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CONTEMPORARY COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION: THE NORTHERN TERRITORY'S COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND ABORIGINAL DEVELOPMENT

Martin Mowbray*

The local government system was an appropriate way of meeting the problems of governing a primitive country whose population was at widely varying cultural levels. The people had to be assisted to a condition where they could pay for their own social services and assume increasing responsibility in the management of their own affairs. They had to be taught that the government of the country belonged to them and was not just an alien system imposed by superior force (Downs 1980, 102).

These candid words are taken from a Department of Home Affairs publication and were written by Ian Downs, a long term administrator, politician and planter in Papua New Guinea. While the circumstances of colonial Papua New Guinea and colonial Northern Territory are radically different, the passage just quoted suggests that the place of local government in either situation may have some remarkable and instructive similarities. (The term 'colonial' is used in the ordinary sense, as a policy of a people with origins in some other state seeking to extend or retain their authority over other peoples or territories.)

In this paper I will argue that this is indeed the case. That is, that local government systems provide colonial governments with a means for the management of the indigenous people that they mean to integrate into the dominant culture.

In the past there has been very little interest in the relationship between Aborigines and local government in Australia. Administrators and authors concerned with local government, at best, ignored Aborigines. Aborigines and those who wrote about Aborigines generally ignored local government as an institution. However, since 1986, there has been a proliferation of research and policy papers around the country - in New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, and not the least in the Northern Territory. This interest in the Northern Territory, not coincidentally, has come at the same time as a major push by the Northern Territory government to persuade remote Aboriginal settlements to incorporate as community government councils under its *Local Government Act 1985*. It has also come at the same time as a government supported push for statehood and against Aboriginal land rights.

Background of community government

The 1960s saw the granting of Commonwealth electoral franchise to Aborigines and the emergence of various local service organisations with at least some degree of Aboriginal participation. Councils of some sort began to be appointed or elected in Aboriginal settlements. These became vehicles for at least tokenistic consultation and expression of Aboriginal opinion on circumscribed issues.

*The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the Central Land Council.

The advent of government grants to local organisations prompted legal incorporation under whatever legislation that was available. In the Northern Territory this was generally the *Associations Incorporation Act*.

The first report of the (Woodward) Aboriginal Land Rights Commission in 1973 identified a need for a specialised form of incorporation for community councils. The resultant *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976* did not come into force until 1977, accompanying the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976*. This legislation has never been promoted by government in the Northern Territory. Many of its features, however, were embodied in the Northern Territory *Local Government Act* of 1979 and 1985. This fact contradicts simplistic claims that community government was specially developed in the Northern Territory for Northern Territory needs (eg Wolfe 1987, 3).

Only recently have any Northern Territory Aboriginal communities or towns applied for incorporation as councils under the Commonwealth legislation. Apparently influenced by the opposition of the Northern Territory government, the Commonwealth's Registrar is stalling on the applications.

The Northern Territory government's vigorous promotion of its *Local Government Act* has led fourteen communities or towns, not all Aboriginal, to incorporate as community government councils. This trend, however, has been at a much slower rate than the Northern Territory government has predicted and wanted.

Over the last few years, the Northern Territory government has been busily promoting community government through propaganda, in the form of pamphlets, newspapers, videos, and other literature, as well as through ministerial lobbying and systematic pressure from the Office of Local Government.

While community government is being offered as evidence of the Northern Territory government's commitment to Aboriginal self determination, the government appears to be unprepared to accept a community's rejection. A very clear and unambiguous 'no' from people at Finke in 1988, for example, has been followed by continued pressure. At the same time, the Northern Territory government has ruled out community government council status for its own township of Yulara and for town camp organisations that carry out municipal-like functions.

Community government ideology

Northern Territory government propaganda about community government features a range of myths. One of the most inventive is one with an anthropological overlay provided by Professor David Turner, a favoured Northern Territory government consultant. This is that community government is especially well suited for Aborigines because, being rooted in the Anglo-American municipal model, it closely resembles Australian Aboriginal culture. The latter, Turner suggests, is 'inherently a municipal culture' (Turner 1986, 9-10). Given the traditional concern of municipalities for services to property, this is a most peculiar formulation indeed.

Another element in Northern Territory community government ideology is that community government is especially well suited for economic development. The Northern Territory's Economic Development Strategy paper claims that the spread of community government will provide an 'industry and employment base away from the two main population centres' (NT Government 1988b, 8). The Northern Territory

Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development Policy makes a similar suggestion (NT Government 1988a, 3). In support, a recent North Australia Research Unit publication claims that community government provides special opportunities, over and above those offered by other available forms of local government, for locally initiated commercial development (Ellanna *et al.* 1988, vi). Other than the fact that the functions of community government may include commercial enterprise, there is no substantiation for the claim that adoption of community government puts a community in a better place to develop commercially. It could just as well be that profitable commercial undertakings by a council could lead to withdrawal of equivalent government support.

One of the crassest suggestions made to communities about community government is that such incorporation will attract more money for amenities, services or commercial enterprises. Again, no evidence supports such claims.

In any case, the truth is that economic development requires significant finance over and above that required for the essential services that many communities are not even able to maintain. Impoverished populations with little or no savings cannot produce substantial incomes themselves. Day to day survival is obviously a higher priority than creation of wealth. The problem of poverty must be addressed directly if economic development strategies are to be successful.

Another crude selling point for community government is that it is real or legal local government, while community councils are not. Communities are fed the simplistic line that adoption of community government will make them like the proper towns throughout the country. This sales pitch is remarkably reminiscent of that used in Papua New Guinea as reported by Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories 1951-63:

The approach was simple. The initiative came from the Australian officer. With variations suited to circumstances he said in effect to the people, 'Don't you think it would be a good idea if you had a council just like the people over at _____?' (He named some neighbouring group whom they envied.) When curiosity had been stimulated, he told them in effect, with local variations, that when they got a council, they would be able to do such things as build a council house, get a lighting plant, start a rice-mill, have a saw-bench, buy a vehicle or do something else which they coveted but which was beyond their means as individuals in a village They were told of the advantages of accepting a tax in order to get funds for common purposes, and this was readily acceptable to them (Hasluck 1976, 242).

Another line is that community government gives communities more control over their affairs. The Northern Territory government's propaganda series, Aboriginal Video Magazine, repeatedly suggests that movement to community government by Aboriginal communities automatically means greater control and power at the local level. The Northern Territory Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development Policy states that 'the Government's commitment to promoting community government in remote areas is a major step towards self determination for those communities (1988a, 3). In another video program, 'Taking Care of Business', a senior government officer solemnly states that 'if there is one thing that the government wants to do, it is to give power from Darwin back to the people on the communities'. Without evidence or examples, he adds that 'this is working really well on many communities'.

The major channel for government control of communities is not necessarily the legislation itself, but the financial arrangements that determine the scope and impact of

council activities. What a community is empowered to do is very different from what it has the resources to do.

Local government In Papua New Guinea

In order to better appreciate the possible motives and effects of the Northern Territory government's drive to incorporate settlements under the *Local Government Act* it may be useful at this point to take a step backward and consider an account of the application of local government by the Australian government in another colonial context - Papua New Guinea.

In the decolonisation period, local government in Papua New Guinea had a number of key functions for the Australian administration. These included: law and order and controlled political development, political education, and infrastructure provision through local taxation and mobilisation of labour. Introduction of local government also served as evidence of responsible United Nations trusteeship in the face of international scrutiny. (For the indigenous people, local government appeared as a vehicle for political opportunity and gaining resources, not previously available.)

The introduction of local government in Papua New Guinea, meant an increase in the amount of government and level of state intervention. In Bonney's words, 'local government was one of the subsidiary institutions of colonialism, generally introduced at a late stage as a device to contribute to socialisation for western style politics' (Bonney 1982, 113). It was in Papua New Guinea a logical part of Australian post-war intervention, that was principally directed at turning Papua New Guinea into 'a secure and profitable centre for the expansion of Australian commercial, agricultural and industrial capital' (Amarshi 1979, 38).

Close similarities in the motivation of administrators for introduction of local government in the decolonisation period between British Africa and Australian Papua New Guinea can be traced.

The *Papua New Guinea Act 1949* provided for the establishment, by ordinance, of native village councils. The 'Native Village Councils Ordinance' was approved the same year. The official local government policy was written by DM Fenbury, the Senior Native Affairs Officer, who had been sent by the Army to Tanganyika (Tanzania), another United Nations Trusteeship, to study local government following the Second World War (Fenbury 1978, 16). In 'Native Local Government Memorandum No 1' (1952), he enunciated four main objectives:

To provide a medium for teaching natives to assume a measure of responsibility for their local affairs in accordance with democratic procedure;

to provide area machinery and local funds for extending and coordinating social etc. services at village level and hence to enlist active native support in endeavours to raise native living standards;

to face the native population squarely with the facts that progress is inseparable from good order and industrious habits, and that social services have to be paid for;

to prepare the way for ultimately fitting the native people, in a way they can understand, into the Territory's political system (Lambert 1957, 465; Fenbury 1978, 195; Downs 1980, 103).

In 1960 Hasluck urged his administration to try to contain the political imagination and aspirations of the people.

This lesson of responsibility is one of the fundamental lessons we have to teach in political advancement and our officers should try to get the native people to face up to the things they can and should do themselves rather than encourage them to drift into the popular Australian habit of carrying resolutions, expressing vague wishes or making demands on someone else to do everything for them (Hasluck 1976, 244).

Many observers saw local government as arms of the Administration (eg Hegarty 1979, 189; Downs 1980, 425), introduced in some areas 'with the deliberate intention of harnessing indigenous political activity. Any sign of political activity was discouraged' (Hegarty 1979, 189). The crucial limitation on indigenous influence or pressure was, according to Mortimer, that it should not disturb Australian dominance (Mortimer 1979, 165).

In 1969 Rowley was still able to assert that local government councils were operating as extensions of the bureaucracy (Rowley 1969, 15). Other observers have also asserted that local governments were mere adjuncts of central administration, dependent on the latter for finance, legitimation and other support (eg Bonney 1982, 126; and see Fitzpatrick 1980, 106).

Hasluck once homilised that 'the wisdom of government is to anticipate and avoid the building up of a destructive flood, and ensure that the energy of people flows along quieter and happier channels' (Fitzpatrick 1980, 105). The Minister was mindful of the tensions associated with nationalist movements in Africa and hoped that in Papua New Guinea that the future 'political rallying cry would not be against 'foreign exploiters', bringing racial antagonism' (Hasluck 1976, 172, 366). He saw councils as a means 'to contain and divert indigenous political action' (Fitzpatrick 1980, 106). Fenbury is quoted as envisaging local government as 'a device for sublimating the energies of native leadership into local channels' (Simpson 1976, 37) - a frank confirmation of official policy.

The lesson to be drawn from this glimpse at the Australian application of local government in Papua New Guinea is that local government in colonial settings is not necessarily positive, or even simply benign. To pursue this point further it is instructive to review the kind of advantages that community government offers a colonial administration like the Northern Territory government.

Territory motives

In 1986 I argued that the Northern Territory government's enthusiasm for community government was explained in significant measure by its wish to reduce financial support to Aboriginal communities. Reductions in the level of Commonwealth grants to the Territory inspired the government to pass on these cuts to Aboriginal organisations. Since 1985, when the cuts began, average real terms reductions probably amount to between 25 and 50 per cent of government financial support. The government has suggested that communities are able to help make up the shortfalls through collection of rates, service

charges or rent. The facility of the *Local Government Act* for enforcing such payment legitimates the promotion of community government schemes.

Community government, thus, becomes a convenient device for displacing revenue raising responsibility to Aborigines and to localities. This is well illustrated by the following announcement in Aboriginal Video Magazine: 'Money is getting harder to find. The government just does not have the same amount of cash as it used to be able to give to communities. So, self help it is' (Aboriginal Video Magazine 12).

While community government has been used to rationalise funding cuts, other uses have been less defensive and are becoming more prominent. Currently community government is being aggressively promoted as part of government efforts to step up the colonisation process. It would appear to be particularly suitable for bringing control of land and planning in Aboriginal communities or towns on Aboriginal land more within the purview of the Northern Territory government. The Northern Territory government is clearly interested in expanding its sphere of jurisdiction in relation to Aboriginal affairs. Recently, it has renewed its push for control of land rights, arguing for transfer of Darwin of land rights legislation, disingenuously labelled 'patriation'.

This thrust is also evident in the 1988 amendments to the *Interpretation Act*, rendering some Aboriginal land public land for the purpose of the operation of other legislation. Amendments to other Territory legislation in 1988 have a similar effect. For example, the *Aboriginal Land Act*, *Summary Offences Act* and the *Fences Act* were altered to make access to Aboriginal land by non-Aborigines easier. None of these changes involved consultation with Aborigines.

Community government schemes provide for the inclusion of outstations and other land surrounding larger settlements. This is despite the fact that many people have moved to outstations precisely because they wish to escape from the larger settlements or towns.

The present Minister for Local Government's determination to bring Aboriginal town camps under the control of municipal councils may be seen as part of the same movement. While this is a strategy for co-opting the power base of Tangentyere and Jularikari councils, something keenly felt by the government and bureaucracy, it is also a means for bringing town camps in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek more within the ambit of the Northern Territory government and allied organisations.

In a very similar vein, community government is a device for overseeing the broader affairs of Aboriginal communities. For example, an organisational model linking all formal organisations and issues in Yuendumu, from the Tribal Assembly of Elders to the media centre, language, land, sacred sites and ceremonies to a community government council at the centre has been developed. This model has been on display in Yuendumu and happens to be uncritically reproduced in a recent NARU publication (Ellanna *et al.* 1988, 25). [Eds' note -Yuendumu does not have community government. The model mentioned here was drawn up by local people who refused to accept the NT government model.] In Lajamanu, the Community Government Council has announced itself to be the sole 'Seat of Authority' in the Lajamanu Community. In a letter (25 August 1988) it has told the outstation resource centre (Walaigh) that 'anything you wish to initiate that affects, or involves this community must go before the Council for approval'. Similar things have happened elsewhere.

The role of the Office of Local Government in the advertisement, shortlisting and selection of staff for community councils enhances this overseer role. Through these

means the Northern Territory is able to secure staff with pro-government views, or who are at least less likely to take an oppositional stance.

Broad oversight and control of Aboriginal organisations is also facilitated by rationalisation of the distribution of funds to Aboriginal organisations. While multiple funding sources may be a headache for their recipients, they at least provide some protection against the vagaries of single granting bodies. The Territory government has indicated a desire to channel all funds for local services through either municipal or community government councils.

In general terms, the promotion of community government suggests that progress is really being made in the administration of Aboriginal affairs by the Northern Territory government.

Community government councils are structures that could be promoted as alternatives to land councils. The Northern Territory government is currently campaigning for replacement of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act* with its own legislation. The Northern Territory government is also hostile towards the existing and relatively broadly based Central and Northern Land Councils. The Territory is actively supporting groups calling for small and localised land councils. Being small and localised, community government councils match the Northern Territory government argument that Aboriginal people should be able to deal directly with outside groups such as mining companies. Being small and localised, they are also less able to oppose powerful interests. A number of community government councils are used as resource bases for opposition to land councils.

Consistent with the direction of taking over responsibility for land rights and replacing powerful land councils, community government councils offer structures whereby Aboriginal land can be controlled by persons other than traditional owners as conceived in the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act*, including non-Aborigines.

In broad terms, community government is a device for instituting accountability for local activities to a neo assimilationist government fundamentally unsympathetic to principles such as Aboriginal self determination and inalienable land rights. (By 'neo assimilationist' I refer to an undeclared revival in an official policy of assimilationism in the administration of Aboriginal affairs. Instead of 'assimilation', the government uses terms such as 'mainstreaming' and uses 'special needs' as the basis for service allocating.)

It should be noted, however, that whatever self determining facility any form of local government allows a community, other factors may have an overriding effect. Perhaps the most fundamental factor is the integrity of the Territory government itself. If it does not like a local decision, any number of means are available for intervention. With amendments in 1988 to the *Interpretation Act*, the government has indicated its preparedness to legislate on Aboriginal land retrospectively. Devices such as the *Planning Act*, building and health regulations, to name the most obvious, are readily available to negate local decisions. Various examples have occurred. At Amoonguna, using planning legislation the government opposed a local wish for establishment of an abattoir. At Daguragu, immediately after incorporation as a community government, the council was challenged under building regulations. While there may be good reasons for the use of such powers, they can also be used for arbitrary intervention for which they were apparently not designed. And, of course, the government may intervene in the affairs of a community government council under the *Local Government Act* itself.

Suggested policy changes

In the final section of this paper I will review some policy changes that are necessary if the foregoing problems are to be reduced. A basic principle embodied in these proposals is that adequate finance and adequate local infrastructure is essential for any forms of Aboriginal development at the local level. I recognise, of course, that money is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for development.

Current levels of financial assistance to Aboriginal local governments are seriously deficient. Since 1984-85 the value of Northern Territory government grants to major Aboriginal communities has fallen significantly, a fact not denied by anyone. Ironically, the introduction of funds due to the Commonwealth *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1986* has done nothing to reverse or hinder this trend.

Full account should be taken of revenue raising and expenditure disabilities of Aboriginal councils. Aboriginal councils are generally poorly placed for raising any significant proportion of their expenditure needs. They are also likely to have a greater demand on their revenue, through the extent of need and cost of delivery of services to remote communities.

In order to ensure a more adequate pool of finance for catch-up programs, equalisation between the capacity of local governments to meet local needs should be effected horizontally, on a national basis. All functionally defined local governments, whether or not they are recognised by the Northern Territory government, should share in financial equalisation. Responsibility for revenue sharing should like with the Commonwealth government.

A clear set of standards, or targets, should be established for the provision of amenities in Aboriginal communities or towns. These standards should reflect the Australian average, not minimum levels of amenity. They should be established in conjunction with Aboriginal people.

Standards for local services should not simply reflect 'average standard performance' provided by local governments elsewhere. Average service levels of current mainstream local government, as envisaged for the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act* and as expounded elsewhere (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 1987 and Morton Consulting Services 1988) are not sufficient.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs' proposed policy for 'Aboriginal Participation and Equity in Local Government' (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 1987, 20) notes that allocating under the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act* are meant to be made in such a way as to 'ensure that each local government body in the state is able to function, by reasonable effort, at a standard not lower than the average standard of other local governing bodies in the state'. This formulation neglects need as a basis for allocating financial assistance.

Average levels of local government services are one thing, need is quite another. What is adequate where there are high levels of individual well-being may be quite inadequate where there are low levels of health and welfare. The policy ignores the plain fact that Aboriginal needs are different from those of mainstream Australia.

Achievement of equity in access to services must take into account the reality of separate levels of access to private facilities. Localities or populations which have a high level of

private services have less relative need of public amenities than those with little private amenity.

Adequate information for monitoring whether or not progress is being made in attaining targets of amenity should be collected and made available. Present provision for the collection of social and economic indicators is seriously inadequate.

Explicit and measurable targets for local amenities should be declared. These should be the object of clearly defined 'catch-up' programs. Finance for such programs is urgently required.

Part of this catch-up program should be specific purpose infrastructure to overcome current disadvantages and bring Aboriginal communities up to an acceptable standard. It must be recognised that current levels of financial assistance are incapable of overcoming vast backlogs in infrastructure in Aboriginal communities and towns.

Northern Territory government statistics show that in 1984 there were 416 Aboriginal communities with populations of less than 100. By 1986 the figure had risen to 450 (Northern Territory Treasury 1986, 71). Government and other reports (Kinhill Stearns 1986a and b), however, indicate very extensive gaps between existing basic essential services and standard requirements. The cost of such services is hundreds of millions of dollars. For a sample of 114 minor communities the Territory government indicates 'a current backlog of services provision in the order of \$335 million'. By its own admission, this figure is conservative. The government's studies demonstrate an extensive gap 'between a reasonable level of service and current actual expenditure' in remote communities. The government also recognises the very limited revenue raising capacity of these communities (Northern Territory Treasury 1986, 78-82).

Whilst it may be necessary for Aboriginal local governments to ensure that revenue is directed at achieving target levels of service, there must be room for discretion in the particular shape of services and how they are implemented. There must also be finance available for the various local organisations' own economic and social strategies.

Attainment of real equity in local government revenue must take into account: all grants, tied and untied; all loans and loan raising opportunities; indirect financial assistance through concessions, rebates and refunds, and all expenditure disability factors.

The central objective of Aboriginal local government policy should be to ensure that adequately resourced and properly empowered Aboriginal local government is established and guaranteed by the Commonwealth. This should be within national provisions for Aboriginal self determination. Pressure should be put on the Northern Territory government to vacate the field of local government on Aboriginal land, in favour of the Commonwealth.

Support should be provided for the use by Aboriginal communities of the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1986* as the preferable form of incorporation as local governing bodies. This is not to say that the Commonwealth legislation is not without problems of its own, such as in the authority of the Registrar in approving alterations to the functions of a council (Dalrymple 1988).

Incorporation under Commonwealth legislation is, nevertheless, preferable for several reasons. The most fundamental of these is that the matter of Aboriginal self determination is one between the Aboriginal people and the non-Aboriginal people of Australia. Self determination for Aborigines is a right that only the Commonwealth government can

guarantee. At a more immediate level, the Commonwealth government may be more sensitive to Aboriginal interests than the Territory government. It is, at least, in a better position electorally to support Aborigines. That is, if it had the fortitude to do so. The Commonwealth's constituency would appear to be less antagonistic towards the needs and rights of Aborigines than that of the Northern Territory.

Further the federal Act is complementary to the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act*. The *Northern Territory Local Government Act* makes no reference to the scheme of protection for the rights of traditional owners entrenched in the *Land Rights Act*. There is potential conflict between the Northern Territory Act and the *Land Rights Act*, which does not exist under the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act* (Dalrymple 1988, 11).

Finally, consultative arrangements should be established to ensure direct Aboriginal influence over policy determination and influence at the local level. These should entail an effective peak representative body, either of Aboriginal local governments or of the range of Aboriginal organisations. The existing Community Government Association is totally inadequate. It is a puppet organisation of the Northern Territory government, set up in part to pre-empt formation of an association of local Aboriginal councils. The Community Government Association is politically inert, offering no effective advocacy role for its constituent councils. It is totally uncritical of the Northern Territory government, which set it up and on which it is almost totally financially dependent. It has evidently failed to even murmur a criticism over the cuts in funding to its member bodies.

Conclusion

Aboriginal communities and towns in the Northern Territory continue to suffer serious economic and social disadvantages. At the present time there appears to be little prospect of these conditions changing for the better. Unfortunately, the Northern Territory government's community government provisions are worse than irrelevant. Despite being vigorously sold as some kind of solution, as a contribution to self sufficiency and self determination, community government acts as window dressing for a neo assimilationist government that searches for opportunities for opposing Aboriginal development.

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THE CHANGING ROLES FOR ABORIGINAL BUSH TOWNS

Owen Stanley

Rural Aboriginal communities have changed rapidly in the last twenty five years or so. The word 'community' is somewhat ambiguous since it is sometimes used to mean a town or a town and associated outstations or simply a set of social relations. To avoid potential ambiguities, I will use the word 'towns' to make it clear that I am not concerned with the roles of outstations. The change in name also serves to remind us that these communities have many points of similarity with European or open towns. I am concerned with 'Aboriginal bush towns' meaning towns under the administrative control of Aborigines, on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory (NT), located away from European urban centres and large enough to have some form of local government.

Origins of Aboriginal towns

Aboriginal bush towns emerged in various ways but are generally the creation of European policy in relation to Aborigines. Many of the older towns were developed as mission stations (such as Hermannsburg, Nguiu, Daly River Mission, Port Keats, Yirrkala, Ngukurr etc). The original inspiration for their development was to provide religious instruction, to change Aboriginal practices which were thought to be undesirable, to protect Aborigines against attacks and exploitation by Europeans, to provide some medical assistance and to provide some European goods. In the early days these missions were funded largely from church and voluntary contributions, later by local Aboriginal production and more recently mainly by government even though some of the goods and services are provided by the church organisations. The churches however still make a substantial independent contribution in some cases.

Another group of towns had their origins as food depots or government settlements (such as Haast Bluff, Papunya, Maningrida and Barunga). Most of these were established during the 'welfare' period and were motivated by a number of factors. These included an attempt to slow the urban drift from the bush to European towns by providing facilities in centres away from European towns, desire to provide health and education services, the need to provide places where dispossessed people could live, and the need to provide training to assist Aborigines assimilate into the European community. While at various times there was plenty of employment at these settlements and there were attempts to make them self-sufficient, employment was generally intended to have a large training component and many residents of the towns were expected eventually to find employment in European organisations and outstations.

Some Aboriginal bush towns commenced as training stations for cattle work and were never intended to develop as major centres of population (such as Wugularr - previously Beswick Station). In general, only employees, trainees and their dependents were allowed to live on these stations and the trainees were expected to leave the station and get employment on European stations once they were adequately trained. It was generally believed that these trainees needed to be isolated from their communities in order for training to be effective. Over time, however, these training stations developed into residential towns.

There is a group of towns and large outstations (the distinction between these is sometimes not clear) which developed once a cattle station was transferred to Aboriginal ownership (such as Willowra Station, Mount Allan, Kalkaringi and Amanbidji Station). The populations of these station communities sometimes grow very rapidly once the land becomes Aboriginal owned and the government responds by funding town-like development on the station.

Finally, there are some Aboriginal towns which have developed as staging positions for the development of outstations in an area. These will be called 'staging towns'. These towns begin as outstations themselves. Aborigines commonly move to outstations in the following stepwise fashion. An outstation is developed within or on the border of an area to be resettled by a group who were previously living in towns. The population of the outstation grows as people arrive and work up to moving to their own estates to establish their own outstations. The residents recognise that the staging town is not their long term home and acknowledge their intention to move further into their own country. In the meantime, however, the growth of population requires the establishment of town-like facilities to serve the town's (temporarily large) population and the neighbouring outstations developing in the area. Over time people leave the staging town and move to their own outstations and the town's population declines. It is likely to remain, however, as a regional centre for health, education, shopping and organisational facilities.

The development of Aboriginal bush towns

The older Aboriginal towns have gone through at least three stages of development.

In the first stage they were meagrely funded and were concerned with performing specific functions, such as religious instruction, or providing health and education services at an elementary level, or training in specific occupations. Provision of substantial housing was not a high priority.

The second stage took place in what is called the Welfare period of the Government administration of Aborigines. During this stage, which ended in the early 1970s, the government developed missions and settlements as substantial production centres. Low money wages (more thought of as pocket money) and the fact that rewards for effort were tied to the town (through payment in kind) meant that production of European goods and services could survive in these Aboriginal towns when they could not in European towns. By the late Welfare period, 1967-68, most missions and settlements produced fruit and vegetables, meat, eggs, sewing and artefacts, while many produced milk, seafood and riverfood, fodder crops, forestry and concrete bricks. Most of the produce was used for local consumption but some was 'exported' to other Aboriginal communities and to European Australia. A visitor to any of the older Aboriginal towns can see the remains of the garden, cattle yards, pig pens, fowl house, freezers and workshops used in this period (Stanley 1985, 177).

The current situation

The extension of equal pay to Aborigines, a change to payments in cash and their entitlement to social security payments in the late 1960s and early 1970s resulted in the cost structure of these Aboriginal towns conforming to those of open European towns, with the consequent decline in production of the old type of town and the emergence of the third stage. In this stage, which is still current, the larger towns are almost exclusively dependent on government funding; there is very little production of goods for domestic

consumption; almost all employment is in the area of council activities, schools, health service, police, housing construction and retailing, although in some towns there is substantial employment in cattle or buffalo activities, and artefact production; there is relatively little (compared with outstations) subsistence activity; there are many Europeans working in the towns; and there is a high rate of unemployment amongst Aborigines. For the purpose of illustration Table 1 shows the employment data for the combined workforces of Barunga and Wugular for the census years 1976, 1981 and 1986. These figures clearly show the decline in agricultural employment and the growth in 'public administration' and 'community services' over the years. These figures are typical of Aboriginal towns.

Table 1
Aboriginal employment from the Barunga-Wugularr
census, 1976, 1981, 1986

	1976	1981	1986
	%	%	%
Agriculture	32.0	14.5	2.3
Mining	-	-	-
Manufacturing	4.0	-	1.2
Electricity, water, gas	-	-	-
Construction	4.8	4.8	4.7
Wholesale/retail trade	12.0	0.8	7.9
Transport, storage	-	-	-
Communications	-	-	-
Finance	-	-	-
Public administration/ defence	18.4	3.2	-
Community services	20.8	75.8	82.4
Personal services	-	-	-
Not classified, not stated	8.0	0.8	1.5
Total per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total no	125	124	171
Unemployed no (per cent)	23(15.5)	24(16.2)	53(23.7)
Labour force no	148	148	224
Aboriginal population no	566	613	678

Sources: ABS Census 76, Aboriginal/Torres Strait Island Tables, mf Batch No 76.501, Beswick

ABS Census 81, Small Area Data - Collection Districts, mf Batch No 81.201 (CD 10605)

ABS Census 86, Small Area Data - Collection Districts, mf Batch No C86.201 (CD's 030702 and 030706)

The larger Aboriginal towns now have most of the physical and organisational features of remote open towns. Indeed their streetscapes are similar although the buildings in most Aboriginal towns are of a much lower quality. The Aboriginal towns have council

buildings (office, workshop, store etc), council plant and yards. There are electricity, water and sewerage services, sport facilities, parks or open space, and sometimes street trees. There is a school, a clinic, a store and perhaps a church. There is extensive housing with a variety of styles, from the simpler iron shed and Kingstrand styles which were built in the welfare period to the larger often brick houses built in more recent times. There are also buildings for community organisations (pensioners' kitchen or women's clubs, for example). Finally there are the buildings, yards and plant associated with the enterprises such as the cattle company and the art and craft enterprises.

The organisations in Aboriginal towns also mirror those in open towns though there are substantial differences. The most important organisation in an Aboriginal town is the community council. In the 1960s and 1970s the missions and government established organisations called 'tribal councils' (etc) which had no real power but which were the antecedents of local government in Aboriginal communities. Throughout the 1970s local government-type bodies became incorporated under various legislation and now most are incorporated under the local government legislation.

They perform the same type of local government functions as those performed in European towns, except that they also control permission to enter Aboriginal land and are often involved in attempting to solve social and (informally) Aboriginal political problems. Usually, all permanent adult Aboriginal members of the town are entitled to vote although there may be arrangements which specify the number of councillors coming from each skin group (eg Nguiu) or from each region (Barunga/Wugularr).

A number of councils have taken up community government (Lajamanu, Angurugu, Milikapiti, Pularumpi, Barunga/ Wugularr, Wallace Rockhole and Nguiu) (Ellanna *et al.* 1988, 20). The taking up of community government greatly expands the possible roles for the council in the community, especially in the area of enterprise management and development.

Aboriginal towns possess a number of other organisations, most of which are incorporated under the associations incorporating legislation although some are incorporated under companies legislation. They included the Housing Association (which owns houses, possibly builds and repairs them, and allocates them to tenants), the Store Association (which manages the store), there may be a beer club, cattle company and there may also be organisations which are involved in organising artefact and art and craft production and marketing (see especially Nguiu).

The organisations in Aboriginal towns dealing with housing, trading and production, or tourism differ substantially from the equivalents found in European towns in a number of ways. Firstly, every adult Aboriginal member of the community usually has voting rights except for art and craft organisations in which case the regular workers will be the members or shareholders. Secondly, the committee members, managers, coordinators and (Council's) councillors are all drawn from a small group of people with each person being involved in a range of organising. These people are chosen because of their interest in being involved in the organisations, their experience and education in European-type organisations and their positions in Aboriginal society. Partly because of this, these organisations tend to be managed in accordance with a set of unified values. Thirdly, profit is generally a minor goal for these organisations. More important goals include: maximising Aboriginal employment (in the cattle company, house construction and repairs, artefact production), managing alcohol problems (by the beer club following certain opening hours and imposing beer purchase limits) and improving nutrition (by the store following certain stocking and pricing policies). Fourthly, these organisations have a range of policies which are designed to assist the needy. Prices of goods at the store may

be set so as to subsidise 'basic' goods (flour, rice, meat etc); profits from organisations (especially the beer club) may be used to support a kitchen or 'meals-on-wheels' for old people and children; and wage earners may be taxed to subsidise the provision of services for the needy.

In at least one community (Ngukurr) there have emerged private organisations of the conventional European type. These are (extended) family run companies which obtain contract work from the council, housing association and elsewhere. There is often much resistance to this type of organisation since it is often considered to be selfish and unAboriginal, but clearly it has certain efficiency benefits in some contexts. The Barunga council is interested in promoting this type of organisation in some contexts (Ellanna *et al.* 1988, 240). This type of organisation however, is likely to remain relatively unimportant in terms of the percentage of the Aboriginal workforce employed by it.

Like open towns, there is also a range of voluntary organisations, the most important of which is the 'mothers club' or 'womens association'. These voluntary organisations are usually run by women and are involved in caring for the aged, children and disadvantaged and are involved in providing encouragement and instruction in such areas as nutrition, house maintenance, child care and art and craft work.

There are also advisory committees for the school and sometimes the clinic, often composed of Europeans and Aborigines. These bodies assist communication between the institutions and the community, carry the institutions' views to the community and allow the community's views to be heard and have an influence on the behaviour of these institutions. They also increase the acceptance of the institution in the community.

Finally, the town may house institutions which are concerned with the region rather than the town. Outstation support organisations are usually located in the central town rather than at an outstation. On Bathurst Island, the Tiwi Land Council is located at Nguuu.

Aboriginal towns have failed

It is quite clear from the above description that although Aboriginal towns appear, at first glance, to be similar to the European towns upon which they are based, they are, in fact, very different. Aborigines have not been the passive and unwitting acceptors of the institutions imposed on them. They have manipulated these institutions to make them workable given the Aboriginal political, social and religious system.

Nevertheless, Aboriginal towns have clearly failed to be an appropriate form of organisation for housing and providing a living for the great bulk of Aboriginal people. The best overall evidence for this is that Aborigines have voted 'with their feet' against Aboriginal towns. Contrary to the 'urban drift' of classical development economics, there has in fact been an urban exodus to the bush.

People have moved away from towns from the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Aborigines were beginning to gain a real choice as to where to live. The outstation movement began in both the centre (for example the Pintupi people leaving Papunya) and in the north (the development at Peppimenarti and people leaving Yirrkala for outstations). This movement has involved people who were previously living in Aboriginal towns and elsewhere moving back to their traditional estates, establishing small communities of about traditional size (perhaps 20 to 40 individuals), re-establishing traditional authority, social and religious structures, and re-engaging in subsistence activities, many of which were suspended while living in the towns. Most large Aboriginal towns in the NT have

lost in the order of half of their populations compared with their peaks to outstations. Barunga and Wugularr are probably going through the process now (their combined populations have fallen from 678 individuals in 1986 to 489 in 1987 (Ellanna *et al.* 1988, 194) as people have moved to outstations in the Bulman area. Taylor's (1989) data shows that this process is continuing (see Taylor, this volume). In his Table 1, ten towns with populations between 200 and 999 (all Aboriginal) had lost population between the census years 1981 and 1986.

The following is a list of reasons which were commonly cited by Aborigines and others for people leaving the towns. Some of these reasons are more easily verified than others but we will not attempt a summary of evidence here. The most important fact is that they are believed to be reasons for moving from the towns.

1. *Location*

Aborigines want to be near their traditional estates: they need to perform ceremonies in certain areas, they wish to have their children born near certain sites and wish to die near certain sites, they need to burn certain country and to otherwise look after their country, and they generally want to live in a country which is theirs and where their human and spiritual ancestors lived. For Aborigines, one piece of land is certainly not as good as any other. Apart from these factors which may be described as 'pull' factors, there are a number of factors to do with the inadequacy of Aboriginal towns, which are 'pushing' Aborigines to outstations. They include the following:

2. *Dominance by Europeans*

Aboriginal towns and the institutions they contain are the inventions of Europeans, their funding is mainly from government sources, and the way individuals and institutions behave is restricted by European Australian legislation and notions of accountability. Also, many of the influential positions in the towns are held by Europeans. The towns are a major way in which European culture is superimposed on Aboriginal culture and many Aborigines find this excessively oppressive and leave for outstations to escape it - to go 'their own way'.

3. *Conflicts*

Traditional Aboriginal society (authority, religious activities and possibly language) is based on relatively small groups of people. The Aboriginal towns brought disparate groups together who had not had extensive and continuous contact with each other. This new grouping, often composed of over 1,000 individuals, resulted in conflict, including fights, sorcery and murders. These problems have continued throughout the history of the towns and although councils and other organisations have attempted to solve these problems, they still remain.

4. *Domination by some groups*

Aboriginal towns are built on one group's country. In most cases this gives the owning group substantial control over any activity to do with land and in some cases it gives them additional influence over all events. This can reach extreme forms. For instance, in at least one case (Mornington Island) the owning group have prevented the migrants from speaking their language or performing ceremonies.

Government has sometimes (probably unwittingly) encouraged this. The bi-lingual program, for example, involves teaching all children in a community language for part of

their school life. The language chosen is often the language of the dominant group (for example Ngangikurrungkurr at Daly River Mission or Kriol at Barunga) and threatens the 'minor' or migrant languages. Many of these languages are revived when people move to outstations.

5. *Decline in traditional activity*

The change from a small group to a large group society in the towns, living with foreign groups and living distant from sacred sites have often resulted in a decline in traditional political, religious and social activities, with the consequent rise in social problems and decline in a culture of great worth.

6. *Health*

People in the towns often have poor health which is related to excessive use of alcohol, lack of exercise, poor nutrition and contagious diseases. These conditions are often improved when people move to outstations. There is now some hard evidence on these matters. For instance, in a survey in 1986-7 by Watson, Fleming and Alexander (1988, 12) it was found that 40 per cent of Aborigines 15 years of age and older in major communities in the NT drank alcohol while only 30 per cent in outstations drank. Further, O'Dea, White and Sinclair (1988) found, when studying Aborigines living on an outstation in northeastern Arnhem Land who had a mixed traditional and western diet, that although the people were very lean they were not malnourished and had better health than Aborigines living in 'westernised' Aboriginal communities.

7. *Subsistence and artefact production*

Areas around towns become denuded of materials for subsistence and artefact production. Access to vehicles has reduced this problem in recent years but this access is often sporadic and the lack of materials is an important restriction on traditional activities. There is a revival in these activities once people move to outstations.

8. *Unemployment*

Despite the substantial government expenditure on training and for the purpose of creating employment, unemployment rates are very high in the towns and the alternatives of subsistence and artefact production are not often available. These factors combine to produce very low per capita incomes. By contrast, many people in outstations make a reasonable living through a combination of subsistence activities, sale of artefacts and social security incomes.

9. *Distribution of income*

Jobs, income, housing and political influence in the towns are sometimes concentrated in a relatively few individuals and families. Traditional Aboriginal society has mechanisms which result in resources being redistributed in a relatively egalitarian fashion. However, these mechanisms are muted in the towns but become stronger again when people move to outstations.

Roles for Aboriginal towns

With all of these shortcomings, do Aboriginal towns have legitimate roles?

The answer is yes. Firstly, these towns may continue to be the centre of political and social life for an area in which a large proportion of the population live in outstations. Secondly, the economies of scale in service delivery often require that services for the town and neighbouring outstations (including European employees) are located in one area. Thus the community council, the clinic, the high school and perhaps intermediate school, the main store and artefact organisation, and the outstation organisations are likely to be located in the town. This means that the Aboriginal and European employees of these organisations, as well as many school children and the sick will live in the towns. Thirdly, there will be many people who cannot or will not want to live in outstations. These include people who do not have access to their land because it is pastoral lease or town, and satisfactory arrangements (excisions or housing) have not been made to allow them to stay there, and some people may not like the conditions available at the outstations where they are entitled to live (political situation, schooling, etc). Finally, towns can provide staging positions for people planning to move further to their own country.

Conclusion

Aboriginal bush towns have 'failed' for the fundamental reasons listed above. Throwing more money at them will improve life in the towns but it will not reverse the trend to outstations.

Policy needs to recognise the changed role of the towns which now serve local and outstation people. That is, they have become more like open towns, serving themselves and a hinterland which is dependent upon them.

Policy in relation to towns and outstations is made by a range of NT government and Commonwealth government bodies. It is important that policy is coordinated so as to recognise that the towns and outstations are highly interrelated institutions.

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THE POLITICS OF A SMALL NORTHERN TERRITORY TOWN: A HISTORY OF MANAGING DEPENDENCY

John Bern

Equality or Big Man: Inadequate approaches to local politics

In this paper I discuss an aspect of the politics of the small town of Ngukurr on the Roper River. In keeping with the theme of the Conference I focus on the politics affecting the organisation and running of this small and remote town. I will concentrate on the formative period for local government in this community in order to provide an account of social processes which help to shape its politics.

There has been a tendency in some recent discussions of local politics in Aboriginal townships, including those in the Northern Territory, to highlight roles of brokerage, individual aggrandisement and social anomie. This is evident across the spectrum of social science literature on contemporary Aboriginal communities. The most succinct examples of this are the writings on local power by Gerritsen (1981) and von Sturmer (1982). These studies have been valuable in bringing to the fore the fact of Aboriginal politics in these small Aboriginal towns. However, their approach has two main defects. They present the local politics of Aboriginal towns as being both unique and aberrant. The aberration is both in relation to other forms of Aboriginal commonality and in relation to the local politics of non Aboriginal towns. They emphasise the aggrandisement of the individual, or individual family, as the central feature of political practice in Aboriginal towns. This highlights the end product of local politics at the expense of analysis of its structure and practice. Analysing politics in terms of leading individuals and interpreting the process as being concerned with the individual monopoly of resources is at best incomplete, while the emphasis on anomie suggests the political processes lack legitimacy.

There are two different approaches that identify political conflict and aggrandisement in Aboriginal towns with the disintegration or failure of those towns. One approach is the 'Traditional Society' view of Aboriginal politics and the other is the 'Big Man' approach to Aboriginal politics. These views are often but not always found in combination. In the first approach communities are seen as being less cohesive the more distant they are from being focused on a single language or land owning group. This was virtually the premise of most anthropological writing up to the late 1970s and is evidenced for example in many of the support statements on the 'Outstation Movement' throughout the 1970s and 1980s (eg Coombs 1978, 134-149; Coombs *et al* 1980; Meehan and Jones 1980; Altman 1984; Hiatt 1984). The second is the 'Big Man' view in which communities are seen to be at the mercy of leading men who are able to control the access to, and the distribution of, major resources. An emphasis on the first view posits a solution to the supposed ungovernability of Aboriginal towns by fostering their segmentation into self governing clans or language based communities. Those writers emphasising the second view, it seems to me, despair of any solution. The problem posed by this latter utopian view is that of restructuring community political relations so that these represent common interests based on equality of access, distribution and reward.

The view from 'Traditional Society' is essentially a moral one. I suggest that we might also view the 'Big Man' argument as being primarily a moral one. There is an underlying assumption that Aboriginal towns should be organised on the basis of equality and

consensus. Their populations are, after all, subject to common conditions of material deprivation and share the same class position. The 'Big Man' view may or may not be buttressed by a belief in the intrinsic egalitarianism of 'Traditional Society' and, or, the moral necessity of retaining 'traditional' patterns of discourse, decision making and authority.

In either case the descriptions of local politics emphasise such phenomena as political leaders not being representative of the range of interests in the town; the absence of agreement as to the goals of the town in its development; and internal inequities in the distribution of resources. The overall picture is one of communities which are dysfunctional. There is a breakdown of legitimate authority, related to the exercise of power by a clique controlling the avenues of communication with governments, bureaucracies and other funding agencies. 'Big Men' are not only leaders of the town but their leadership is corrupted through their control of communication with outside authorities and the access to goods and services that this brings.

The general proposition of these students of Aboriginal politics in the Northern Territory is that Aboriginal towns are unable to govern themselves. This general conclusion they apparently share with other commentators and administrators. The reasons for this supposed ungovernability are to be found in a combination of outside interference, a poor level of local comprehension and particularistic interest which give rise to local systems of patronage. What is it that these researchers, commentators and administrators are looking for? In their explanations of 'ungovernability' they appear to be idealising the past and imposing that ideal on to present behaviour. These commentators are, I would contend, looking for internal unity and harmony in the Aboriginal towns in the face of the external onslaught on the lives of the citizens of those towns.

There is also a secondary concern, which is for the amelioration of the Aborigines' dependency on handouts. This results in some writers emphasising the need for the people to provide their own subsistence (eg Altman 1984). Others place the emphasis on the need for people to control their income and expenditure. Waste, misappropriation and unequal distribution of resources are seen as barriers in the way of the hoped for amelioration.

There are problems in looking at politics in this way. These are not necessarily to do with the final conclusions but in the basic assumptions about politics. It is not very helpful to address the analysis of political structure and practice armed with an ideal(istic) model of supposed egalitarianism or even representative democracy to which those structures and practices are to measure up. You start with expectations which are bound to be dashed. These Aboriginal towns have not as yet disintegrated nor disappeared during their short history of relative political autonomy. However, neither have they enjoyed significant fiscal autonomy during that period.

The local politics of Aboriginal towns is of a similar order to that of other small towns. There is competition for positions, rewards and priorities. This competition is subject to constraints, both internal and external. A major dimension of this politics is the acquisition of power. The politics of Ngukurr has a ring to it which is I think similar to that of many small, long established communities. The fact that the people are Aboriginal has significance for some of the things that they compete about. Aboriginal identity is also significant for the nature of the relationship between town and the various institutions of government.

Aboriginal local politics is set within a wider framework in which important parameters are set by the political struggles of groups to identify and have recognised a specific set of interests. Important among these are the removal of outside constraints on the

organisation of local communities, while retaining and expanding the financial resources for this endeavour. Securing rights to land, living areas and community facilities are a vital aspect of these interests. Ngukurr politics is, like that of most localities, largely over determined by external political agendas, in which the Ngukurr people struggle not to be mere pawns.

One significant difference between the average town and Northern Territory Aboriginal towns, including Ngukurr, is the absence of a local economy providing the basis of productive activity and wage labour. What I mean by this is that in most towns in contemporary Australia there is a core of work available in industries which are the rationale for the town's existence. Historically, there may be wide variations in the levels of employment, but the long term economic basis of a town is not welfare support and the servicing of a whole population that is not productively employed, as is the case in most Aboriginal towns in northern Australia.

The impact of this fundamental difference cannot be overestimated. It means that the towns are directly dependent on governments for their survival. For those towns on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory their main assets in the struggle with governments and other outside interests are their Aboriginality and the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act*. The fact that the people see themselves as owners of the land through long term historical and mythological association also separates them from other towns of rural Australia.

The town polity and the development of sectional interests

In 1974 I completed my doctoral thesis on the Aboriginal politics of the Roper area entitled 'Blackfella Business Whitefella Law'. At the beginning of that thesis I made the observation that:

Ngukurr Settlement is only a part society because it cannot independently determine either its internal organisation or its external relations. Control of the Settlement, especially of its economic and politico/judicial structures, is located outside its physical environs. This control is concentrated in the hands of the Australian government, who (sic) provides the finance, personnel and direction for the maintenance and development of the Settlement (1974, 1-2).

Some of my language bears the stamp of seventies structuralism, but, that aside, I think it makes an interesting starting point for looking at the politics and administration of Aboriginal towns in the Northern Territory. Much has, of course, changed but the main contention is still pertinent.

There are two dominant themes in the local government politics of Ngukurr. The first is a concern with the management of outside interference in the running of its affairs. The second is a focus on the ambiguity, in its internal management, between an emphasis on the integrity of the community and the drive of differing sectional interests.

In the late sixties and early seventies, when I undertook my original research, these towns were still government or mission run settlements. Self determination had not yet progressed to the stage of institutionalising local autonomy through the combination of elected Councils and Council employed executive heads (Town Clerks, Bookkeepers, etc). They were, though, in the early stages of the period of change which took them from the paternal authoritarianism of Native Welfare policies to the politics of self management.

The town of Ngukurr started life as a mission settlement founded by the Church Missionary Society in 1908. There are aspects of this background that I wish to highlight here without spending too much time on the Roper region's particular history of European occupation.

The local population of the Roper region was, in 1908, fragmented, dispersed and greatly reduced in numbers by a quarter of a century of frontier conflict prior to the arrival of the Church Missionary Society. The extent of their social and physical destruction can still be gauged from the demographic profile of the present day population of Ngukurr and the surrounding area. One such measure is that the long term residents of Ngukurr enjoy close spiritual and territorial ties to areas in the vicinity of Ngukurr as well as areas some distance from the town. Most of the bonds to the closer areas are ones which were built up over the period of mission occupation through the incorporation of peoples of more distant origin into the local pattern of myth and ritual associations.

The mission, in its early years, provided a focal point for the protection and regrouping of the survivors of groups which had occupied parts of an area roughly stretching from the south eastern section of the Arnhem Land escarpment across to the Walker River in the north, then south and east along the Gulf coast to Rosie Creek and west to Nutwood and Roper Valley Stations. These people shared ceremonies, myths and exchange networks in the past, but becoming dependent on the mission brought them into closer and more sustained association. The relationships that were built up among this diverse population became fairly stable by the early 1950s as did their construction of a common culture. The specifically Ngukurr aspects of this common culture grew along with a high level of community intermarriage. It focused on the local orientation of traditional religious practices, and the shared experiences of the mission and local cattle industry.

The local social divisions pivot around the different structures and interests forged by the development of the Ngukurr community. There is a division between the old established families with a continuous association with Ngukurr since at least the 1930s (the core population) and those whose ties to Ngukurr were more recent or more intermittent. People's differing relations to their land in terms of both traditional associations and current designs provide major dimensions of political activity. Women have a significant place in Ngukurr political life. The young men have an occasional impact upon local affairs. The key management positions in the town be they Gerritsen's 'wayfarers' or representatives of outside institutions are also an integral part of the local political scene (1982, 27-30). I will discuss each of these in turn.

The core families largely control the secular local politics of Ngukurr, though others, including relatives returning from urban Australia are not entirely excluded. Much of the overt competition of Ngukurr is expressed in terms of the competition among the important core families.

Two families currently stand out among the core group and have done so over much of the last two decades. Both were established early in the mission period and through strategic alliances and demographic fortune have grown in size and importance. These families may provide the major loci of organisation but they neither monopolise power nor are they monolithic in structure. There are other family interests articulated with more or less success. In the 1960s a closely allied group of families identified with interests to the south of the Roper river were also influential in local politics. During the last decade the family identified as the 'Traditional Owners' of Ngukurr have been making their presence felt.

The ritual divisions I have described elsewhere gave the framework for the opposition between the leading core families (1979). While this division is one of the main fulcra of the political scene it needs to be put into context. In the first place these are not two closed warring camps. There is a high level of intermarriage. Their leaders are able to unite for important joint activities as well as in opposition to joint threats. In recent times threats have multiplied and the need for cooperation increased.

Family competition is a major dimension of local politics. Families compete in the organisation, conduct and control of traditional religious activities. Their competition has become an integral part of community organisation including mission and later local government politics. The leading core families provide a major point of identification for the political divisions of the community. It is this division which is the focus of the recent studies of aspects of Ngukurr politics by both Gerritsen (1982) and Thiele (1982). Both writers emphasise the conflict between the leading families and its divisive impact on town affairs. It is important to note, however, that competition took place within a framework in which decisions were taken and major activities requiring the cooperation of these families were successfully carried out. It would be a mistake to read local politics as being determined by the competition between families or even more narrowly between their family heads.

The division of the leading core families gives a structure to local politics something like that of the factional divisions of the ALP. It is almost as though Ngukurr politics operated as a party system. Factions are, though, the more apt analogy. However, this formalised factional structure is embattled by other groups, interests and structural constraints.

Internally, Ngukurr's dynamics are the result of the interplay of the variety of divisions and differing interests. It is the characteristics of these that give to Ngukurr politics its particular flavour, an important ingredient of which is the input of women.

The women of the Ngukurr core are active participants in the public life of the community. During the long period of mission control women had access to both church and secular education. They availed themselves of this access to a greater extent than did the men. Church leadership positions were monopolised by men, but women made up a significant portion of the active church population and committee membership. Within the settlement too, the mission authorities encouraged women's participation. For example the women had reserved places on the mission initiated settlement consultative council.

Under mission influence the women moved into acceptable areas of 'women's work' within Ngukurr: teaching, nursing and domestic service. In the context of the Roper River mission these were the areas which gave greatest access to European Australian influences. It was not that the men were denied access to such influences but rather that the women enjoyed similar access and, in areas such as Christian indoctrination and education, made more use of it. However, despite these advantages the main context of women's activity at Ngukurr was still the home and the family. In this their position is similar to that of the majority of women in Australian society as a whole. Nevertheless through their education and support from the mission authorities they were brought into public affairs alongside the men. In the consultative framework of the last period of mission control, the mission administrators encouraged, indeed insisted upon, women's membership of all its committees and councils.

An important example of the mission's support for women's participation is the composition of the consultative council, established by the mission in 1962. For the period in which the Church Missionary Society continued to administer Ngukurr (they

departed in October 1968) Aboriginal membership of this council included at least one woman, and often two, out of the Aboriginal complement of eight. From late 1968 when the Northern Territory Administration (a part of the Commonwealth Department of the Interior) assumed control, the reserved place for women disappeared. Since then women have rarely been members of the main deliberating bodies of Ngukurr local affairs. The present Yugul Mangi Council and its predecessor the Ngukurr Town Council had no women members. If women sought to pursue their interests and/or particular issues they either had to operate through men or use other avenues to have their voice heard.

With the local government council effectively closed to them they have had to use other public avenues to press their views and interests. These are the public meeting and some of the other public organisations of the town. There have been, since the end of the mission period, three institutions in the town which have normally remained outside the control of the Town Council or its predecessors. These are the school, the health clinic and the church. It is in these areas that women have had most acceptance and been most prominent.

In the case of both the school and the health clinic the women have defended the independence of these institutions from the Town Council. This has occurred even to the extent that they have sided with the relevant government departments against their own Council to protect this separation. Both the school and the health clinic are largely staffed by Ngukurr people. In the case of the school there has been a local head teacher since the early 1980s. The majority of the teaching staff are also Ngukurr people.

The encouragement of women's active and public participation in political life was at odds with the local male Aboriginal ideology of public life which was primarily based on specifically Aboriginal universe encompassing land, exchange and ritual structures. Conflict was inevitable if men sought to exclude women from public life. The form and content of the conflict were both influenced by the ideology of that exclusion.

It is tempting to see women's interests as being primarily defined by their exclusion. They are the leaders in representing the interests of those institutions (school, church and health clinic) in which women have an accepted public place. Ngukurr's leading women, however, are drawn from the middle aged women of the core families, those same families from which the leading men come. Their political activity is more extensive than mere opposition and at times the allegiance to family outweighs that to gender.

Age is also a significant dimension of differentiation. Like gender it is complicated by other factors including gender, family membership, work experience and ritual position. Among the men there are three age identified groupings: the young, the middle aged and the old men. Town leadership is drawn from the middle group and more particularly from the family heads of the core families. The old men retain a voice in ritual (if they had one in their middle years) and occasionally in land related matters, but even in these traditional areas leadership is in the hands of the middle aged family heads. The young men form an unstable grouping with few clear interests. In the ritual sphere they are subject to the authority of their fathers, uncles and older brothers. But this has infrequent impact on the political and social life of the community. Their orientation is toward immediate gratification in personal consumption and leisure activities. When there is any organised political response from this grouping it is associated in some way with the opposition to authority, be it government, family or community.

The majority of the young (like the bulk of the population) are dependent on Welfare incomes. The present generation of young people has little work experience and none of any necessity to work. Ngukurr youth have poor educational opportunities. This

combined with the absence of work exacerbates a situation of high youth unemployment. Young women are likely to commence child-bearing at an early age. The economic situation of Ngukurr's youth is not dissimilar to that of other poorly educated unskilled Australian youth who increasingly have little chance of entering the workforce in today's economic climate.

Ngukurr politics is articulated around the management of town affairs in relation to external intervention in its various forms, from the complete control of the settlement era, to the multiplicity of tied assistance at the present time. The dimensions of this politics are the attainment of community autonomy; the improvement of material conditions including health, education, housing and income; the identification and protection of particular family rights and interests; the attainment and defence of individual autonomy, including personal and family rivalries. Local political practice is highly competitive.

Ngukurr's changing bases of dependency

The conditions of change in the 1960s had a decisive impact on the organisation and practices of Ngukurr politics. At the beginning of the 1960s Ngukurr, then Roper River mission, had a small indigenous population consisting primarily of the core families. In 1970 these families comprised nearly 70 per cent of the Aboriginal population. The young were being educated, those of working age were gainfully employed in producing much of the mission's subsistence or in servicing its other needs, spiritual, educational, medical and domestic. Given the context of their institutionalisation the people were relatively secure and experienced spheres of independent action in their lives. Among these was control over their own traditional ritual activity. The ability to continue traditional influences in this arena principally lay in the accommodation struck with the mission, in which both women and men were supported to maintain their authority through the conduct of the major ceremonial rites.

The relative independence they enjoyed was also related to their locale. Being situated on the border of Arnhem Land and the cattle country gave people the opportunity of moving away if they felt their conditions became intolerable. There are instances in the history of Roper River mission where the whole Aboriginal population departed (eg 1933 and 1952). Certainly prior to the establishment of Numbulwar in 1952 there was a great deal of movement between the hinterland of south east Arnhem Land and Ngukurr. Again, people from the mission had kin on the nearby cattle stations and there was, and still is, continuous movement between them.

But independence of movement is a very restricted type of independence. There is another more significant meaning to be given to the term here. This is a sense of the control over one's life. This sense of independence has two bases: one is the control of ceremonial life and the other is the level of understanding of European Australian society (albeit, the restricted view of that society provided by their association with missions, government and pastoral life). This sense of independence is not without contradiction. It is enclosed within the people's dependence on both the mission and governments for material needs and protection. Indeed this contradiction can be seen as the driving force of Ngukurr politics. In earlier papers in which I have considered Ngukurr politics of the early seventies I have contrasted two thrusts of Ngukurr politics: that for autonomy and that for equality.

In the early sixties the mission added to its support for a revived ritual life by establishing a consultative council. The council consisted of eight mission staff and eight members from the community. The community had its own public forum, an institutionalised

public meeting. The former provided a context for including community leaders of both sexes in discussion of the running of the settlement, though not in deciding its policy, nor responsibility for implementation. The latter, though dominated by the leadership, did provide a forum for the public expression of the range of interests within the community. In a way we can say that these fora together provide Ngukurr with the basis for both a representative structure and for participant democracy. The two do not sit easily together!

Neither the representative structure nor that of participant democracy ran the settlement. This was still controlled through a hierarchical organisation with a superintendent as the local apex who was responsible to outside authorities, both mission and government.

In the mid sixties a range of changes were initiated which affected Aborigines both nationally and locally. Important among these were the 1964 Social Welfare Ordinance, the Yirrkala petition to the Commonwealth Parliament, the 1965 Arbitration Commission hearing into the inclusion of Aborigines in the Northern Territory pastoral award, the strikes which followed its decision, the 1967 Commonwealth constitutional referenda and the subsequent establishment of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs. At the local level came the transfer of administrative control of Ngukurr from the Church Missionary Society to the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory administration in 1968.

These great milestones resulted in few immediate changes at Ngukurr. Perhaps, most frustrating were the expectations built up by the negotiated withdrawal of the Church Missionary Society, which were not realised with the advent of government control. If one were to identify a point at which Ngukurr politics becomes directed toward the managing of dependency then it comes with the realisation that they would not be permitted to control the direction and administration of Ngukurr without the sanction and supervision of those organisations funding their continued existence. This lesson was driven home during the late 1960s culminating in the failure of the community strike in 1970 (see Bern 1976).

Interests in land and models of ownership

The Ngukurr population had a certain security living within the Arnhem Land Reserve. Arnhem Land was in many ways Aboriginal land from the time it was reserved for the use of the Aborigines in the early 1930s. The land was available for people to traverse and utilise with relative freedom. Threats to the inviolability of Arnhem Land did not emerge until the 1960s, at the very time when the momentous social changes were just getting under way. These threats were the proposed establishment of mining ventures on Groote Eylandt and the Gove peninsula. Arnhem Land Aboriginal communities, including Ngukurr, became aware that their rights to the country were not inviolate. Locally there was an awareness that political responses were needed.

One of the responses, common to most of the east Arnhem Land settlements, was to seek government recognition of people's indigenous land rights. The pressure from Ngukurr at this time was broader. They sought a lease to the south east corner of Arnhem Land. Their aim was indigenous control within the context of existing Australian law.

As a brief illustration of the interaction between external constraints and local interests I will outline the different models of rights to land which have been important in Ngukurr politics. There are three main models. The community model emphasises the collective interests of Ngukurr people over territory in which they have interests.

The other two models place their emphasis on kinship and totemic associations. Within this context there are three principal statuses recognised. *Mingirringgi* status is identified with that of the patriliates. *Junggayi* status is identified with that of one's own and one's father's maternal kin. *Darlinyin* status is identified with that of one's mother's mother's kin. The second model emphasised patrifiial ties (*Mingirringgi* status) to particular totemic estates. The third model emphasised both cognatic ties to estates (all three statuses) and the interconnectedness of those estates (cf. Bern and Larbalestier 1985, 62-64).

The ownership model pursued in obtaining the lease to the south east Arnhem Land area was for community control of the land. The model emphasised the integrity of Ngukurr and the existing political leadership. This model was the basis of the structure of ownership in the Yugul Cattle Company (Thiele 1982).

Between 1974 and 1980 this model failed to satisfy the aspirations of the majority of the Ngukurr people. It was replaced by the model based on family specific interests to particular areas. The government support for the outstation movement and *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act* reinforced this change of focus. The *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act* was promulgated in 1977. This confirmed moves in the direction of specific family interests (with an emphasis on patrifiilation), which were reinforced in the presentation of 'Traditional Ownership' claims in the Limmen Bight Land Claim in mid 1980 and the Roper Bar Land Claim in early 1982. Only the *Mingirringgi* were recognised as 'Traditional Owners' in both claims (Aboriginal Land Commissioner 1981, 1982).

The patrifiial model has direct consequences for the continuity of a Ngukurr community. Part of the town is a site on the totemic path of one of the groups identified as 'Traditional Owners' at Roper Bar. The 'Traditional Owners' have used this to press their rights within the town. As owners of the town location they were successful in claiming the right to receive rent for the lease of the Ngukurr store area. Their rights, as owners, have been challenged on a variety of grounds. The 'Traditional Owner' group should be wider than the one currently recognised and include others who have more distant patrifiial ties as well as a number of people with particular individual totemic associations. Even more broadly the rights, as 'Traditional Owners', of appropriate *Junggayi* and *Darlinyin* should be acknowledged. There were also challenges to the rights of particular individuals, through a questioning of the authenticity of their claim. Each of these challenges is directed at the constitution of the group of 'Traditional Owners'.

During this period people set up outstations on areas where they had close kinship and historical ties. The range of these ties was more inclusive than those which had been recognised as establishing 'Traditional Ownership' in the nearby claims. The emphasis was on cognatic and affinal, though family based, relations. This was one variant of my third model. The emphasis, however, was on the interests of those setting up the outstation, rather than any determination of the correct formal structure of the group having rights.

The formal characteristics of the third model are similar to those recognised as constituting 'Traditional Ownership' in the Cox River and Mataranka Land Claims (Aboriginal Land Commissioner 1985, 1988). Briefly, the 'Traditional Owners' are the local descent group formed on the basis of descent from any of four grandparents and therefore including all three statuses of *Mingirringgi*, *Junggayi*, and *Darlinyin* (see Bern and Layton 1984 for a detailed discussion).

The parameters of conflict have varied over the nearly two decades since the movement toward community control of the south east Arnhem Land area at the beginning of the

1970s. At that time a broad based consensus focusing on winning control from the government was partially successful. The establishment of the Yugul Cattle Company put control of the lease in the hands of one of the leading families, excluding the other and the families patrilineal ties to the Ngukurr area. The opposition to one family control (which became identified with the community model) was most vigorous from the Ngukurr 'Traditional Owners' and from women of the other families. The family most closely associated with the Yugul model was itself divided. The result was dismemberment of the lease area and the recognition of the particular claims to parts of the area.

The issue of which model of ownership should apply continued to be a political question. By the mid 1980s the focus of attention was the town itself. None of the interests within Ngukurr with the exception of the 'Traditional Owners' were prepared to concede control of their town to its *Mingirringgi*.

Their attempts to exercise their rights as 'Traditional Owners' to Ngukurr focused the issues. At the same time as questioning the narrowness of the 'Traditional Owner' group most sections of Ngukurr with the women in the lead challenged the rights of 'Traditional Owners' (however constituted) over those of the community of Ngukurr, particularly in relation to the town site and its facilities. Their social history of the last eighty years in which residence, intermarriage and common cultural experiences all emphasised their Ngukurr identity was not to be thrown aside for the narrow interests of a small segment of their number.

Conclusion

The last decade has provided new opportunities for the management of Ngukurr dependency. Northern Territory self government and the strengthening of the Northern Land Council have added two substantial players to the scene once dominated by direct Commonwealth activity. The disputes over the control of Ngukurr have brought together some strange bedfellows.

In the present politics of the Northern Territory the primary source of support for a town such as Ngukurr is government, both Territory and Commonwealth. One, the Territory government, through its Community Government Scheme, appears to offer an extremely attractive package of secure funding and after spending accountability. A package which will strengthen the position of the Ngukurr Council (now renamed Yugul Mangi Community Government Council) in controlling the local affairs of the town.

The Northern Land Council is bound to oppose the package, which at least poses the possibility of conflict between the rights of 'Traditional Owners' and those of Community Government Councils (see Mowbray 1986). The threat to the Northern Land Council is broader and even more fundamental than this. The Yugul Mangi Council is one of the leading proponents for the establishment of a separate Land Council for the east Arnhem Land region. There is some evidence of a connection between the Northern Territory government's support for community government in the area and the Land Council secession movement, though the extent is unclear (see the comments by Phegan in support of regionalising Land Councils in this publication). The Commonwealth is, as they state in Land Claim hearings, neither supporting nor opposing these arrangements. However, their action in offering no viable alternative to the Community Government Scheme, nor support for the Land Councils who are the main opposition, speaks volumes.

The Ngukurr leadership has, since the early seventies, perceived itself as having direct access to government and its various funding bodies. The Northern Land Council can be

seen as intervening in this. They are another set of brokers, whose constituency is not the town of Ngukurr but people having traditional interests in the land thereabouts.

The complexity of Ngukurr politics cannot be appreciated by simple characterisations of its effects in terms of individual aggrandisement or failed traditions. Internally there is a complex interweaving of interests, in which family allegiance, competition for leadership, family autonomy, community (defined not only by the necessity of co-residence but by two and three generations of intermarriage and common experiences), gender and generational antagonisms, centripetal and centrifugal tendencies, and dependence on the material aspects of town life, all play a part. Whatever the local town related political issues, the political resources and constraints always include groups and interests outside the town and ones over which the townspeople have little control. Political competition is not only for personal reward. It is also over social goods such as the rights of 'Traditional Owners', the amount and type of housing, the control of the local store, and the composition and powers of the Council.

All political competition must be directed both internally and externally. The process and outcomes of competition cannot be read off from prejudgement of a breakdown in 'Tradition' nor one giving priority to 'Big Men' or the role of brokers. The politics of this one Aboriginal town is a complex of balancing and competing interests. Certainly, both the object of competition and the possible outcomes are more often than not over-determined by outside agendas, but these do not paralyse the varying interests in the town.

One might see local politics as a fool's paradise, a waste of energy which is necessary for the struggle against external domination, or worse, see the manipulations necessary for survival as destructive of the very fabric of the community. Such a view would not fit present day Ngukurr nor adequately represent the changes of the last two decades. The town has a thriving political life which is integral to its existence. Despite being, even by Northern Territory standards, a poor community, its political pluralism, which is continually under both internal and external threat, has some impressive gains and some equally impressive losses. Among the latter I would include a series of financial disasters, the loss of control of the local store, and the demise of the Yugul Cattle Company (see Bern 1976; Gerritsen 1982; Thiele 1982). Among the former I would include the school with its all Aboriginal staff, the management of alcohol and petrol sniffing, and the continuing integrity of the community.

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BALANDA COME, BALANDA GO - BININJ ARE HERE FOREVER

Peter J Carroll

This paper* is in part a historical consideration of one of the Territory's small Aboriginal towns. Gunbalanya, or Oenpelli, is an Aboriginal community in western Arnhem Land. It is 250 km east of Darwin and near the border of Kakadu National Park (see Figure 1). The experience that the Aboriginal people of the Region have had with the outside world over a period of more than 150 years has provided the stimulus for my title which draws on two key words from the Kunwinjku (Gunwinggu) language of western Arnhem Land.

Balanda is a commonly used word by Top End Aborigines for white person and has been interpreted as a development from the word Hollander through the Macassan influence along the Territory's northern coast (Capell undated, 1).

Bininj is the Kunwinjku word for man, or more generally Aboriginal person. It has some similarities in its use and meaning with the north-east Arnhem Land word *Yolngu*.

My title stresses a truth about Aboriginal people in north Australia, that both this conference and those who would work with Aboriginal people must accept and understand. Aboriginal people have been here a long time and will remain here. At Gunbalanya over the past 100 years there has been a series of different external agencies each with its own philosophy and approach. In turn the Aboriginal people have been required to adapt to the priorities and concerns of these agencies and have been expected to adopt the agenda of the agency. In many instances the cooperation of Aboriginal people has been somewhat nominal. To satisfy the agency a minimal response is given, while the people themselves follow their own agenda. The same is undoubtedly true of other Aboriginal areas of northern Australia.

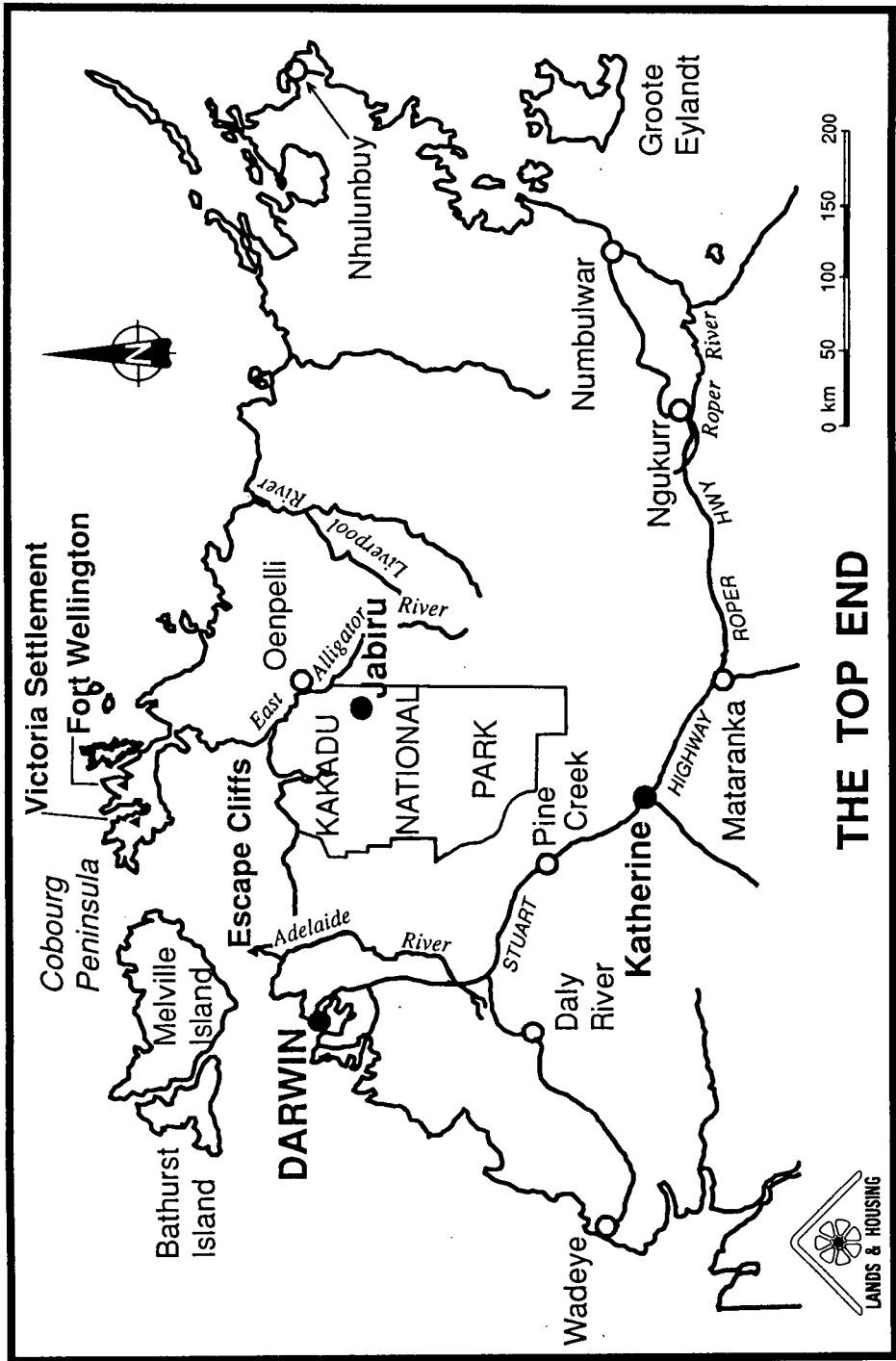
Our conference theme is small towns in northern Australia - these are all rural towns. In the Territory the Aboriginal communities are often referred to as remote communities.

The word remote is not an inappropriate one for this conference. It could be applied to many of the situations addressed in the various papers. My historical consideration of the Gunbalanya experience focuses attention on several issues, all of which are relevant to other remote communities.

Some of these issues are:

- Local autonomy, freedom to choose, external pressures
- The outside world, consultation and effective communication, diversity of organisations

* This paper is a personal presentation. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of Lands and Housing. The assistance of the Department in the preparation of the maps is gratefully acknowledged.



THE TOP END

Figure 1 The Top End

- Exploitation - Cahill, mission, welfare, mining
- Funding problems - mission, community - who controls the money?

In his 1968 Boyer Lectures the late Professor Stanner commented on Aboriginal desires:

on the evidence the Aborigines have always been looking for a decent union of their lives with ours but on terms that let them preserve their own identity, not their inclusion willy-nilly in our scheme of things and a fake identity, but development within a new way of life that has the imprint of their own ideas (Stanner 1969, 28).

That in essence has been the desire of many small towns - to retain their independence and viability while being part of the wider Australian society.

Early history

Prehistory

Western Arnhem Land is dominated by the sandstone plateau and escarpment covering an area approximately 200 by 260 km. Rivers, gullies and rockshelters occur throughout the region and it is in some of these rockshelters that important archaeological discoveries have been made.

In the 1960s edge ground stone axes, dated 22 000 years ago were found at Nawamoynd and Malangangerr (see Figure 2) (Schrire 1982, 31). In the 1970s ochre impregnated grinding stones dated 18 000 years ago were found at Malakunanja (Kamminga and Allen 1973, 48-49). Aborigines have been in the region for a very long time.

In the first half of the nineteenth century there were three different military settlements established along the north coast of the Northern Territory. Two of these were in the vicinity of western Arnhem Land (Spillett 1972, 15-18): they are Fort Wellington at Raffles Bay (near Croker Island) on Cobourg Peninsula (1827 to 1829) and Victoria at Port Essington on the Cobourg Peninsula (1838 to 1849).

Explorers

It was to the second of these settlements at Victoria that Ludwig Leichhardt travelled from Moreton Bay near Brisbane. He passed through western Arnhem Land at the end of 1845 and actually descended the escarpment in what is now Kakadu National Park. He received assistance and guidance from the local Aboriginal people and he gives us a fascinating insight into aspects of their lifestyle. He was overwhelmed when on 2 December 1845 a man approached him with the following greetings: 'Commandant, come here, very good, what's your name?' (Leichhardt 1847, 502).

The Aboriginal response to Leichhardt in the region was to assist him to find Port Essington. Oral tradition amongst Oenpelli Aborigines recalls an early contact with particular attention to the first experience of flour and sugar. Flour was perceived as only being useful for body decoration and sugar because of its granular appearance was identified with sand and regarded as of little use. Such friendly treatment was not always given to explorers.

In 1866 following the establishment of Escape Cliffs near the mouth of the Adelaide River, John McKinlay was sent to explore the country to the east. His intention was to

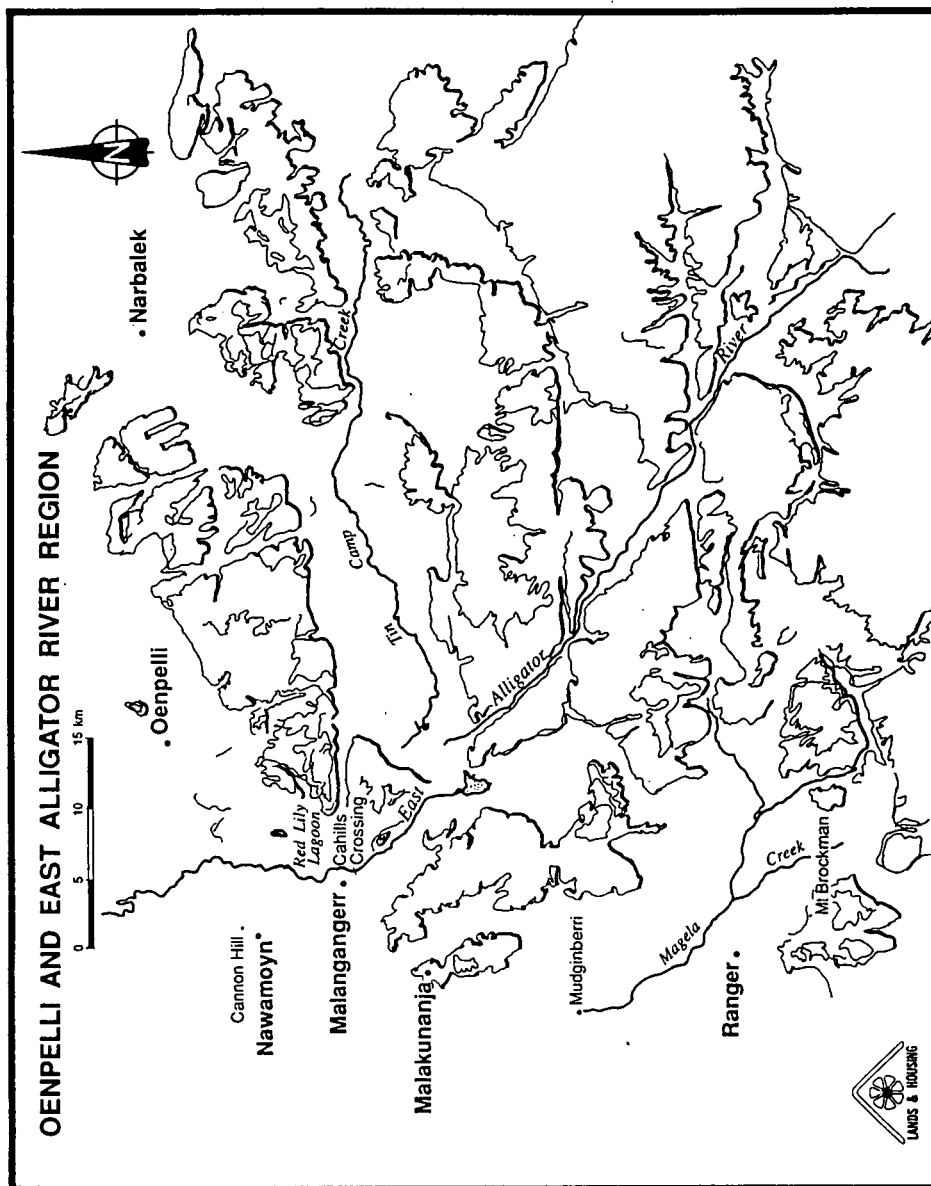


Figure 2 Oenpelli and East Alligator River Region

explore as far as the Liverpool and the Roper Rivers. However, no allowances were made for the Northern Territory 'wet' season and after leaving the Adelaide River in January 1866 he finally reached the East Alligator River in June. The situation was hopeless, the supplies had been used up and the horses were exhausted. The horses were killed and their hides used to make an improvised raft in which they returned by sea to the Adelaide River. Aboriginal oral tradition from Oenpelli tells of an early hostile encounter with Europeans when spears were thrown. The tradition suggests it was Leichhardt's visit but this is not confirmed in Leichhardt's diary, however McKinlay does refer to an attack by Aborigines (McKinlay 1866, 21).

Buffalo

It might be thought that military settlements of relatively short duration over a century ago would have had minimal impact today. However, the presence of the water buffalo on the coastal plains was a direct result of these early military settlements. When the settlements closed, the water buffalo were released and thrived on the coastal blacksoil plains multiplying and spreading across the Top End. The buffalo was used as a source of food by the Aborigines and in the later part of the nineteenth century the animals were hunted and shot primarily for their hides by hunters who came into the area.

Paddy Cahill was a buffalo shooter who came into western Arnhem Land. He was active in the Oenpelli and East Alligator area from the 1890s. In 1893 he was visited by the Government Resident from Darwin who reported the discovery of large numbers of Aboriginal people suffering from leprosy (see Carroll unpublished). In 1906 Cahill formally took out a pastoral lease at Oenpelli and in 1912 was visited by Baldwin Spencer, the newly appointed Protector of Aborigines following the assumption of control for the Northern Territory by the Commonwealth government. Cahill became an informant for Spencer in his writings and was widely regarded as having good rapport with Aboriginal people. Recent oral tradition at Oenpelli suggested that Cahill brought Aboriginal people to Oenpelli from elsewhere and there was tension between them and the local Aborigines. The late Mrs Ruby Roney (Paddy Cahill's niece) visited Oenpelli in the late 1960s. She had been at Oenpelli with Cahill for many years at the beginning of this century. She commented that other Aborigines visited Oenpelli, but in contrast to those working on the station, they were regarded as untrustworthy.

This tradition is supported by an intriguing reference in the Administrator's report issued during the first world war:

Mr Cahill, than whom no one knows the native more thoroughly (speaking as he does more than one dialect) nor views him more sympathetically, informs me that in spite of the defection of Romula in attempting to poison him and his family, he would gladly have the Aboriginal back at once, trusting him as fully as he did in the past. He is satisfied the aberration manifested was solely due to the bad influence exercised for a time by the other native 'Nipper' and as Romula had been his close companion during twenty-five years of an adventurous career it may be assumed that Mr Cahill thoroughly understands the moral temperament of the man (NT Administrator 1918, 13-14).

European presence in the region was not always welcomed with open arms by the Aboriginal people. Indeed these brief references indicate a degree of resistance.

Paddy Cahill's time was one of transition from buffalo shooting and occasional visits to permanent settlement. His station at Oenpelli became an experimental government dairy

with Cahill as manager. The intention, which would be an economic challenge today, was to supply butter to the Darwin market. At least one shipment was made, delivered to Darwin by lugger using ammonia refrigeration equipment, but it arrived at the Darwin waterfront during serious industrial trouble. When it was realised that the butter shipment came from an Aboriginal area it was not handled and allowed to melt on the wharf. The experiment came to a halt (Cole 1975, 15-16).

In the nineteenth century the buffalo were introduced to the military settlements. To establish the government dairy, cattle were brought from Victoria. In recent years there has been a major eradication program established for the buffalo because of the widespread occurrence of tuberculosis which was introduced into the buffalo herd in the region by the cattle brought from Victoria for the experimental dairy (Dr D Wells, pers. comm.).

Twentieth century developments

The failure of the dairy project, followed by the departure of Cahill and the gradual movement of many Aborigines to the settlements and the 'track' to the west was to lead to changes at Oenpelli. Several years of limited activity was to result in a government invitation to the Anglican Church Missionary Society (who were then working at Groote Eylandt and at Roper River, now called Ngukurr) to take over the administration of Oenpelli. In 1925 the first missionaries arrived (Cole 1975, 22), and like missionaries everywhere a major concern was evangelism of the Aborigines. However this was not their only occupation.

Settlements

Following a visit in 1928 by JW Bleakley, who had been commissioned by the Commonwealth to conduct a survey of Aboriginal work in the Territory, it was reported that at Oenpelli there were fruit and vegetable gardens, stock numbering 1800 cattle, 80 horses and 200 goats, children were being taught in school and building and medical work was continuing (Bleakley 1929, 20-21). With minimal financial assistance the missionaries worked with those Aborigines who stayed at the Mission when not undertaking nomadic wandering through their country.

After the second world war the Government began to take a greater interest in the situation of the Territory's Aborigines. In the Welfare era of the 1950s and 1960s increasing amounts of finance were made available for the work on both government and mission settlements. There was a transfer from protection to welfare:

the Director of Welfare has the specific duty in relation to the Aboriginal population 'to promote their social, economic and political advancement for the purpose of assisting them and their descendants to take their place as members of the Commonwealth'. The Ordinance thus abandons the 'protective' approach of the Aboriginal Ordinance in favour of a positive 'welfare' policy (NT Administrator 1956, 37).

This transition was to lead to a major focus on the various Aboriginal settlements and a later report stated:

It is not Government policy to isolate Aborigines in reserves, but the settlements are established to serve as training centres in social change. Similar work carried out by Christian Missions is subsidized by the

Government. In these settlements and missions emphasis is laid, in the first place, on the advantages, benefits and responsibilities of community living, then on instruction in the necessary skills and techniques for a successful life within such a social pattern (NT Administrator 1964, 41).

Very clearly the Government had its own agenda.

By the middle of the 1960s there were few Aborigines living a completely nomadic life. Many Aborigines in the Territory had experienced life at either a government or mission settlement. Several hundred Aborigines from the surrounding country had settled at Oenpelli. In 1967 the population was approximately 350. Some claim that the Government and the Missions forced Aboriginal people to come to the settlements; others assert that it was the attraction of western goods and health services. Whatever the reason, the Welfare period was to see the movement of Aborigines from their own country to the various settlements. This was the situation in western Arnhem Land in the late 1960s and it was at this time that uranium deposits were discovered in the Alligator Rivers Region.

This sequence of events may just be an accident of history but to the Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land it was no coincidence. The words of an old man as recorded by Stanner (1969, 49) ring true: 'You are very clever people, very hard people, plenty humbug'.

Outstations and homeland centres

Up to this time the attitude of Aborigines had been one of passive resistance in the face of continual exploitation. In the early seventies that exploitation was set to escalate with virtually all of Arnhem Land under application for mineral prospecting. It was the commencement of such prospecting in western Arnhem Land that triggered the initial expansion of the outstation movement in the 1960s.

From the mid sixties to the mid seventies, over 200 people moved from Oenpelli to ten homeland centres in the surrounding country. This movement was an Aboriginal response to previous periods of exploitation and paternalism. It was an attempt to gain some control over their lives and their environment. It provided the opportunity to get the best of both worlds. On the one hand they were able to live in smaller family groups, in or near to their own country, and yet were able to select from Australian society what best suited them - Toyotas, radios, solar panels, rifles etc. The homeland centre movement together with the Land Rights legislation were significant factors in the continuation of Aboriginal society and culture in the Top End. Government support for outstations has been an important factor in their continued existence.

Mining

In western Arnhem Land, the Land Rights legislation had a further impact (Carroll 1983, 339-357). It was under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976* that negotiations were conducted for the development of uranium deposits at Ranger and Nabarlek. These developments were to bring increasing numbers of Europeans into the region as well as providing royalty and other payments to various Aboriginal communities and organisations. These payments gave to Aboriginal people a degree of independence and a control over expenditure. At Oenpelli, a major expenditure was on four-wheel drive vehicles which were essential for transport and communication between Oenpelli and its many outstations.

The origin of royalty payments goes back to action by Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories for part of the Welfare era. He amended the Territory mining legislation to provide that where mining occurred on an Aboriginal Reserve a royalty was paid into a trust account for the benefit of Aborigines resident in the Northern Territory.

The Ranger deposit is located about 220 km east of Darwin. It is in the catchment area of the Magela Creek, which flows into the Alligator River after passing across extensive flood plains.

In July 1975 the Australian government appointed a commission to conduct an inquiry in relation to the proposal to develop uranium deposits in the Alligator Rivers Region. This Commission became the Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry (Fox 1977). In Sydney in August 1976 the Commission received formal 'final' submissions from seven 'principal parties' including both the Northern Land Council and the Oenpelli Council who submitted that the Ranger mine site should be regarded as if it were on Aboriginal land, and that royalties should be payable to Aboriginal people to assist them to strengthen their traditional culture, to aid in the development of Aboriginal communities, and to assist in establishing outstations. There had been preliminary talks between the two councils in the previous June but the submissions were prepared independently.

The adoption of the Ranger Inquiry recommendations by the Australian government meant that, although the Ranger deposit was outside the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve the Aborigines would be in a position to negotiate terms and conditions of mining, though they could not veto the development (Commonwealth of Australia 1977).

The Nabarlek ore body is within Arnhem Land approximately 280 km east of Darwin and about 30 km by road from Oenpelli. Aborigines were opposed to the development and received support for this opposition from Mr Justice Woodward who at the time was inquiring into Aboriginal Land Rights in the Territory (Woodward 1974, 124).

During June 1974 the Prime Minister, Mr Gough Whitlam, visited the region and had discussions at Oenpelli, Nabarlek and other places. In a very clear and direct manner the Prime Minister explained to the Oenpelli Council, the community and the traditional owners that Australia did not need to develop and mine the Nabarlek ore-body as there was sufficient uranium available elsewhere to meet Australia's commitments. (At this time the Australian government through the Atomic Energy Commission was a partner in the Ranger Development.) The ore-body would not be developed without the consent of the Aboriginal people.

It seems likely that in 1974, having had the support of both the Prime Minister and his specially appointed Land Rights Commissioner, Aborigines felt that they had made their point, that their opposition to mining was finally understood and that would be the end of the matter. But within a matter of weeks, Queensland Mines officials asked to come to Oenpelli for further talks about the development of Nabarlek (a classic example of external pressure). This incident highlights some of the differences between Aboriginal and European methods of decision-making. On the one hand, the Aborigines had maintained their opposition and finally told the highest authority in the land of that opposition, and this was accepted by him. On the other hand, for the mining company this was only a statement of opinion and a basis for further negotiations and compromise if necessary.

As a result of the approach by Queensland Mines discussions began with the Aborigines leading to the negotiations later carried out by the Northern Land Council with Queensland Mines on behalf of the Nabarlek traditional owners. One can only speculate

as to why the Aborigines concerned changed their attitude. My observation is that both the key members of the Oenpelli Council and the traditional owners of Nabarlek decided that opposition to the development of Nabarlek was futile and that development would occur sooner or later, irrespective of Aboriginal opinion (Carroll 1978, 7-8).

National Park

An integral part of the Australian government's decision on uranium was the establishment of the Kakadu National Park in the Alligator Rivers Region. The negotiations between the Northern Land Council and the Commonwealth of Australia concerning the Ranger project proceeded at the same time as negotiations concerning a lease to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. The Park was seen by the Ranger Inquiry as a buffer zone to protect the environment and Aboriginal interests in the region and to provide recreation outlets (with necessary controls) for the increasing number of people coming into the region.

The agreement for the National Park was signed at Oenpelli in November 1978. The Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust granted a lease for a period of 100 years to the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In 1979 an area of 6144 sq km between the East and South Alligator Rivers was proclaimed as Stage One of the park. Subsequent developments have led to the addition of Stage Two (6567 sq km) and Stage Three (6735 sq km) making a total area of 19,446 sq km.

Mining has been perceived by many as a major threat to the environment and to Aboriginal society. The dramatic increase in visitors to Kakadu Park has presented the Park service with a major problem to operate the Park with as little as possible impact on the environment and on Aboriginal society. Tourist development has the potential to make a greater impact than the mineral developments.

The current situation

Concepts of self management and self determination have dominated the government approach to Aboriginal communities in the 1970s and 1980s. Many communities were not adequately prepared for the significant changes that were made in government policy during the 1970s. In some situations a too rapid departure of European staff created a void that took time to fill and left communities open to exploitation.

Professor Stanner in his Boyer Lecture explained some of the philosophy behind government policy:

The development explosion of the 1960s and 70s is the pastoral expansion of the 1860s and 70s vastly intensified. It will take all the ingenuity of which we are capable to avert similar effects on the Aborigines. Nothing of course can arrest development. If the Aborigines have no prospects within it they have no prospects outside it, but some of us would like to think that we can devise something better for them than to be hewers of wood and drawers of water on the fringes of these vast new enterprises (Stanner 1969, 51).

At Oenpelli, the Community Council is considering entering the Community Government Scheme under the Northern Territory Local Government Act. Different groups within the

community have extensive interaction with the Northern Land Council in relation to mining and other land use projects. Several outside entrepreneurs are running apparently successful enterprises within the community.

Issues relating to small towns

In the introduction to this paper I referred to several issues from the Oenpelli experience that affect other small towns. Central to these issues is the relationship of the small town to the outside world and the degree of local autonomy that is established.

My paper has shown the varying reactions on the part of Aboriginal people in the Oenpelli area to the outside world. Leichhardt was assisted, McKinlay resisted. Cahill was in the area for a long period but there is evidence of Aboriginal dissatisfaction in official documents that is consistent with current local oral tradition.

In the earlier years of mission administration at Oenpelli the mission was the sole contact with the outside world, but as development pressure from the outside grew with increased government and mining activity many Aboriginal people left Oenpelli to establish homeland centres in their own country.

The outside world is confusing to Aborigines because of the many different organisations that the community deals with. There are Territory and Commonwealth Departments and agencies as well as a range of Aboriginal and other organisations. Many Aborigines see the continual change as a deliberate attempt to confuse them.

It is often stated that today the various Aboriginal communities are independent. One way to assess the degree of independence is to determine who controls the finances. For a period in the seventies the Commonwealth administration experimented with a global grant for Oenpelli. An allocation was made on the basis of a set figure per head of population. After about eighteen months the community council had progressed significantly in the learning process and was starting to set its own agenda. Suddenly the policy was changed, the experiment ceased and the progress towards self management that had occurred in this period was lost.

Within the Territory administration it is the Office of Local Government that assists Aboriginal communities and the work of the office is addressed in other papers. A major concern of the office is funding for Municipal and Local Government (including Community Government) and the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for monitoring expenditure by Aboriginal communities.

In recent years government departments have experienced staff cuts and budgetary restraint. These pressures lead to the desire by organisations to limit their own responsibilities. It is important that the Office of Local Government continue its general advisory role to Aboriginal communities in addition to its specific financial and local government responsibilities.

At different stages in this conference there has been discussion and debate over the relationship of community government to Aboriginal Land Rights legislation. The debate does not need to be an either/or situation and in the interests and well being of Aboriginal clients a complementary option needs to be developed. One such option is for the Land Councils to grant a lease to a Community Government Council where its area of responsibility includes Aboriginal land. The terms of the lease would define the respective responsibilities of the Land Council and the Community Government Council.

In western Arnhem Land the Aboriginal people of Oenpelli would see both the Northern Land Council and the Office of Local Government as outside agencies.

There are many different agencies dealing with Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. Each agency has its own program and priorities and if the agency does not recognise the implications of its role as an external body it should not be surprised if its officers and programs are received less than enthusiastically.

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SOUTH OF THE BERRIMAH LINE: GOVERNMENT AND THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY IN KATHERINE AND TENNANT CREEK AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

John Lea

Any population is divided in many ways. There are men and women. There are professional people who live comfortable lives they consider normal, and there are the indigent who, these days, rely on welfare payments. There are the owners of property, who employ those who sell their labour. There are children and adults. But it is the racial division that is the most contentious, the black, the white and brindle (Cowlshaw 1988, 1).

Katherine and Tennant Creek are small by national standards of town size but this belies their importance as key centres of inland settlement in northern Australia since the 1930s. They are archetypal frontier towns which have evolved into diversified and sizeable multi-racial communities after tentative and precarious beginnings. Although they possess distinctly different economic origins and are located 700 km apart, the two towns are directly linked by the Stuart Highway and share substantially similar social and administrative backgrounds. Their colourful histories have captured the attention of travel writers and novelists (notably Herbert 1938, 1975) and to many they represent the pioneering spirit of white settlement in the north, as well as containing some of the most obvious problems characterising emerging Aboriginal urbanisation.

As in many other parts of Australia small towns of this kind demonstrate more clearly than anywhere else the severe disruption to Aboriginal social organisation resulting from contacts between white settlers and indigenous people. The process began long before the towns were established, of course, and extends back to the building of the Overland Telegraph repeater stations in the 1870s. The unsatisfactory conditions experienced by the Warramunga at the time of the 1933 goldrush have been described in some detail by Stanner (1980) but may have deteriorated quite rapidly in the period shortly before his visit in 1934. Bishop White travelling through the area 30 years earlier, for example, seems to have gained a more favourable impression:

The natives here [at the Tennant Creek Telegraph Station] were a fine handsome race One was struck with their vigourous life and playfulness, contrasting greatly with the abject appearance of the blacks near Queensland towns or stations They seemed to be treated with great kindness here (White 1981, 82-3).

Although there may be some doubt about the accuracy and representativeness of this observation, it suggests that most of the severe disruption affecting Aboriginal life and custom in the Katherine and Tennant Creek districts has taken place in the past eighty years. For most of this period the catalyst for the greatest changes was the emergence of the two small towns.

This discussion is confined, however, to the thirty formative years in town establishment which followed World War Two and which led by the late 1970s to the adoption of full local government and the setting up of Aboriginal community associations. It was also a time which saw considerable population growth, an expanding urban economy and the development of a sizeable and permanent Aboriginal presence. One concern in particular commands our attention - the manner in which the towns began their transformation into today's multi-racial communities possessing characteristics more commonly found in third world cities than in the urban centres of an advanced capitalist country like Australia. As a starting point the proposition is advanced that there have always been close *economic* ties between Aboriginal, Asian and white society in the two districts but the process of *social* integration, though widespread among Asians, whites and part-Aborigines in the pre-war towns in areas like schooling, altered markedly in the post-war period. Changes in the laws affecting Aboriginal status, the continued separate administration of the main race groups, the rapid influx of town campers as well as major growth in the urban population (Table 1), proved difficult to accommodate socially and led to greater polarisation between black and white society.

Table 1
Katherine and Tennant Creek Populations
1933-1976

Year	Katherine	Tennant Creek
1933	213	200 (3)
1937	150	628
1947	371	630
1954	596	662
1961	606 (2)	837
1966 (1)	1,506	1,065
1971	2,764	1,794
1976	3,127	2,236

Source: after Lea 1987, 1989

- Notes:
- (1) includes full-blood Aboriginal population from this date
 - (2) census estimate of urban area population
 - (3) goldfield population to 1947, thereafter the town population

The circumstances of the two towns were not identical, with Tennant Creek being governed under the provisions of the Mining Ordinance until 1954, whereas Katherine was an open settlement. This had the effect in Tennant Creek of restricting land access to those with a Residence Area permit under the Ordinance and must have affected the ability of some groups, particularly part-Aborigines, to settle there (Lea 1989). Race laws governing the administration of part-Aboriginal people were not relaxed until the passage of the Welfare Ordinance in 1953 but it seems that the 'mixed blood' population of the Northern Territory experienced little segregation in earlier times in comparison with the rest of Australia (Long 1967). In Katherine and Tennant Creek a proportion of these families were scarcely distinguishable from the white population as a whole and they are excluded from the generalisations about the Aboriginal population made here (see also Berndt and Berndt 1987, 281-82).

The paper is organised into four sections beginning with an identification of the stages whereby Aboriginal people established a permanent presence in the two towns, followed

by an examination of some of the causative factors involved, a description of reactions by government and in the local community to the Aboriginal influx as revealed in NT Legislative Council debates, departmental correspondence and the deliberations of the town management boards, and last, the identification of certain contemporary urban development policy issues against a background of the changes which began in the post-war period.

Stages in the evolution of Aboriginal urban settlement

The preconditions for Aboriginal settlement in Katherine and Tennant Creek were present in the first years of town establishment. In both places the location of a telegraph station and associated pastoral activity dates from the 1870s and led to permanent camping in the district. Although Tom Cole (1988, 102) does not say much about this in his account of experiences as a Tennant Creek linesman in the 1920s, it seems some close links were already in place:

There was the usual Aboriginal camp a short distance up the creek; nomads who came and went as fancy took them. When I killed a bullock they would always get some of the meat.

At the same period, in Katherine, Harney (1946, 1961) described how western Arnhem Land people were attracted to find work on the peanut farms via a 'bright lights' process, only to encounter a social environment for which they were ill prepared.

Katherine was a place of tragedy for the natives, a real 'sink of iniquity'. Methylated spirits, or metho. for short was sold to natives here in large quantities by people, who, like vultures ever waiting to pounce upon a weaker prey, sat back in pious dignity in their sheltered homes and sold it at a large profit (1946, 251).

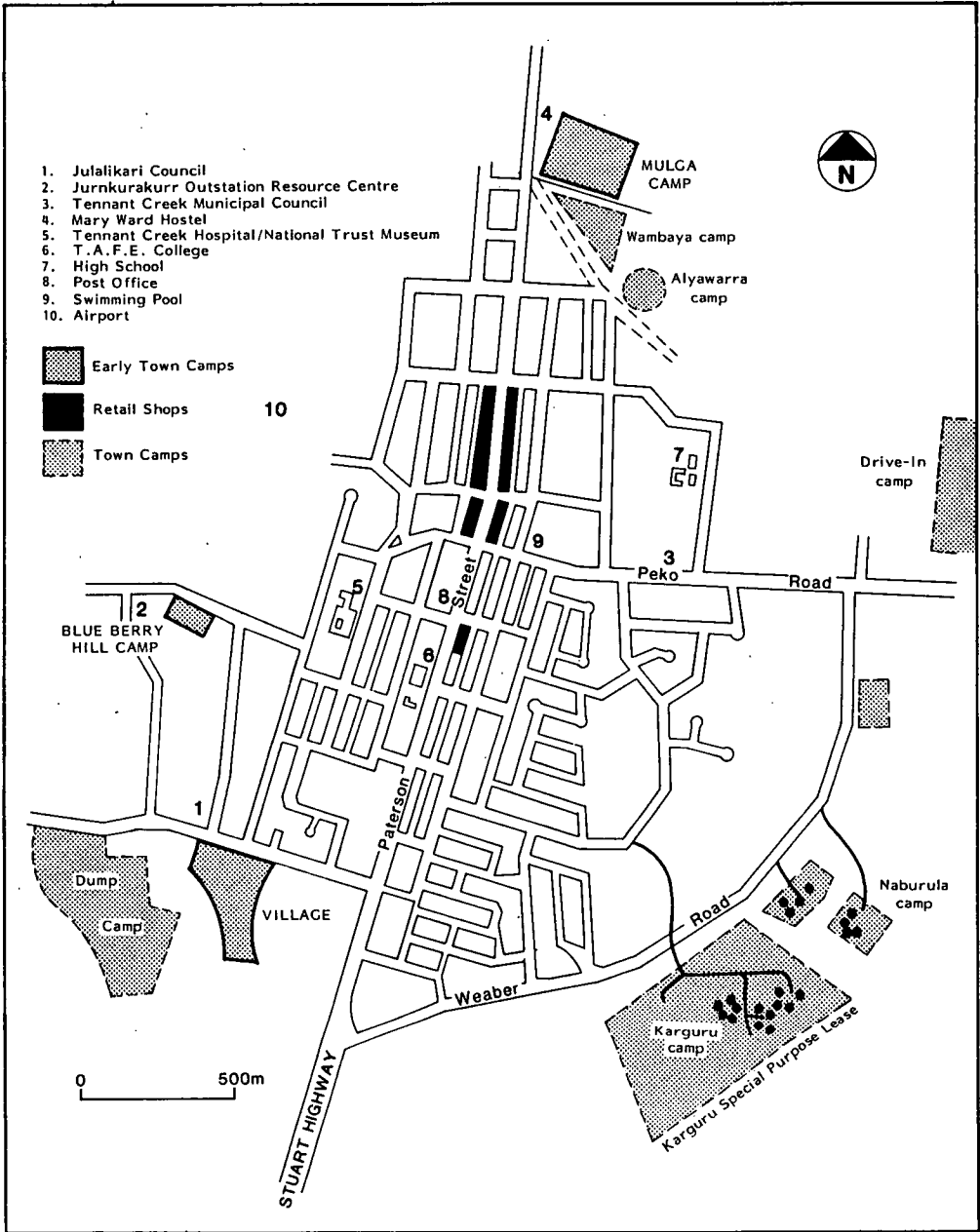
The Tennant Creek goldrush of 1933 attracted Aborigines to the new township 'either to work or simply to beg' and led, in part, to the legislative changes affecting their status which were passed in that year (Meggitt 1962, 26). These included the introduction of a minimum wage, the provision of food, clothing and basic medical attention for Aboriginal employees, as well as restrictions over the provision of liquor and consorting between white men and black women. Despite this, miscegenation was commonplace in the Northern Territory at this time and led to a considerable number of 'mixed blood' families becoming established in the pre-war years:

The gentle cough from one of the 'Pandanus Fairies', as we called the night callers, caused no embarrassment to anyone (Harney 1961, 140-1).

Employment and accommodation of Aborigines was officially forbidden in Tennant Creek by order of the Mining Registrar:

The employment of natives in Tennant Creek is strictly and well controlled and there are very few natives seen in the town (CRS:F1 46/199 cited in Nash 1984, 11).

Some were employed on the goldfield before the establishment of the Phillip Creek settlement in 1945 but they were not permitted to live in the town itself (NT Archives Service, NTRS 226, TS 431).



Map 1 Tennant Creek land use (after Lea 1989)

World War Two marks the second stage in Aboriginal urban settlement and hastened a breakdown in tribal custom and a blurring of distinctions between different language groups. The army became a major employer of Aboriginal labour in the Katherine district in a development which was to bring the occupants of its labour camps 'into unprecedented, prolonged contact with each other' (Merlan and Rumsey 1982, 25). Some camps supplied labour for army farms, a meatworks and construction activities on the north-south road and others functioned as control centres after Aborigines were prohibited from remaining north of the Edith River in August 1942 (Hall 1980; Berndt and Berndt 1987). At the end of the war it seemed appropriate to the authorities to continue the regulation of Aboriginal accommodation by transferring the inmates of the Katherine camps, for example, to Maranboy and Beswick Creek and to new government farms (Lea 1987). Similar moves in the Tennant Creek district saw the establishment of the Phillip Creek settlement and later Warrabri (Ali Curung) (Davidson 1985).

Close checks were maintained on the full-blood Aboriginal population in both districts and removal of the unemployed prevented unauthorised settlement in the towns:

Regular checks were made to ensure that no unemployed natives remained in the town area; those who could not find work in Katherine were moved to employment on a settlement, mission, or pastoral property (Northern Territory Welfare Branch 1961, 19).

The first permission to employ civilian Aboriginal labour in Tennant Creek was secured with great difficulty in 1952 and forms the third stage in the urban settlement process. It will come as no surprise to learn that such labour was initially sought by the town's sanitary contractor because white employees were 'as usual unobtainable for the clearance of sanitary pans and garbage' (letter by A Fraser, Municipal Inspector to NT administration May 1952, CRS:F1 52/635). After at first being refused, permission was eventually given by the Director of Native Affairs to employ a male person from the Phillip Creek settlement. Among the conditions laid down were that the contractor must pay award rates, provide accommodation at his own premises, and feed the employee and charge him board. This would result in payment to the employee of two pounds per week (from which the board was deducted) with the balance paid to the Trust Fund (letter from Acting Government Secretary to Municipal Inspector, 13 November 1952, CRS:F1 52/635). This permission to employ full-blood labour was progressively extended in both towns to include other branches of the Administration. By 1960, for example, more than 50 Aboriginal children were enrolled in the pre-school centres in Tennant Creek and at the Peko Mine. Of these, eleven were identified as full-bloods and were probably the children of five government employees (Lea 1989). Similarly, in Katherine, major sources of Aboriginal employment at this time were the CSIRO and NT Administration farms.

A fourth stage is associated with formal attempts by the Welfare Department (successor to Native Affairs) in the early 1960s to construct government-financed Aboriginal camping areas in both towns. Plans were drawn up in 1961 for a semi-circle of five Kingstrand houses in the Tennant Creek 'Village' and the area was occupied two years later by 33 persons of whom 14 were children under the age of 14 years (Map 1). In 1964 the village population had doubled in size to 84 in a rapid growth phase associated with changes in Aboriginal legal status which affected both towns. In Katherine the 'race days' provided a special incentive for groups to camp on the river bank:

On 500 yards [475 m] of the river bank there had been 300-400 natives camped and the new town area was just down the way and that there were a lot of children in the area and that it would not be good to have those

many white people camped there let alone natives (Katherine Town Management Board minutes, 21 June 1961, 9).

At the insistence of the town management board, plans were drawn up for a multi-racial transit camp for visitors in the Highlevel area adjoining the town pound now occupied by the Katherine Civic Centre. However it immediately became a place used exclusively by Aboriginal people (Map 2).

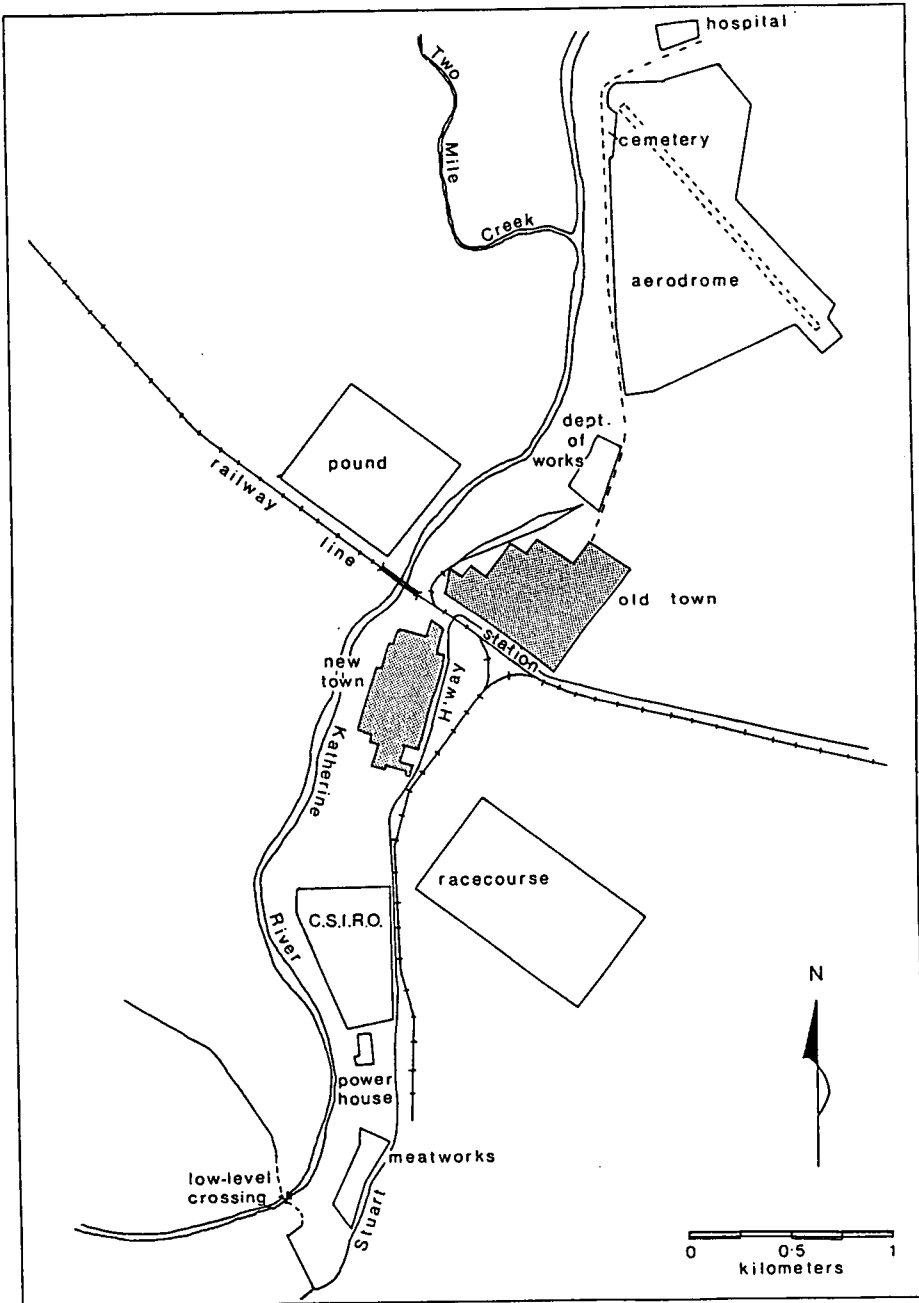
After the mid 1960s Aboriginal settlement in the towns entered a fifth phase of increasing maturity as employment became more secure and some choice in living accommodation became available. A threefold physical grouping emerged based on where people lived, their personal priorities and their general socio-economic condition (Lea 1989). At the top in income terms were the families (most of them part-Aboriginal) who occupied conventional Housing Commission dwellings. This was the group which in the Administration's view had been successfully assimilated into white society and were seen as a model for the rest. A second group occupied sites in official town camps like the Tennant Creek Village and the Mulga and Highlevel Top Camp in Katherine. They were supplied with shelters and basic services and the economically successful were expected to move on to occupy a Commission dwelling. But failure by the Administration to understand the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of these camps largely prevented them from fulfilling such a role even if it had been desirable for them to do so. Third, were the informal bush camps which offered casual living conditions with the minimum of interference from the authorities. They provided newcomers with a toehold into urban life and acted as a refuge for those who wished to be left alone or were displaced from the main groups. Once again, a lack of understanding of these functions by the authorities limited the ability of these camps to provide this necessary accommodation.

By the early 1970s the management of Aboriginal urban settlement entered a sixth and final phase in the period covered by this review. The pace of change in the Aboriginal community had little bearing on parallel adjustments affecting the governance of the white residents but it is noticeable that much more dialogue commenced in the towns after the first moves towards Territory self government came into effect in 1974. Before the new town councils were created in 1978, Aboriginal housing associations appeared under a new scheme established by the Whitlam Labor government. They soon became a forum for expressing the aspirations of Aboriginal people who were effectively excluded from the formal trappings of local government. In the eyes of their members these associations possessed a function which far transcended the provision of better housing.

In the mid 1970s the chief issue for the associations in both towns was the question of tenurial security over housing land. Some aspects of their management and performance were controversial but these bodies gave control over domestic developments in the Aboriginal community to locals for the first time. Although the formal apparatus of Aboriginal administration was still separate from the government of the other urban residents, the creation of the new associations can be seen in retrospect to have been one of the most significant changes affecting Aboriginal urban settlement in the post-war period.

Factors underlying the urban migration of Aborigines in the mid 1960s

It is tempting to explain the large increases in town campers in both towns in the late 1960s and early 1970s in terms of single factors such as the 1968 decision by the Commonwealth to grant Award wages to Aboriginal people working on NT cattle stations. However, evidence shows that earlier changes to laws governing the status of NT



Map 2 Katherine land use in the 1950s (after Lea 1987)

Aborigines passed in 1964, together with improved economic conditions in the towns during the same decade, are likely to have been just as significant. In any event, as Stevens (1974) and Berndt and Berndt (1987) point out, most NT stations had been paying better rates since the 1965 Equal Wages case and white employees (as an alternative to displaced black labour) were in short supply. Those that were available in the Katherine district were no competition for the blacks anyway and in the opinion of one station owner were:

a bloody lot of no-hopers. I had to sack the lot of them as well and ended up going into Katherine to apologise to my own blacks to get them to come back (Stevens 1974, 122).

The imposition of the 1968 Pastoral Award is considered to have had a much more dramatic effect in forcing Aboriginal people off the stations in the Kimberleys than in the Northern Territory:

The Territory in the 1960s was characterised by walk-offs, but in the west these were more often push-offs. Large numbers of Aborigines were forced to leave pastoral station properties which they had regarded as home. This, so it was said, was because a wage economy limited the number of possible Aboriginal workers, all other residents 'were not required' (Berndt and Berndt 1987, 266-67).

In reality, then, the rural-urban drift appears to have been a combination of a rural 'push' occasioned by a steady decrease in pastoral employment which continued for almost 20 years between 1965 and 1982, together with an urban 'pull' associated with several other influences (Table 2).

Table 2
The turnaround in Aboriginal pastoral population and the population of some centres in the Lindsay District, 1965-1982

Year	Aboriginal population location			
	Lindsay Dist	T/Creek	Elliott	Warrabri
1965	1290	84	58	590
1970	1218	118	87	600
1978	1006	270	233	685
1980	956	330	259	740
1982	934	364	268	790

Source: Dept of Aboriginal Affairs Tennant Creek 1984 (after Lea 1989, 66).

Aboriginal residence in the towns was also subject to seasonal factors affecting the meat industry but can be seen in Tennant Creek to have built up steadily between 1963 and 1974 (Table 3). Employment prospects appear to have altered little in Tennant Creek in this period, though are said to have improved considerably in Katherine with the opening of the new abattoir in 1963 (Lea 1987).

Table 3
Aboriginal population and employment in Tennant Creek, 1963-1974

Year(1)	Adults		Children			Employed		
	M	F	M	F	Total	M	F	
1963		19		14	33		n/a	
1964		43		41	84		n/a	
1965	13	17	18	16	64	13	7	
1966	29	26	30	21	106	26	7	
1967(2)	18	21	26	19	84	16	3	
1968	17	19	22	13	71	13	2	
1969	19	18	26	14	77	10	1	
1970	34	42	31	27	134	19	3	
1871	31	45	47	44	167	16	7	
1972	45	66	40	58	209	14	10	
1973	33	51	42	49	175	20	8	
1974	41	57	56	59	213	26	6	

Source: after Lea 1989, 65

Notes : (1) figures shown for March quarter only from 1965
(2) figures for June quarter in 1967

Perhaps the most significant changes affecting Aboriginal living conditions in the towns in the 1960s were caused by the passage of the new *Social Welfare Ordinance* in August 1964 and the *NT Licensing Ordinance* (No. 35 of 1964). These measures had far reaching effects in reducing restrictions over Aboriginal employment, encouraged the widespread introduction of cash wages and facilitated access to liquor. Convictions in Katherine for drunkenness for all race groups, for example, in the twelve months up to September 1964 (when the new Ordinance came into effect) numbered 237. In the four months directly after this date the total had already climbed to 270 which was triple the rate (Lea 1987).

Thus a combination of factors operating at varying levels of intensity in each town resulted in a permanent lift in the numbers of Aboriginal residents. The nature of the population movements were not entirely unidirectional from rural areas to town camps and have been investigated in some detail for the Katherine district by Taylor (1988). Of central importance in understanding the movement of patterns are the circular and repetitive shifts between town residence and rural family settlements. This phenomenon which is also found in the third world has made Katherine and Tennant Creek important nodal points in an extensive district kinship network: 'To maintain specific and meaningful Aboriginal associations it is necessary to move about' (Larbalestier 1979, 194).

The overall process of Aboriginal urbanisation and the place of towns like Katherine and Tennant Creek needs to be seen in the broad context of inter-communication in this part of northern Australia during and after World War Two.

However, the channels of inter-Aboriginal communication which had existed prior to World War II, and which mainly flowed from east to west, from the North-South road and its townships, continued to be maintained. During the war period some Aborigines were drawn to these eastern centres, and reports of their experiences filtered back to their home areas. Those experiences were of the same kind in regard to the improved position

Those experiences were of the same kind in regard to the improved position of Aborigines (or what appeared to be improved conditions when compared with station living). Consequently, they opened up new vistas vis-a-vis European contact and the material trappings of that kind of social living (Berndt and Berndt 19987, 267).

Besides becoming important destinations for Aboriginal migrants from stations and bush settlements, Katherine and Tennant Creek and other centres on the 'track' appear to have facilitated the onward movement of people to the primary drawcards of Darwin and Alice Springs. Although no specific research seems to have been conducted into this step-wise movement, there is evidence in the existing kinship networks in both towns to support this claim.

Reactions of government and the local community to Aboriginal urban settlement

It is interesting to note that negative reactions of white residents to problems they associated with Aboriginal settlement seem to have received public expression much earlier in Katherine than in Tennant Creek. Within a year of the establishment of a town management board in Katherine (1960) and Alice Springs (1961), minuted comments were raised about Aboriginal issues but the same did not occur in Tennant Creek until 1967 (Heppell and Wigley 1981; Lea 1987, 1989). In Katherine reactions rapidly became extreme:

..... Police in Katherine be given the authority to arrest and 'vag' every black fellow in the area that will not work and is nothing more or less than a nuisance (minutes 37th meeting Town Management Board, 27 October 1964, 5).

In Tennant Creek, by contrast, the first concerns appear to be about hygiene. The *Territorian* in February 1967 declared that poor living conditions in the Village '[do] indeed smack of discrimination'. Later the same year the town management board expressed its concern about conditions in one of the bush camps located to the west of the township (minutes 47th meeting, September 1967). The camp, known as Blueberry Hill, had in fact been cleared once before only to become re-established again. Most of the 43 people involved were moved out of Warrabri or stations in the Barkly Tableland but within two years 20 others had set up home on the same site.

It appears that there was a significant demand on the part of some Aboriginal people for a freedom from institutionalised control to allow them to house themselves. None of the three main options available - life in the rural settlements, Housing Commission accommodation, or supervised town camps - satisfied the desire for autonomy and more choice. The fact that many wished to live in close proximity to people from their own language groups seems to have escaped the notice of the authorities at this time and complicated the physical distribution of the camps considerably. Small and unhygienic bush camps around the town boundary were seen as an offence to good town planning practice and little or no regard was given to their functional importance. Besides providing casual accommodation for newcomers, these camps managed to cater for some who moved to escape drunkenness elsewhere or wanted the freedom to indulge a drinking habit.

The official approach of the Darwin administration at this time (early 1970s) is found in a remarkable briefing document describing the policy response to Aboriginal housing

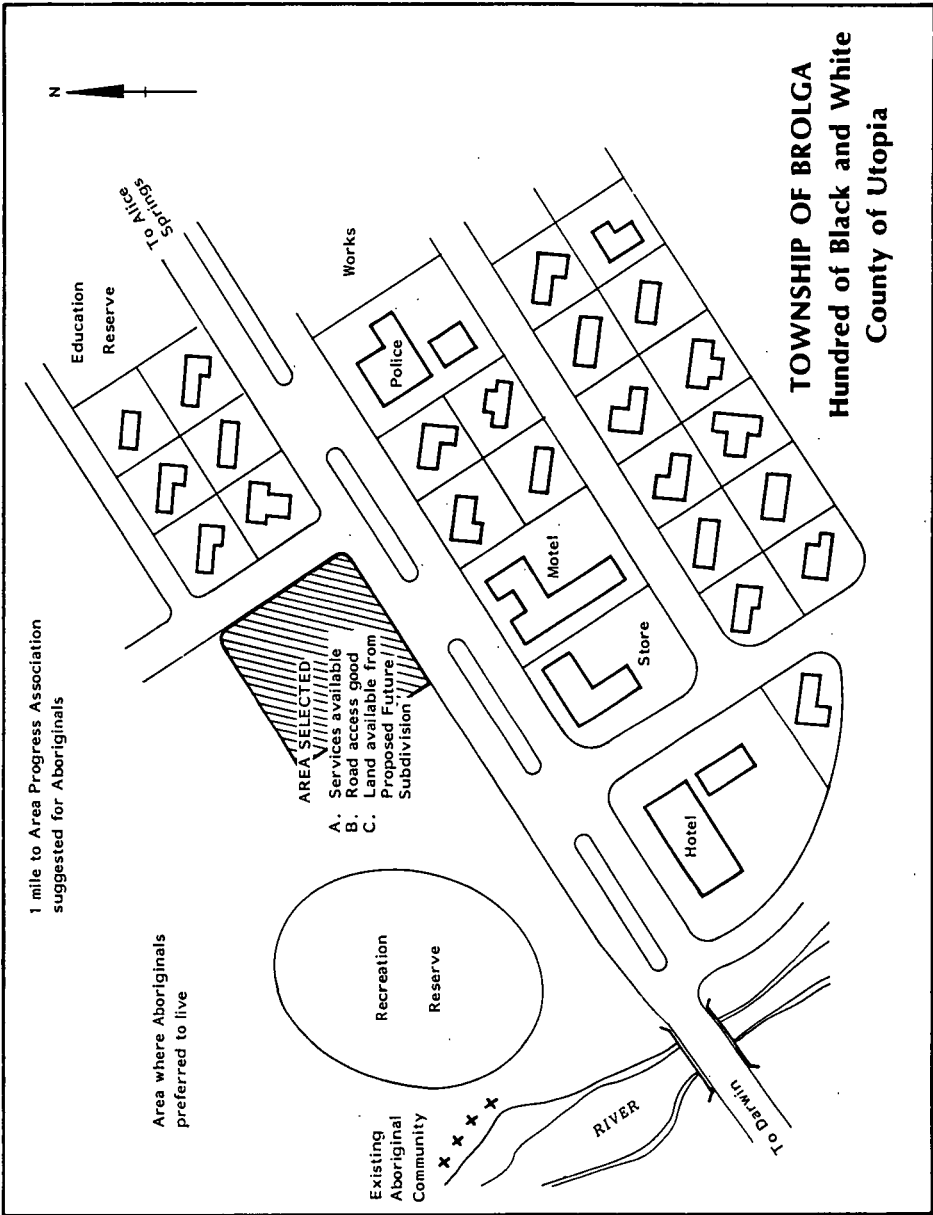
problems in an imaginary NT town called Broлга, situated in the Hundred of Black and White in the County of Utopia (Map 3) (this archive document is set out in full in Lea 1989). A small community of 250 white people is portrayed as living in proximity to a river under conditions reminiscent of post-war Katherine). The Aboriginal community is shown as camping on the river bank behind the recreation reserve. When approached by the Administration, the Progress Association suggests a new camp to be located about one mile (1.6 km) out of town but the Aborigines express the wish to live in an area north of the recreation reserve. Both groups were then persuaded by the Administration to accept a third location, as indicated, close to water, power, the police station and the town centre. The Progress Association was also informed that the new Aboriginal housing would be built to an acceptable standard, constantly maintained, properly landscaped and fenced. Thus an externally imposed solution, unwanted by both the parties involved, is advanced as a model of good planning.

The most celebrated and controversial case to come before the Tennant Creek Town Management Board in the 1970s was the offer by Mary Ward, a local pioneer, to donate a new hostel for the use of Aboriginal stockmen and their families from her pastoral station (Banka Banka). The Administration accepted her offer immediately in principle and suggested a site on the highway at the northern entrance to the town, adjoining the Mulga camp (Map 1). The Town Management Board and many local residents did not like this idea and put forward a couple of other sites in the south at a well-attended public meeting held in November 1971. All sorts of reasons were given for not using the northern site, such as a negative effect on land values, damaging the appearance of the main street and, most peculiar of all, because it might be seen as being socially discriminating against 'natives'. This last reason was advanced by a prominent Territory political identity who thought the northern site would be disadvantageous to Aborigines wishing to visit persons in the south of town because they would be forced to walk past two hotels and the Police Station en route!

No one seemed to realise or was prepared to admit that a northern location was essential for the accommodation of northern language groups. To have moved them in with southern people would have meant no solution at all. It should be noted, however, that after the \$58 000 building was constructed near the Mulga it was never used for its original purpose and soon acquired the distinctive name locally of the 'Pink Palace'.

We have already remarked on the creation of Aboriginal housing associations in both towns in the mid 1970s. The Warramunga Pabulu Housing Association (WPHA) in Tennant Creek and the Kalano Community Association in Katherine rapidly became the focus for local Aboriginal aspirations despite a relative failure to provide much in the way of shelter. Indeed, the conditions imposed on these bodies in areas like the employment of approved technical consultants and accountants, together with the lack of tenurial security over existing camps, made their chief function almost impossible to achieve. The WPHA, for example, received a quarter of a million dollars in public funds over two years without building one house. Heppell (1979, 77) shows that only 76 houses were completed by all the NT Aboriginal housing associations put together between 1972-75, at an outlay of almost fifteen and a half million dollars. The embarrassing figures were seized upon by Territory politicians who used them to berate the Whitlam Labor government:

..... if the Association had been able to build its houses without the interference of 'bureaucracy and consultants' it would have been more ready for the crisis it is now facing. The Times would like to know just who these bureaucrats and consultants are, and above all why not one house has been finished (Tennant Times, September 1975).



Map 3 The imaginary town of Brolga (after Lea 1989)

Fortunately, the associations in both towns were able to weather the storm and managed, with the assistance of the land councils and the Aboriginal Development Commission, to gain tenurial security and new land for further development.

Some concluding comments

There are several issues arising out of this early experience of Aboriginal urbanisation which are of relevance to contemporary development and change in the Northern Territory and the circumstances of small multi-racial towns nationally.

First, the Katherine and Tennant Creek experience demonstrates how externally imposed outposts of European economic expansion in the north have become progressively incorporated into an indigenous settlement network based on Aboriginal population movement patterns, kinship links and bonds of language affiliation. Second, the progression of Aboriginal urban settlement is shown here as being more than an expression of simple economic dependency resulting in migration to the towns. It was strongly affected by wartime controls and legislative changes concerning the status of Aboriginal people. Third, the use of these towns by government and private agencies to manage Aboriginal welfare administration in the two districts has greatly increased their economic resilience and underlined their permanency. Today, this role has been enhanced with greater Aboriginal spending power (Drakakis-Smith 1980) and the economic significance of claims arising out of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976*.

Frontier towns like Katherine and Tennant Creek are on the apex of an Aboriginal settlement network which extends via smaller bush towns and communities to a dispersed spread of outstations across much of the tropical north. An important question is the extent to which the local governance system is successfully adapting today to meet the demands of this reality. Traditional local government models in the Northern Territory have already been replaced by various levels of community government in the smaller places in a process which is of considerable importance to similar population distributions in the neighbouring states.

Several NT towns have become the recent focus of Aboriginal financial investment via Commonwealth agencies and the community associations which originated primarily as welfare outlets in the mid 1970s. Income derived from mining royalties, land claims and other sources is being invested in towns like Jabiru and Katherine in a new phase of Aboriginal urbanisation. It is part of an ongoing process which will give Aboriginal people a much higher and less dependent economic profile in these communities. Elsewhere, in Tennant Creek for example, a cooperative venture between the Julalikari Council (successor to the WPHA) and the town council is aimed at healing racial rifts through urban improvements:

The outback town has been the setting for a frustrating struggle between black and white to find a new image.

Uncertainty over sacred sites and the Warramunga land claim has created tensions. But the Julalikari Council which represents nine town camps, is determined to work with the white population for a bright new future with a new initiative -- greening Tennant Creek (Northern Territory News, 31 October 1988).

This leads directly to another issue of concern in multi-racial communities throughout Australia - the likelihood of an ethnic minority being able to exercise its potential voting

strength to elect its own local government councillors. Parallels are sometimes drawn with the circumstances of northern Canada where indigenous people dominate the local government scene in contrast to the current position in the Northern Territory. Although it would be wrong to place too much emphasis on the effectiveness of a single Aboriginal councillor, for example, there is evidence from western NSW that changes do occur from such small beginnings. Cowlshaw (1988) reports that the election of an Aboriginal to the 'Brindleton' Council (an anonymous NSW country town) in November 1983, led to a lessening of gossip and denigrating asides about Aborigines in the council chambers. The new member's presence is said to have:

..... created a new slant on the usual spate of complaints. As the representative of the Aboriginal community he became the target of accusations. 'What are you doing about your lot down there', he is asked and 'Your people were playing up in the pub again' (Cowlshaw 1988, 255).

Were all eligible Aborigines to have voted for Aboriginal candidates in 1983, Brindleton would have had at least three Aboriginal councillors and the changes might have been much more significant.

As far as the history of Northern Territory town camps is concerned, it would seem that the degree of autonomy and expertise demonstrated by bodies such as the Kalano Community Association, the Julalikari Council and Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs far exceeds any similar organisations in western NSW. Recent press reports of appalling living conditions at Toomelah and Boomi are reminiscent of Katherine and Tennant Creek in the 1960s and include similar threats of summary eviction under the public health Act (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 and 13 January 1989). At present, accusations of blame and neglect revolve among the cotton growers, the Moree Plains shire council, the NSW government and the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs. There is little likelihood of significant improvement in such southern towns until effective Aboriginal associations, like those which have emerged in the Northern Territory, are formed to promote the interests of their members.

Lastly, although the recent history of Aboriginal urbanisation has been the focus here, it is evident that this concern should be seen in the broader experience of the Katherine and Tennant Creek communities as a whole. The separate administration of black and white residents seems to have encouraged a sort of parallel intellectual division in urban studies in the north which rarely considers economy and society in these places in their totality. One cause is probably the availability of funding for special interest projects in Aboriginal studies when compared with other subjects and the comparative lack of interest shown by Australian researchers in northern towns in general. This in turn has its origins in factors such as the high costs of fieldwork, the small numbers of higher degree students in the region and a general reluctance on the part of Australian human geographers to tackle topics in northern Australia. Much more has been done for example in Papua New Guinea which had similar territorial status to the Northern Territory for most of this century.

Frontier towns in northern Australia are probably more advanced in acknowledging the inter-dependency among the main race groups than anywhere else in the country today. Their experience has important implications for remote area settlement nationally.

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COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND COMMUNITY ISSUES IN A SMALL NORTHERN TOWN: A KIMBERLEY CASE STUDY

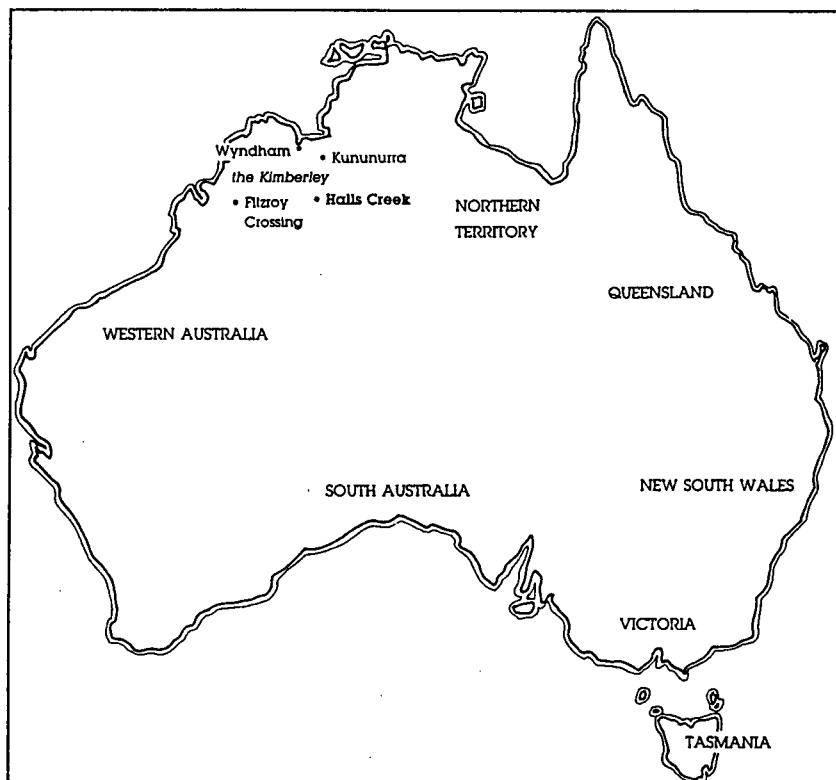
Hilary Rumley

This paper aims to contribute to an understanding of community life in Australia and more particularly to an analysis of some contemporary features of the interactions among local government, Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal women in the town of Halls Creek in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia (Map 1). It is my intention to show how the changing demographic composition and socio-economic characteristics of the town have created a situation where the so-called 'station mentality', the male pastoralist view of the town, which has dominated local government and community life for most of this century, is being increasingly challenged by pressure from town-based non-Aboriginal women and other members of the local Aboriginal population, particularly Aboriginal women. The dominance in local government of the 'station mentality' is seen by many people as the main reason for the relative neglect of service provision to town residents. The need for better services in town has been a major community issue since the mid 1980s and one which has been addressed regularly in daily conversation and through the pages of the *Nugget News*, a community newspaper which commenced publication on a two monthly basis in 1986. Further evidence of pressure to improve local services can be found through increased local level political participation and the emergence of an informal coalition of primarily, though not exclusively, town-based Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women which led to the formation of the Halls Creek Progress Association.

The paper presents data collected between 1985 and 1988 which indicate, among other things, the ways in which people describe and perceive social groupings in the town. It is suggested that while these perceptions result from the historical and socio-economic circumstances of the development of the town, there are now competing claims between social groups as to which is more representative of the community or ought to be dominant in community affairs and these developments are evident in community issues which have recently emerged in the town.

One of the underlying assumptions of the paper is that it is not sufficient to understand 'community relations' as only referring to relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Although race relations do form a significant part of 'community relations' in the town, it is overly simplistic to treat 'community relations' as simply those between black and white. The community issues to be discussed in this paper show that alliances are increasingly likely to be formed *across* racial lines when common interests run counter to those of the local dominant elite.

This paper addresses a number of points raised by Austin (1984) in a discussion of Australian community and regional studies in which she argued that such studies can and should address issues of inequality and domination in Australian life and the various responses to these. This is best done, she continued, through an approach which utilises both anthropological fieldwork methods and a knowledge of the structure and history of Australian society. I hope that attention in this paper both to ethnography and structural analysis will, as Austin put it, avoid 'the sins of triviality, overly abstract theory, and the presumption that ordinary people do not know what they are doing' (Austin 1984, 139).



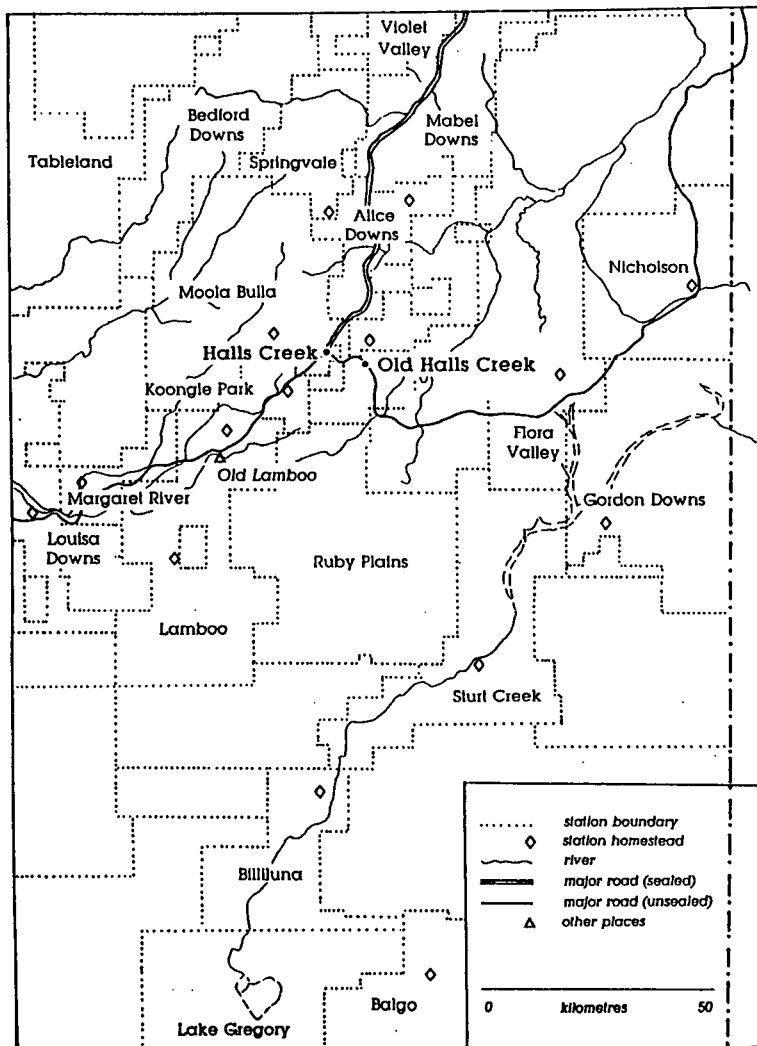
Map 1 Location of Halls Creek and the Kimberley region

Source: Ross 1987, 10

The material to be presented is organised as follows. The first part of the paper gives brief background information on the history and development of Halls Creek and also provides data on the changing demographic composition and socio-economic characteristics of the town. The next part of the paper outlines the nature of social groupings in the town, and relates these to various experiences of local government service provision and to recent changes in local political participation. The last section looks in more detail at one particular community issue which serves as a case study of the analysis presented in the paper.

The town of Halls Creek : the changing context

Pastoral development in the East Kimberley area began in 1884 with the establishment of the Ord River station. The gold rush, which led to the establishment of the town of Old Halls Creek (some 15 km east of the present townsite, Map 2) lasted from 1885 to 1890. Settlers in the area met with some resistance from the local Aboriginal population, but by the 1920s, most Aboriginal people were living on pastoral stations or missions, engaged in seasonal labour or domestic work and receiving food and clothing as payment (Bolton 1953; Biskup 1973; Ross 1987). Thus from the early days of non-Aboriginal settlement



Map 2 Location of Halls Creek and neighbouring station in 1980

Source: Ross 1987, 14

in the Halls Creek area, the social structure was essentially that of a typical northern Australian rural colonial situation. Social groupings comprised in essence a dominant elite of white pastoral employers and dependent Aboriginal workers and servants. Some Aboriginal people made camp around the town from its beginnings at the end of the last century, but the typical pattern was for Aboriginal people to live and work on pastoral stations. The town of Halls Creek continued as a small service centre for the south east Kimberley region after the turn of the century, despite the end of the gold rush. The town was relocated in the late 1940s to provide a better site for an airport and to allow for future expansion.

The 1950s saw the beginnings of changes both in the distribution of population in the area and in the town's social structure. Economic and political decisions made outside the local community brought about effects which were to have ramifications for community

local community brought about effects which were to have ramifications for community relations and community issues into the 1980s. From about this time, more Aboriginal people began moving to live in Halls Creek or in fringe camps on the edge of town. Two main reasons seem to account for this movement. Firstly, the sale of Moola Bulla, a government-owned cattle station close to Halls Creek, to a Queensland pastoralist in 1955 resulted in the shift of a large proportion of the station's former Aboriginal residents to the town. These included 92 'caste employees and natives' in paid employment of whom about 45 were 'stockmen and drovers, pumpers, butchers, house staff, gardeners, saddlers, mechanics and general hands, etc.', but did not include 'indigent natives, children and those who are not being paid' (Archives of Western Australia, Moola Bulla File 3/53). On the basis of these figures, it can be estimated that the number of Aboriginal people who were shifted from Moola Bulla in the mid 1950s was in excess of 250. Aboriginal residents were removed initially to Fitzroy Crossing, but many soon moved back to Halls Creek.

A few were allowed to return to work at Moola Bulla but the majority simply camped on the town common on the fringes of Halls Creek. In the late 1950s the (state) government was forced to accept that they were there to stay and two reserves to accommodate them were set up by the Department of Native Welfare (Bolger 1987, 3).

The second main reason for the movement of Aboriginal people from the country to the town at this time related to changing conditions in the pastoral industry. International and corporate capital was becoming an increasingly important factor in the operation of the northern pastoral industry, resulting in part in changed styles of management and deteriorating working conditions for many Aborigines (Altman and Nieuwenhuysen 1979; Ross 1987, 15-16). At the same time, the displacement of Aboriginal people from pastoral stations was exacerbated by the introduction of award wages in 1968. The Commonwealth decision to introduce award wages further reduced Aboriginal labour in the pastoral industry, as employers claimed they could no longer afford to support the families of workers and pay full wage rates. So, by the 1970s, few Aboriginal people lived permanently on pastoral properties in the area. More typically, Aboriginal people had come to live in or around the town of Halls Creek, taking seasonal work in the pastoral industry if it was available or, more recently still, moving between the town and outstations. As the Aboriginal population of the town of Halls Creek increased, Aboriginal dependence shifted from pastoralism to government welfarism (Bolger 1987, 3).

During the 1960s, the state government's policy to promote development and settlement in the north-west saw the commencement of such schemes as the Ord River Irrigation Project in the East Kimberley which produced an overall increase in the population and an expansion of tertiary industries. Primary industry, most notably pastoralism, which had been the dominant economic activity in the area, declined in relative importance.

The last two decades have seen a steady growth in the role of Halls Creek as an administrative and service centre for the region. Agencies of government, both state and federal, have expanded in the town over this period. It was noted even in the mid 1960s that the then state Department of Native Welfare had 'expanded its activities in the region considerably in recent years' (Kerr 1967, 225). The situation is now such that a large proportion of the non-Aboriginal population in Halls Creek comprises officers of federal and state governments temporarily employed in the town.

Their servicing roles and the flow-on effects to other businesses such as garages and shops, put the Aboriginal population in the position of

accounting for the majority of non-Aboriginal employment in the area (Ross 1987, 11).

At the same time as Halls Creek has become demographically a more Aboriginal town and economically a less pastorally dominated one, it has also become a more female town, or at least, a less male one, demographically and economically speaking. At the 1954 census, the non-Aboriginal male population (249) of the shire of Halls Creek was double that of the non-Aboriginal female population (124) (Table 1). It was noted in the 1960s that males still predominated and that workers outnumbered dependents. This situation showed 'the lack of permanent settlement and the relative importance of transient male workers' (Kerr 1967, 27).

Table 1
Shire of Halls Creek: non-Aboriginal population changes
by gender 1954-1986

	1954		1966		1976		1986		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
		Total		Total		Total		Total	
Population	M	249	67	380	66	408	61	486	60
	F	124	33	197	34	260	39	323	40
Total		373		577		668		809	

- Sources:**
- 1 1954 Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, Vol 5, Western Australia, CBCS, Canberra
 - 2 1966 Population Census, Local Government Area Summary Data, mf Batch No 661.1, WA, ABS, Canberra
 - 3 ABS 1976 Census of Population Housing, Local Government Area Summary Data, mf Batch No 76.201, WA, ABS, Canberra
 - 4 ABS 1986 Census of Population and Housing. Legal Local Government Areas, mf Batch No C86.203, WA, ABS, Canberra

Figures for the mid 1970s and the mid 1980s indicate that the female population of the shire of Halls Creek has risen at a greater rate relative to the male population and that the proportion of women to men in the town of Halls Creek (as distinct from the shire as a whole) is now equal (Table 2). Census data indicate that community stability has been increasing, and the workforce in town is a less transient one. Whereas in 1971, 28 per cent of people in town lived at the same address five years previously, in 1986 this proportion had increased to 34 per cent, which compares to a state proportion of 45 per cent. An increase in community stability may be associated with an increase in the demand for and expectation of improved local services.

There has been an overall decline in male employment in the main industry categories in the shire of Halls Creek from 78 per cent in 1954 to 63 per cent in 1986, while female employment has increased from 18 per cent to 31 per cent over the same time period (Table 3). In 1986, women were employed in all the main industry categories noted, which was not the case earlier. Male employment in primary industry in the shire has declined from 60 per cent of total employment in 1954 to 28 per cent of total employment in 1986. Female employment in community services in the shire has risen from 3 per cent in 1954 to over 11 per cent in 1986 (Table 3). The town of Halls Creek has had a higher proportion of female to male employment than the shire as a whole and this proportion has been increasing (Table 4).

Table 2
Women as a percentage of population of the Shire and Town of Halls Creek 1954 - 1986

	1954	1966	1976	1986
Shire	33*	34*	46	46
Town	n/a	n/a	51	50

*not including Aboriginal population

Sources:	1	1954 Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, Vol 5, Western Australia, CBCS, Canberra
	2	1966 Population Census, Local Government Area Summary Data, mf Batch No 661.1, WA, ABS, Canberra
	3a	ABS 1976 Census of Population and Housing, Local Government Area Summary Data, mf Batch No 76.201, WA, ABS, Canberra
	3b	ABS 1976 Census of Population and Housing, Urban Centres and Localities, mf Batch No 76.102, WA, ABS, Canberra
	4a	ABS 1986 Census of Population and Housing, Legal Local Government Areas, mf Batch No C86.203, WA, ABS, Canberra
	4b	ABS 1986 Census of Population and Housing, Urban Centres and (Rural) Localities, mf Batch No C86.206, WA, ABS, Canberra

Table 3
Shire of Halls Creek - Main industry categories by gender as a percentage of total employment 1954 to 1986

Industry	1954		1966		1976		1986	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Agric/Forestry/ Fishing/Hunting	56.7	9.0	39.9	6.1	35.9	9.3	25.3	8.4
Mining	3.0	0	7.2	0	5.0	0.2	2.4	0.3
Electricity/Gas/Water	0	0	2.0	0	2.8	0	4.5	1.8
Construction	6.0	0	13.0	0	15.9	0	13.1	0.6
Wholesale/Retail	1.0	1.0	1.7	2.6	2.2	2.0	3.2	3.8
Public Admin/Def			1.7	0.3	2.4	3.2	2.8	0.6
Comm Services (*)	9.5	3.0	5.2	4.9	7.1	7.7	10.3	11.3
Rec/Ent/Personal/etc	2.0	5.0	0.9	2.9	1.4	1.4	1.0	4.6
Total	78.2	18.0	71.6	16.8	72.7	23.8	62.6	31.4

Sources:	1	1954 Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, Vol 5, Western Australia, CBCS, Canberra
	2	1966 Population Census, Local Government Area Summary Data, mf Batch No 661.1, WA, ABS, Canberra
	3	ABS 1976 Census of Population and Housing, Local Government Area Summary Data, mf Batch No 76.201, WA, ABS, Canberra
	4	ABS 1986 Census of Population and Housing, Legal Local Government Areas, mf Batch No C86.203, WA, ABS, Canberra

Notes: (*) 1954 data for public administration/defence and community services is combined

Female employment in the main industry categories has increased from 35 per cent of total employment in 1971 to 44 per cent in 1986 (Table 4). Total employment in the tertiary industry sector in the town has risen from 80 per cent in 1971 to 87 per cent in 1986, while total employment in primary industry in the town has fallen from 20 per cent to 13 per cent over this time. Total employment in the community services area has increased from 21 per cent to 37 per cent from 1971 to 1986 (Table 4).

Table 4
Town of Halls Creek - Main industry categories by gender as a percentage of total employment 1971 to 1986*

Industry	1971		1976		1986	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Agric/Forest/Fish/Hunt	11.4	0	10.2	1.8	7.7	0.9
Mining	8.3	0	2.4	0	4.7	0
Elec/Gas/Water	0	0	8.4	0	3.4	0
Construction	17.4	0	18.1	1.2	5.2	0
W'sale/Retail	8.3	6.1	6.0	6.0	8.2	9.9
Public Admin/Def	2.3	2.3	7.2	9.6	6.4	1.7
Comm Services	9.1	12.1	7.8	13.9	17.2	20.2
Rec/Ent/Personal/etc	8.3	14.4	3.0	4.2	3.0	11.6
Total	65.1	34.9	63.1	36.7	55.8	44.3

*Figures pre 1971 unavailable

- Sources:
- 1 1971 Census of Population and Housing, Urban Centres and Localities, mf Batch No 711.8, WA, ABS, Canberra
 - 2 ABS 1976 Census of Population and Housing, Urban Centres and Localities, mf Batch No 76.102, WA, ABS, Canberra
 - 3 ABS 1986 Census of Population and Housing, Urban Centres and (Rural) Localities, mf Batch No C86.206, WA, ABS, Canberra

With a total population of 1 182 (1986 Census), the town of Halls Creek now contains approximately 41 per cent of the total shire population of 2 886 (Table 5), a proportion which has increased from 35 per cent in 1971. Numbers of men and women in the town are now approximately equal. The Aboriginal population represents per cent of the total (Table 5) and this proportion increases during the wet season to approximately 72 per cent (Ross 1987, 11).

Table 5
Town of Halls Creek - Population by gender and Aboriginality 1986

	M	F	Total	
European	244	219	463	(39%)
Aboriginal/TSI	345	374	719	(61%)
Total	589	593	1182	

Source: ABS 1986 Census of Population and Housing, Urban Centres and (Rural) Localities, mf Batch No C86.206, WA, ABS, Canberra

Social groups, service provision and local political participation

The dominance of the male pastoralist social group in Halls Creek has, until fairly recently, directly affected the level and type of services provided by local government, but increasing local political participation by other social groups is challenging the dominance of this group and questioning its priorities in the area of service provision.

Social groups

At one level residents of the town of Halls Creek are united in seeing themselves collectively as a socially and politically isolated group, likely to be neglected by state and federal governments unless they speak and act together. There is a strong expression of the ideal of building a stronger sense of community in order to overcome the disadvantages and difficulties of climate and distance. This is especially marked when people in the town compare their situation unfavourably either with other towns in the Kimberley or elsewhere. These themes appear regularly in the *Nugget News*. For instance, one letter in the August 1986 edition referred to the 'climatic extremes and associated problems of Kimberley life', particularly during the wet. An editorial in October 1986 noted that 'We all realise that being in Halls Creek means that we are quite isolated' and others in September and October 1987 again raised the isolation problem in referring to flight problems and the non-arrival of the daily supply of newspapers. The editors commented on the 'complete incomprehension (by various organisations) of the distances, isolation and true conditions that prevail in the Kimberley'. Another editorial in November 1986 entitled 'Community Involvement' noted that:

Halls Creek is a small but growing rural community. It relies on community members to get things done... The really successful small towns in Australia are those where there is good communication, joint endeavours, an enthusiastic leadership and a strong sense of civic and local commitment... Halls Creek needs everyone to unite behind a clear and attainable Long Term Development Plan. Let's try to make Halls Creek an active, growing leading community in the future and show by results just what we can achieve when we all work together for common goals and ideals.

This plea to work together for the good of Halls Creek appears regularly in the *Nugget News*, and expresses an ideal view of what small town communities ought to be like, yet in part is a clear recognition of the reality of sub-groups and factions in the town.

The existence of sub-groups and factions within the town's population is reflected both in comments made in the local newspaper and in observations made by several residents about social groups in the town. Observers commented frequently on various groups within the community. For example, one white woman said: 'Halls Creek is a very cliquy little town; teachers, hospital, police, locals ... not a lot of mixing'. Part of an editorial in the *Nugget News* in November 1986 noted:

the tendency for each small group to work independently and not to communicate with other groups...All of the small splintered sub groups such as school, hospital, welfare, church groups, aboriginal groups, all need to join up their resources, willpower and endeavour.

A letter in December 1986 referred to 'growing divisions in this small community'.

The two major groups of people in town are Aborigines and non-Aborigines and it is certainly the case that the boundaries between the two are socially and spatially apparent. Almost half the town's Aboriginal population live on reserves or in camps, with the rest in housing commission dwellings. One commentator noted that:

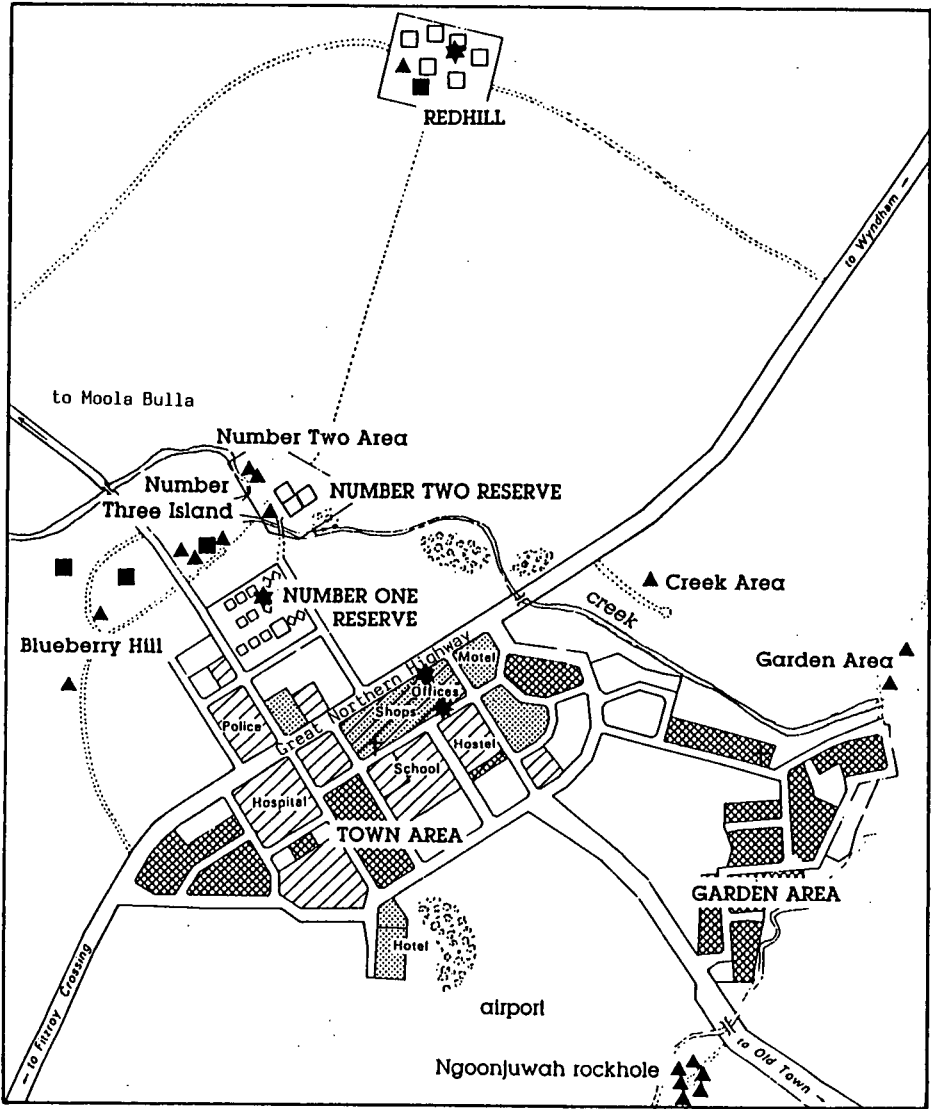
the majority of adult Aboriginal people's interactions with non-Aborigines were business ones with officials, the hospital, and shopkeepers. Personal friendships were rare, and sexual relationships were seldom made public... Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people mainly kept to themselves, though exchanges were generally cordial or civil when they occurred, and expressions of hostility were rare (Ross 1987, 12).

This lack of interaction was summed up in part by one shire official who remarked that communities of Aborigines 'were in another world' and this view was confirmed by an Aboriginal man who said that 'Aboriginal people haven't got a clue about what's going on in shire council. It's a small clique there, they don't want to know anything about Aboriginal people'. These observations seem especially to apply to interactions between men in the town, with a prime example being Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men drinking separately in the pub. More opportunities seem to exist for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women to interact on a more personal and informal basis. Through the activities of the school, kindergarten and language centre for example, some women of the town have been increasingly involved in issues of mutual interest and concern.

People speak about sub-groups within these two major ones. Aboriginal people described themselves and are categorised by some others according to the language they speak, the traditional area they came from, where and how they now live and which, if any, religious organisation they belong to. Most Aborigines in Halls Creek are either Jaru-speaking people from the area to the south and east of the town, now living mainly at Number Two Reserve and Redhill community, or are Kija-speaking people from the north and west, living mainly at Yardgee community, the former Number One Reserve (Map 3). Local graffiti denotes the youth of this latter group as the 'Yardgee Blockbusters'. Aboriginal people living in state houses in town have been described as 'less inclined to traditional values than those living in the camps and reserves' (Ross 1987, 17). Jaru-speakers at Redhill belong to a Catholic sub-group in the town. Missionaries are active as teachers and community development workers among them. Members of the Yardgee community are mainly part of 'Brother Mac's mob', followers of an Assembly of God pastor who has been in Halls Creek since the early part of the 1980s. Another sub-group is represented by the United Aborigines' Mission, which has a more mixed membership in its People's Church. The existence and significance of these sub-groups within the Aboriginal population in Halls Creek are barely recognised by members of the dominant male pastoralist group, who seem to perceive Aboriginal people mainly in terms of the amount of white blood they have or how 'bushy' (traditionally-oriented or assimilated) they are.

The most striking feature of the way in which the non-Aboriginal population of Halls Creek categorises itself is the constant reference to length of residence, which relates in part to type of work. 'Transients' are generally government employees while 'permanents' are employed in primary industry or town businesses. The existence of such community attitudes contrasting 'transients' with 'permanents' is revealed in newspaper references and observation of everyday life. One letter to the local newspaper in December 1986 referred to two negative phrases in current usage in the town:

Map 3 The townsite of Halls Creek in 1980



- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| ▲ tent | — road |
| ■ shack | ⋯ track |
| ◇ small reserve house | ⋯ footpath |
| □ large reserve house | + church/mission |
| □ Redhill house | ▨ civic purposes |
| ▨ Aboriginal drinking areas | ▩ commercial purposes |
| ▩ conventional housing | ★ Aboriginal gathering areas |

Source: Ross 1987, 18

One states 'I've been in the Kimberleys for x years and it will never work'. The other is 'Why should I contribute when I'm only here for 2 years and I'll never get anything out of it'. Both stifle initiative and originality.... Above all let's remember that we all live here, short term, long term whatever, so any input is welcome'.

Other items in the *Nugget News* pick up this 'transients' and 'permanents' theme. One described a junior government worker who was being transferred from Halls Creek as 'an enthusiastic member of the community ... (who proved) that the floating population has as much to offer this town as the permanent residents' (*Nugget News*, May 1987). Another referred to a government employee as having, 'in contrast to many transient people ... a special relationship with station people' (*Nugget News*, September 1987). In addition, people commented on the existence of a small clique running the town, those shire councillors with a 'station mentality' who 'fired off' publicly about 'transients'. In the words of one 'transient' woman:

people here have a station mentality. They see Halls Creek as here because of the pastoral industry and therefore assume they have the right to run the town. But pastoralism is no longer dominant as it once was, yet they think anyone not in the pastoral industry is inferior.

To quote another 'transient' woman:

we're up against the old Kimberley attitude, which sees Halls Creek as a supply base for cattle stations. But this is no longer so... Most women in town are 'transient'. You're not regarded as permanent if you're not Kimberley born and bred.

In April 1987, after a ratepayers meeting the previous month, one 'transient' woman wrote a letter to the *Nugget News* in the following terms:

This is the second public meeting I have been to at the Shire where there has been an insinuated insult directed at 'transient' people. This sort of 'Veteran local' mentality has no place in this community today. It is particularly hurtful to people who may only be here for two to five years but in that time put in a fair amount of work. This town is no longer pastorally dominated and will always be partly comprised of 'transient' people... their contributions of work and ideas (should) be welcomed and encouraged rather than sniggered at...What does one have to do to be considered 'local' as opposed to 'itinerant' in this town? How long do you have to stay and how much harder do you have to work to prove your worth? Is there some recipe for gaining this hallowed status?

In recent years, town-based 'transients', predominantly female, together with sections of the local Aboriginal population, have challenged the domination of the 'station mentality' with varying degrees of success.

Service provision

For the most part, the local shire council has been and still is dominated by male, pastoral, and to a lesser extent town business, interests, seeing itself as 'us', representative of the permanent, ratepaying category of the population and everyone else as 'them', the transient, or Aboriginal non-ratepaying category of the population. Pastoral interests have generally not been served by spending on facilities in the town. The dominance of a self-interested 'station mentality' on the shire council has meant, it was maintained by a

number of people, that virtually nothing has been done for the town. Spending priorities of the shire have been mainly on maintaining and grading roads (Rumley and Rumley 1988, 38-41) and many people currently living in the town consider that the town has been neglected in the provision of facilities and services by the shire.

As noted elsewhere (Rumley and Rumley 1988), the shire of Halls Creek has in recent years given a low budget priority to expenditures in the 'social well-being' areas of health, welfare, recreation and community amenities compared both with its spending pattern on roads in the shire and with its concern to build up a credit balance in its accounts. For the period 1982/3 to 1985/6, for example, the average proportion of the shire's budget spent on social well-being was 23 per cent compared with a state average of 44 per cent, while figures for road plant over the same period were 19 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. The shire's overdraft at the end of the 1970s was turned into a budget surplus of over a quarter of a million dollars by the mid 1980s. It seems as if the dominant 'station mentality' on the shire council was loath to spend much of its money on anything but roads in the shire. Very low priority was given by the shire to expenditure on less traditional items in the social well-being categories, particularly in the town area or in the other world of Aboriginal communities. One Aboriginal woman in town asserted that the shire was more interested in tourists than Aborigines and that most Aboriginal people thought that the shire only did roads. One non-Aboriginal shire councillor, who could be described as sympathetic to Aboriginal concerns, claimed that the shire was 'very prejudiced', they were not interested in Aborigines and did not want to be associated with Aboriginal problems, although he thought they ought to be more involved. The lack of communication between shire councillors and officials on the one hand and Aboriginal people on the other is reflected in the non-provision of local government services by the former to many of the latter. Whereas those Aboriginal people living in state housing commission dwellings in town have generally received equivalent services to other town residents, some of the basic needs of Aboriginal people living in camps or on reserves around the town of Halls Creek have been ignored or unmet by the shire. A rubbish removal service has not been provided, nor have adequate water supplies and sewerage connections been made. A number of Aboriginal people commented on the lack of public toilets in town and how these were often kept locked. It is interesting to note, in the light of the earlier comment about tourists, that the shire's fairly recent decision to provide the 'Memorial Park Public Toilets' (*Nugget News*, July 1988) includes these as part of the coach park construction for tourists.

Expenditure on recreation in the town of Halls Creek between 1982 and 1986 was approximately half that of other local government authorities in the state, averaging 12 per cent of its budget compared to the state average of 25 per cent. In 1985/86 the major part of this recreation expenditure was on the establishment of a town oval. This particular facility was, in the words of one woman, instituted by 'transients' and was mainly utilised by the non-Aboriginal cricket and football teams. While the funding of this development represented something of a concession by the council to the interests of its town-based 'transient' inhabitants, it was pointed out by a number of residents that its use was restricted, not only to a limited number of male-oriented sporting clubs, but also because of the fact that the verdant green oval, something of an oasis in Halls Creek, was kept locked most of the time. One Aboriginal woman commented on the contrast between the well-maintained, but under-utilised oval and the poorly-maintained, but extensively-used town basketball courts. Another Aboriginal woman pointed out that the town park 'only had a few bits of play equipment, no shade trees and no tap for drinking water'. Aboriginal people had been blamed by the shire for removing any trees planted and for breaking a slide in the park.

The lack of a public swimming pool was an issue raised by a number of people in Halls Creek, both in conversation and publicly through the pages of the *Nugget News*. In mid 1986, the council's response was: 'To build a swimming pool at this stage...would...be quite irresponsible' (*Nugget News*, August 1986). The general issue of better recreational facilities in town, including a swimming pool was raised intermittently in the local newspaper from this time (see for example November and December 1986 issues). But according to the Shire clerk, members of the shire council were not interested in providing a swimming pool, mainly because they believed it would run at a loss and this would mean raising the rates. This was yet another example of the 'permanents' (or the 'locals', the 'ratepayers') feeling that they would, to quote one 'transient' woman 'get lumbered with activities commenced by transients'.

Local political participation

Until 1985, voting rights in local government elections in Western Australia were restricted to ratepayers and occupiers of rateable property. The majority of Aboriginal people, particularly in country areas, did not fall into these categories, as they more usually occupied reserves which were non-rateable crown land. As a result, Aboriginal participation in local government elections up to this time was virtually non-existent, or at least minimal. However, legislative changes which took effect from 1985 have significantly altered this situation, particularly in country shires with high Aboriginal populations such as Halls Creek. The legislative changes to the Local Government Act provided, among other things, for full adult franchise and thus removed remaining legal constraints on Aboriginal voting in municipal elections.

When these legislative changes were being debated, opposition to them was particularly marked in almost all country shires in Western Australia because of the belief that non-ratepayers (including Aborigines) could potentially gain 'too much power' on shire councils. In fact, a popular Western Australian myth has frequently been invoked in an attempt to exclude the non-ratepaying population, including Aboriginal people, from participation in local government. This myth exaggerates the relative importance of rates in overall municipal revenues and then uses this exaggeration to justify the exclusion of those who do not actually pay rates from the right to be involved in municipal decision-making. This myth has been and still is apparent in the shire of Halls Creek. In May 1983, for example, the shire council agreed to advise the Country Shires Association that it was not in favour of adult franchise for local government elections since 'it could lead to the election of 'non ratepayer' councils, and therefore ratepayers would lose control of Council' (Halls Creek Shire Minute Books 1, 1984). However, it should be noted that for the period 1982/3 to 1985/6, Halls Creek generated on average only 12.8 per cent of its annual revenues from locally-derived rates. The bulk of its revenues in this period were derived from external sources in the form of government funds granted to the shire on the basis, in part at least, of the needs of its population.

After the amendments to the Local Government Act took effect in 1985, enrolment increases in both wards of the shire of Halls Creek were dramatic. In the Town ward, there was an increase of 244 per cent from 1984 to 1985 (149 to 513), while in the Country ward the increase was 700 per cent (121 to 968). Most of these increases were made up of Aboriginal people. Two Aboriginal candidates stood in the local government elections in 1985, with one being elected. Another Aboriginal candidate ran unsuccessfully for election in 1987, while a second Aboriginal councillor was elected in 1988, defeating the longstanding shire president, a Country ward pastoralist. But the 'station mentality' attitude on the shire council, which has sought to exclude or at least to minimise the representation and participation of non-ratepayers, especially Aboriginal people, in local government still continues. This is evident both in the council's decision

not to have any additional polling places other than the shire offices for the 1985 and 1986 elections and also in the following letter which was written to the *Nugget News* in June 1988 by the deputy shire president (later shire president) following the defeat of the then shire president:

In the aftermath of the Shire Elections ... a number of matters need to be addressed. Firstly, the present system of voting is unsuitable for an area of the state in which such a high proportion of the population are either illiterate or uninformed on matters relating to Shire issues. Secondly, the potential for the possible manipulation of community groups by others cannot be overlooked, and the system must be overhauled in order to prevent this from occurring ... When the president of a shire council ... can be defeated, as was the case in Halls Creek on Saturday 7th May, one must question the suitability of the universal franchise system of voting ... the uncertainty of stable local government can only add to the concerns of future project developers. The government must examine the effects that the introduction of universal franchise voting has had, and having done so, must proceed to make the necessary adjustments so that Kimberley people as a whole, no matter what colour their skin, can again look forward to the future with confidence (Nugget News, June 1988).

A significant recent development in Halls Creek as far as local political participation is concerned has been the formation late in 1986 of the Halls Creek Progress Association. This association has been acting as a local pressure group, lobbying the shire to provide better services and facilities for town residents. At least three Aboriginal people, including the unsuccessful candidate for the 1987 local government elections, as well as a number of 'transient' women involved in the publication of the *Nugget News*, have been on the committee of the Progress Association. It is interesting and significant that many local women, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have directed some of their local political energies to participation in and support for the formation and activities of the Progress Association rather than to involvement as candidates in local government. The shire council is regarded as something of a dominant male domain bound by formal and rather intimidating rules which can be made more responsive to changing local needs by challenge from outside. Some women view the continued dominance of the 'station mentality' on the council as rendering potentially ineffective the presence of Aboriginal male councillors because of the unwritten rules of interaction between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. Some of the issues taken up by the Progress Association will be dealt with more fully in the next section of the paper.

It is interesting to note that in another sphere of local political activity it is mainly women who are taking the lead. Several Aboriginal women with socio-cultural ties to the country on which Moola Bulla station is situated are engaged in ongoing negotiations with the station manager and the state's Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority to regain access to their traditional land.

A recent community issue: commercial television in Halls Creek

A number of the considerations and issues relating to the interactions between the shire, local Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal women can be exemplified with particular reference to the emergence, development and outcome of one particular local community issue.

The introduction of a commercial television channel, Golden West Network (GWN) emerged as a major community issue in Halls Creek during 1986, in the same year that publication of the town's local newspaper, the *Nugget News*, commenced. The two events were not unrelated, in that a number of people involved in getting the newspaper off the ground were also involved in lobbying the shire about supporting the introduction of commercial television. From the first edition of *Nugget News* in May 1986, editors and letter writers queried the shire about its plans for developing a number of facilities, amenities and services in Halls Creek, including commercial television. For example, one letter asked:

Would the shire care to respond to a request by me on behalf of many residents of the town and shire to comment on their financial well being and what things we can look forward to by way of development and progress for our town? Can we get the commercial satellite television? Can we get the radio? Can we get a public swimming pool for the hot and bored kids in town? Are there more plans for progress? (Nugget News, June 1986).

The shire's response in the next issue (*Nugget News*, August 1986) was that it was pursuing the commercial television question and hoped to give a statement before long.

The October issue of the newspaper was headlined 'GWN for Halls Creek?' and the item gave background on the issue. GWN had recently begun transmitting to the north of Western Australia, providing its own transmitters to towns with a population of over 1 000. The only major centre not to be receiving the transmission was Halls Creek. As far as people in Halls Creek were concerned, the problem was that figures from the 1981 census were being used, when the town's population was just under 1 000, whereas by mid 1986 its population had risen to well over the required figure.

Apparently, it was reported in the local newspaper, other communities in the state which had missed out, such as Meekatharra, Leonora and Laverton, were calling for tenders, having decided to foot the bill for commercial television themselves. The Shire of Halls Creek was in the process of making approaches to GWN, as well as to the state and federal governments.

Among other things, this issue raised the isolation problems experienced by people in Halls Creek. As the editorial in the October issue of *Nugget News* pointed out, Halls Creek now had television, radio and a sealed road. 'But lately we have had our position of isolation reinforced... Why is GWN so intractable? Would their decision have been different if Halls Creek had a different type of population? What are our MP's doing about the situation?'

In December 1986, a public meeting was held about the possibility of receiving commercial television in Halls Creek. Over 40 community members attended and 'turned in a display of enthusiasm unmatched in recent times' (*Nugget News*, January 1987). The shire had by this time unsuccessfully exhausted all avenues of funding and heated discussion arose at the meeting as to who should pay for this 'town facility'. It seems as if the 'station-mentality' which prevailed among most shire councillors resisted spending shire money on a facility which stood mainly to benefit inhabitants of the town. While recognising the particular benefits of an additional television station to sick, aged, handicapped and young people in the town, the shire clerk had earlier pointed out that shire councillors would hardly be keen to cover the cost of a facility which they would not get anyway.

The major outcome of this meeting was a resolution to form an association and establish a trust fund to help finance community projects such as the introduction of commercial television. A further meeting in January 1987 formed the interim committee of the Halls Creek Progress Association. Of the seven members of this committee, five were women including one Aboriginal woman. Membership of the committee also included a local Aboriginal man. So the public meeting in December about GWN had served as a catalyst to the formation of the local Progress Association, which represented town-based women's and, to a lesser extent, Aboriginal interests in a way which the shire council did not. By March 1987, the Progress Association had already commenced its fundraising efforts and begun to be regarded as a representative pressure group for the community on a range of other matters to do with the quality of life and the provision of services, facilities and amenities in Halls Creek. It had requested the shire council to totally fund the introduction of GWN, but was advised at a second public meeting at the end of the month that the shire was not prepared to pay for the costs of equipment and installation. In an atmosphere of animosity and with the shire on the defensive against criticism by supporters of the Progress Association, it was apparent that the social groups of 'transients' and 'permanents' were significant in informing the debate on this issue.

By June 1987, the Progress Association had been involved in a number of fund raising activities for the GWN project and in the August edition of *Nugget News*, it was able to report that its Community Trust Fund stood at \$5 833, with a promise from the shire of a further \$5 000. With the prospect of GWN closer still by September and the shire being prepared to loan the additional funds necessary, the Progress Association began to consider what community project should be the next priority. Eventually, the remaining monies for GWN were received as donations from the shire and the local Aboriginal resource agency, Ngoonjuwah. The Progress Association then began to direct its attention to raising money to build a Guide/Scout Hall.

Encouraged by the success of its efforts to mobilise community action and put pressure on the shire regarding the commercial television issue, the Progress Association and some of its members revived the question of a swimming pool and other facilities in the town. At about the same time as GWN was eventually arriving in Halls Creek, letters and editorials in the *Nugget News* again referred to these matters as they had done over a year earlier. An editorial in the December 1987 edition noted 'an air of cooperation in the town. While GWN is not everyone's 'cup of tea', the project did give people the opportunity to air their views... The Shire Council will also be aware of the growing community concern for swimming facilities in the town'. A letter in the same edition commented on the poor state of existing sporting facilities in town, mentioning in particular the tennis and netball courts, as well as the lack of a public swimming pool and suggesting that the shire should assume greater responsibility in these areas. Another item asked 'Can we have a pool please?' and went on to argue that while many shires see them as financial liabilities, 'it is the shire's responsibility to the town to provide this recreational facility' (*Nugget News*, December 1987). Debate about a community issue was again couched in terms of 'transients' and 'permanents'. To quote from the same item:

Talk all you like about your responsibility to ratepayers and out of town ratepayers who won't benefit from a swimming pool. People who live out of town on stations and in remote communities do so because they choose so. The townspeople therefore do not consider this to be a valid argument against a swimming pool. ... the more the town centre progresses and improves, the more it will have to offer to out of town people when they come into town...

By June 1988, the shire council had recommended that a feasibility study for a town swimming pool be undertaken and that a steering committee be formed. Invitations for membership on this steering committee were sent to the Progress Association and to Ngonjuwah, the Aboriginal resource agency.

Conclusion

This paper has analysed some aspects of the interactions among local government, Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal women in a small northern Australian town in order to show how changing demographic and socio-economic conditions have contributed to a situation where local level community politics have taken on a different character. As the population of Halls Creek has grown and diversified and become characterised more by employment in tertiary industries than in primary ones, local residents have begun pressuring the shire to provide better and more appropriate services and facilities in the town. This pressure has come mainly from non-Aboriginal women in the town, whose efforts have been supported by the increased political participation of local Aboriginal people. The dominance of male pastoralists on the shire council and in community affairs generally has been challenged both through the ballot box and through the activities of the newly formed Progress Association.

An observation by a woman in town seems a particularly apt one with which to conclude. She remarked:

Women are really up against it in the north, especially in a town like Halls Creek, with its lack of facilities, isolation and high costs. It's a men's environment. But it's women who instigate change around here, they won't accept all the old ways and old things.

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THE SMALL TOWNS' WINDOW TO THE WORLD: THE ROLE OF THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

Iain Smith

In early February the Australian Broadcasting Corporation introduced the greatest change undertaken in its radio services at one time in one area in its history. That area is the Northern Territory. Three frequency changes occurred in Darwin, two new stations were introduced in the city, a very significant change occurred in the programming of one radio network, called Radio Regional, and throughout the Top End and in central Australia local ABC radio output increased by approximately 35 per cent. Two days later the ABC officially celebrated the opening on the Gold Coast of its 350th radio transmitter in Australia. Only two and a half years ago Radio National was broadcast on 11 transmitters throughout Australia. On the 13 February Darwin became the site of the 100th transmitter broadcasting the Radio National network. By the end of 1989 a further 11 transmitters are expected to be installed and commissioned in the Northern Territory. And these developments are in ABC radio alone.

In the commercial world it is only thirteen and a half months since the introduction of the Imparja television network, whose signal covers some of the most isolated areas of Australia. In 1987 the licence for the Western Australian remote satellite Television Footprint was awarded, and in April last year a similar licence for Queensland was awarded. Thus in the space of two and a half years there has been a major increase in the availability of radio and television services in the more sparsely populated areas of northern Australia.

The reason this has been able to occur of course, is satellite technology - that has been well publicised. But what is not as well publicised is the increasing demand from people in the more isolated and remote areas of northern Australia for more choice in radio and television services. This demand has had, and I believe will continue to have, an effect on politicians and on government policies. It also raises questions which I suggest are pertinent to at least some of the research that is being discussed at this forum.

Since the Aussat launching in 1985, satellite technology has brought both benefits and problems to many areas of northern Australia. Perhaps nowhere has this been more evident than in Aboriginal communities. There are no accurate statistics that I am aware of, that detail how many individual satellite receiving dishes there are in Aboriginal communities throughout northern Australia. There is even less information on the effects of the introduction of the electronic media on people living in these communities. Yet every day many people who, until quite recently, had very little contact with the world outside their relatively isolated communities, are now being exposed to news, views, entertainment and information from many countries.

This is posing problems for many community leaders, government departments and politicians. I have been told by several community leaders during the past four years or so that 'the young people are losing their respect for the old ways - they want some of the goods and services they see on television and hear about on radio'. Of course this is not

unique to Aboriginal communities. I remember my own father saying similar things to my brother and I after the introduction of television in Melbourne!

However the effects in many Aboriginal communities are pronounced, and these have led to the federal government adopting measures that only a few years ago would not have been contemplated. Perhaps the most notable of these is BRACS (Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme). This scheme, announced in mid 1987, allows for the progressive provision, over a two to three year period, of community-controlled satellite receive and transmit facilities to 76 remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. As no commercial licences had been issued at the time BRACS was announced but ABC programs were already available on the satellite system, the scheme was devised to allow reception of the three ABC radio networks, plus television, for low powered retransmission as and when each community chose. Communities could also add material of their own, or material provided for them by nearby, larger regional Aboriginal media groups. Now that the commercial central Australian television licence has been awarded to Imparja, the original proposal has been extended. Communities can now select from the range of commercial material as well as from the ABC. In other words the community decides what it will see and hear.

To date the success of BRACS is somewhat debatable. I do not intend to enter that debate today. I believe that the most important aspect of the BRACS scheme is the precedent it sets in acknowledging that a segment of the Australian population deserves and requires special consideration in the electronic media services provided to it.

It is not only hardware that is progressively being introduced into Aboriginal communities. Last year saw the commencement of a pilot course at Batchelor College that was hailed as a world first. It is a three year Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media course, supported by the ABC, together with the Australia Department of Employment, Education and Training and the Technical and Further Education authorities. It is structured so that trainees come together periodically at Batchelor from their regional resource groups, or in some cases, from more remote communities. The ABC has installed radio studio facilities at the College to aid in broadcast training. Between these periods at Batchelor they continue their work experience back in their parent communities. There is every possibility that the campus itself will emerge as the focal point for a regional resource group in the Top End capable of feeding programs to the HF (High Frequency) Shower Service, the BRACS communities in its region, and to CAAMA (Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association)/Imparja.

The ABC's involvement with Aboriginal broadcasting does not end there. In fact it commenced several years ago with the establishment of a small group of remote area staff which provides support for developing broadcasters. Over the past seven years or so more than 100 individual broadcasters have been assisted and trained through the efforts of this group.

The ABC is also the interim manager of the HF Shower Service. This service is peculiar to the Northern Territory and broadcasts on the domestic Short Wave band through VL8A at Alice Springs, VL8T Tennant Creek and VL8K Katherine. The service was established in February 1986 and is intended to complement rather than duplicate radio services to communities via satellite. VL8A and T broadcast a combination of ABC and CAAMA programs, while VL8K broadcasts ABC mainstream programs and a daily two hour Aboriginal program produced and presented by Aboriginal broadcaster Echo Cole. Echo is employed by the ABC in Darwin.

As well as broadcasting approximately 64 hours of Aboriginal programs each week on VL8A and T, CAAMA also has its own 8KIN network in central Australia, and is the largest Aboriginal media group in the country. CAAMA broadcasts in six languages including English.

In Queensland the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Media Association broadcasts programs for Aboriginal people on several ABC transmitters for one and a half hours each week. On Thursday Island TSIMA (Torres Strait Islanders' Media Association) broadcasts 20 hours per week, sharing the ABC's 4TI transmitter. In Western Australia the Waringarri Media Association broadcasts Aboriginal programs for two hours each week on ABC transmitters at Kununurra, Wyndham and the Argyle diamond mine.

I have spent some time outlining these structures and relationships in Aboriginal broadcasting because they highlight the acknowledgement of government bodies, politicians and community leaders that the electronic media does exert a strong influence on attitudes, lifestyles and expectations.

While generally not to the same extent, that influence is also felt in non-Aboriginal communities in isolated and remote areas. This influence often leads to pressure on various levels of government to provide an increased range of community services, and resentment if these are not provided.

Heightened awareness of the wider world can have other ramifications as well. Only last weekend a well known politician gave me an example of this. He has found that as a result of the extension of television, both commercial and ABC, into communities and towns in the Territory, the level of awareness of his (and other) parties' policies has increased markedly. People in these areas are now more willing to discuss issues with him than in the past, as they feel they know him. He freely admits that, for the next election campaign, his party will have to alter its distribution of advertising funds to more effectively reach the wider population the electronic media now serves. Of course what effect on past voting patterns this may have I do not know, but once again, it reflects the power the electronic media has to influence people.

And often it is not so much the actual content of programs that influences attitudes, as the way in which it is presented, ie. viewer and listener perception. It is a well known fact in broadcasting that at the end of a five minute interview, most people will remember two or three main points only - even if twenty or more have been made during that interview.

And viewer perception is becoming increasingly important to commercial television operators in particular. Strategically placed local adverts and station identification give an impression of a local service. But the fact is that there are significantly less locally made programs on regional commercial television than there were five years ago. Similarly on the ABC there is generally less 'local' product. By 'local' I mean regional or state based programs.

The reason is cost. Television in particular has seen a staggering increase in costs of production over recent years. With the increasing sophistication of production techniques, a commensurate increase in audience expectation of level of production quality has also come. Corporately, ownership of television and radio stations is increasingly being concentrated to a small group of companies with big money changing hands. The net result is that to minimise costs, national and international networking is increasingly carried out. The main 'local' content of most television stations is the nightly news and to a lesser extent current affairs programs. This is common to populated areas as well as sparsely populated ones. The void left by this increasing nationalisation of television has

been filled to a large degree by radio. Over the past ten years or so this pattern has led to many people devoting a greater amount of their time each day to listening and viewing. It is debatable whether this is a good or bad thing, however what is undeniable is that people in northern Australia now have a greater exposure to ideas, events, news and information through the electronic media than they did a decade ago. And there is an increasing call for access to even more electronic media services.

However, the introduction of an expanded range of services can present some difficulties for broadcasters and the public alike. These vary in different areas of the country but all have a bearing on what we have available to listen to and watch. Let us look at the situation with radio in Darwin, as an example of what programmers face. The local commercial station 8DN caters for a wide range of age groups and mixes talkback with popular music and strong local identification. It is financially successful and has a strong following, but it also has a listener satisfaction rating that is relatively low. In December last year the General Manager of 8DN Jim McNally, put out a press release which pointed out that with the expansion of ABC services in the city and the proposal to grant a new commercial FM licence in the relatively near future, 8DN could well be forced to an all music format to survive. With a commercial FM operator obviously adopting an all music format, this would probably mean that the only local current affairs and information of consequence would be heard on the ABC. Thus while a number of radio services would increase, in one important area listeners would lose something.

The increased amount of music available on the commercial and ABC stations could also affect the public station 8 TOP FM. It currently has a significant number of hours each week devoted to music. It is very likely that its listeners will diminish in number with the greater number of alternative services. What effect will that have on its ability to attract financial support from the community? And if this financial support is reduced, what effect will it have on the station's future viability?

Now let us consider the ABC. With the establishment of 8DDD, the ABC is committing a significant increase in staff and funds to Darwin. To justify this expenditure of scarce public funds 8DDD will obviously have to demonstrate it reaches a wide audience across the week. At the same time, under its charter, the ABC has to ensure that it caters for a variety of tastes across its networks as well as within each one. Variations on these problems occur daily around the country. Thus programmers - commercial, public and ABC - face constant difficulties in trying to provide services that satisfy the communities they serve and the reality of national networking is that those decisions made at the national level are basically made with the populated east coast areas in mind.

Listeners will gradually have to change their listening patterns as well. I believe that increasingly we will see 'dial hopping' become the norm for perhaps the majority of the population in Darwin and in time throughout most of the Territory. The reason for this is that as the number of services expand, so the mix of program types on the services will narrow considerably. This is already apparent in places like Sydney and Melbourne, where the number of radio stations available is quite astonishing. There are all-talk stations and all-music stations which concentrate on very specific music areas only. This is a form of 'narrowcasting'.

In America the trend is much further advanced. There are all-news stations, education, rock music, current affairs and so on. I was told recently that there is actually one all-weather information station now operating. To those of us accustomed to one service offering a mix such as news, current affairs, general information, comedy, music and entertainment, the thought of having to constantly switch stations to get these various

elements during the day sounds quite ridiculous. But within the next decade this could become the norm rather than the exception.

In 1998 the C-Series of Aussat satellites are due to enter service. Already it is proposed that these satellites will have the capacity to direct broadcast anywhere between 16 to 32 radio channels alone. By direct broadcast I mean we can literally be out in the middle of nowhere, and with a portable radio complete with its own miniature satellite receiver, we can have access to all these channels with perfect reception. Portable receivers of this type are already available in Europe for around \$1000. By the time the C-Series satellites are operative the receivers could cost around \$300. In ten years time that is certainly not going to be a large amount for a radio. Direct broadcasting to television is a more complex problem, at present, but in ten years time it could be a very different story.

Another development which has received recent airing in the press is cable television. The technology is well established. At present cost and politics are delaying its introduction into Australia, but sooner or later it will arrive. Its introduction will have a significant effect on the programming strategies of the major networks. The precise nature of this will depend very much on the services the cable networks offer. But for the more isolated towns where it may not be viable to install cable television, their populations could end up having less choice of programs on existing services as the networks which do have a national coverage will obviously be programming for the large markets that do have a greater variety of services.

One thing is certain though - the next decade will see enormous changes in electronic media services and these changes will bring problems as well as benefits. Programmers, media proprietors and governments are going to have many decisions to make. To date there is very little research available to my knowledge regarding what people living in the more isolated areas of northern Australia want in the way of television and radio programming or on the effect of the electronic media's provision on attitudes, lifestyles and expectations of the population. I suggest that it is time for that research to be undertaken, so that the decision makers, particularly government, have a more informed base for the decision making process.

PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Jane Stanley

This paper is particularly concerned with planning for the full range of human services in remote Aboriginal communities. Some of the issues raised will also apply to planning for any remote towns, and some to planning generally. However I have not drawn these distinctions myself.

Community service provision and community development

In looking at a broad range of human services, I have used the following definition (Jones as quoted in NSW Dept Local Govt 1988, 2):

those services and facilities which enable individuals and groups to improve, maintain and restore their wellbeing and personal welfare. Within Australian Governments, human services are taken to include services such as welfare, health, education, recreation, arts and culture and libraries. These services are often targeted to particular groups within the community such as the aged, women, children, young people, people with disabilities, Aboriginal people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. The range of services may be developmental, therapeutic, rehabilitative or preventative in character.

When applying this definition to remote Aboriginal communities, and bearing in mind the particular characteristics of those communities, it becomes apparent that most of the population is specially targeted as needing community services. This is in contrast with mainstream urban society where only a minority of the population is normally considered to be in such need. It is an important difference which is reflected in the need for a special approach to planning and delivering community services.

Hand in hand with community service delivery goes community development, as a preventative approach to tackling social problems. Whereas service delivery is often seen as dealing with a passive client, community development seeks participation and involvement (NSW Department of Local Government 1988, 2):

community development has the following characteristics

- *a concern with the affairs of communities located in discrete areas*
- *a close involvement by community members in the activities and decisions of the community*
- *the encouragement of objectives locally set or assented to*
- *a concern with the equitable provision of services and opportunities to and within a community.*

The normal sequence in mainstream urban society is for service delivery to be made on the basis of individual need, and for community development to follow on where it is found that a particular area or group has especially high needs. However any consideration of the situation on remote Aboriginal communities would reveal from the

outset an extraordinarily high level of need, and this suggests that the sequence of service delivery/community development could be varied.

Welfare and wellbeing

Let us reflect on what community service delivery and community development aim to do for people generally, and residents of remote Aboriginal communities in particular. More theory is called for. The aim is to both improve an individual's subjective perception of his/her situation, i.e. *wellbeing*, and to improve a more objective measure of it, i.e. his/her *welfare*. My preferred definition of welfare is as follows (Erikson 1974, 273):

the individual's command over resources with whose help he/she can control and consciously direct his/her living conditions.

Welfare is seen as having several components:

- *individual-bound resources (health, education and skills, wealth, political resources)*
- *social determinants (employment, services, fellowship, autonomy)*
- *physical determinants (housing environment, workplace environment, natural environment, communications networks).*

These various components become available as a result of physical accessibility and attainability. The resources and determinants affecting the individual present both opportunities and limitations, affecting the choices made and the resultant wellbeing.

The overall goal of any social program therefore must be to maximise opportunities and minimise constraints, thus giving individuals greater choice and control over welfare resources. These resources available in remote Aboriginal communities are severely limited. Without wanting to point to causes or historical explanations, these are the present facts:

- appalling standards of housing, with third world conditions prevalent in many areas, inadequate shelter, services and gross overcrowding
- very poor standards of health, and high mortality rates
- enormous problems of substance abuse
- high incidence of violence
- high rates of imprisonment
- very low rates of employment
- inadequate care of children and the elderly
- and perhaps most of all, a sense of hopelessness about the future that frustrates any attempts at improvement.

In this situation it becomes more important than ever to plan for service provision that effectively enhances community welfare and individual wellbeing by giving control over resources, as well as planning for economic use of resources. Unfortunately the common method of community service delivery often sees duplication of effort, wastage of scarce resources, and lack of client control. This directly works against any maximising of welfare goals.

Given the enormity of the social problems found in remote Aboriginal communities, and the historical context for this, there is some justification for regarding such communities as being in a state of cultural trauma. This is similar to what might be found in areas of

the world subject to major physical disasters, such as earthquakes, flooding, cyclone destruction, etc. The causes for Aboriginal communities are different, but seemingly just as shocking. The cultural values and traditions of thousands of years have in a short time been irrevocably destroyed. The guidelines for disaster relief in this situation are to tread carefully, and reinforce those cultural values and social structures that still have any resilience (Davis 1978). This makes the welfare model described here particularly relevant.

So to the programs that currently fund service delivery in remote Aboriginal communities.

Housing

I have included this as a type of community service in my broad definition, because so much about the characteristics of housing determines other aspects of social welfare and consequent needs for other forms of community service delivery. The Commonwealth and state/territory governments are injecting large amounts of money into the Aboriginal housing area. Much of this comes through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) program 'Rental Housing for Aborigines', which is applied to both urban and rural areas, including the large metropolitan areas. The aim of the program is to increase the supply of adequate rental housing for Aborigines, in the face of statistics which indicate grossly inadequate supply.

Additional resources come from special purpose funding from the Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC). The aim of these funds is somewhat different, arising from the particular charter of the ADC. Housing is seen as a valuable and durable form of investment, which has the capacity to strengthen the economic base of Aboriginal communities, provided it can be adequately managed.

In the past there were considerable problems arising from a lack of coordination of the two housing programs. Better coordination mechanisms are now in place. Planning for housing is on a regional or state/territory basis, and takes into account the relative need of different communities using objective physical data on housing conditions (ADC 1988). However there is also regard for the ability of communities to manage their housing stock, collecting rents, carrying out necessary maintenance, discouraging vandalism of property, etc.

The type of housing constructed under these programs has undergone some change over the years. There have been attempts at simple minimal housing, to spread the available funds further and make a greater numerical impact over a short period of time. These structures have generally been found not to be durable, subject to vandalism (for whatever reason) and a poor investment in the long term. There have also been experiments in individually designed and constructed housing using local labour and indigenous materials. These buildings have been very slow to construct, often unexpectedly expensive, and with difficulties of quality control over the building process. The current approach by both state/territory agencies and the ADC is to build from a limited range of tried and tested designs, producing housing that is durable and which meets all required performance tests.

The allocation of housing resources is generally left to the communities themselves. Perhaps this is the hardest part of the process, as when faced with enormous housing needs, any allocation mechanisms are likely to be challenged as involving favouritism and paternalism. In communities where more than one tribal group is resident, and where one group holds political or territorial power, the allocation of housing may exacerbate

existing social wounds. The result may be destabilising to those systems of authority that participate in it.

Construction of housing relies on a high degree of prefabrication, and construction using non-resident labour. There may be an explicit goal on the part of state/territory governments to maximise the impact of Aboriginal housing funds on the regional economy, i.e. through the mainstream construction industry, and there is no doubt that the funds have had a revitalising effect for some firms in the beleaguered Northern Territory industry. Some communities have been successful in organising labour squads of their own, to carry out the erection of housing, but these are in the minority.

When allocated a conventional house, Aboriginal households are generally left alone to adapt to living in it. Given the fairly minimal shelter seen in traditional Aboriginal society, it is likely that houses will not be used in the same way as in mainstream urban society, and this is to some extent recognised in the house designs selected. Houses are needed for storage (particularly food storage), shelter in times of inclement weather, to provide security and privacy in settlements which now see much more dense levels of occupation than in traditional society, and to provide washing and ablution facilities necessitated by the proximity and permanence of household shelters. These needs are well recognised by Aboriginal households themselves, but this does not adequately prepare them for the adjustments that have to be made when the appropriate housing is made available. There is commonly no guidance on how electrical power needs to be handled, and stories abound of fires being lit in electric ovens, switches being misused, etc. Similarly, there is little understanding of the necessary care of sanitary appliances and plumbing systems, so that these are often blocked through ignorance and subsequently vandalised through frustration. Traditions of social obligation often result in gross overcrowding of dwellings, particularly during the wet season, or when visitors arrive from elsewhere. Despite the generally sturdy nature of the housing prolonged occupancy of, say, a four bedroom house by 30 people will drastically reduce its life and/or result in huge maintenance costs. The fact that the new housing has an ongoing cost that must be partly met by the occupants is often poorly understood, as there is no tradition of rent payments and building maintenance programs. Any form of household budgeting may be a problem in a situation where households are themselves unstable in structure, where incomes are small, and where there is little tradition of planning ahead for economic contingencies.

So how do these housing programs perform against the important welfare goals of maximising housing opportunities and minimising constraints? It is immediately apparent that the program goals are inconsistent with welfare goals to a large extent. The method of housing delivery does little to enhance welfare goals. The housing opportunities of the individual are only enhanced by overall increases in housing supply, and his/her access to these resources is dependent on an often shaky and sometimes inequitable political process. There is generally no enhancement of the individual's ability to provide for his/her own housing needs. If housing resources are allocated, there is often nothing to assist the individual to make appropriate use of them, and the resulting misuse (and abuse) threatens the whole housing supply process. The housing programs do little to remove the constraints on housing opportunity, being lack of skills or individual economic power, and poor political structures necessary for program administration. That is not to say that the injection of money into Aboriginal housing is not having any effect, or that it is entirely misplaced in terms of resource allocation. But the structure of the programs and the method of service delivery does run the serious risk of wasting resources and leaving individuals less in control of their housing situation than they were without outside assistance.

There has so far been little housing provision for special needs in remote communities. A particular area of concern here is accommodation for the elderly. In many communities there is little tradition of care for the infirm elderly, and conditions of overcrowding in either the new housing or the old humpies are not conducive to such care. Problems such as incontinence and immobility simply cannot be dealt with, and this has led to distressing cases of old people becoming outcasts, as well as serious cases of physical neglect. The new housing, if it is all that is available, may leave elderly people with special needs actually worse off than before.

Health

The forms of health service delivery vary considerably between states and territories. In the Northern Territory, the most direct form of health service delivery to remote communities is through Community Health Centres, and these often have specifically trained Aboriginal Health Workers. These centres and workers give basic treatment for identified health disorders, as well as administering some preventative programs such as eye treatments in children and inoculations.

There have been various specific preventative and treatment programs administered in the Northern Territory relating to substance abuse. Notably there was until recently a task force approach to the problem of petrol sniffing among children in central Australia, as a result of publicity surrounding its prevalence, and the short and long term debilitating effects. This program is being reassessed as a result of lack of evident success in reducing the extent of petrol sniffing, and the need for a new approach. There has also been a major effort in recent times to raise awareness in Aboriginal communities about the incidence of various forms of substance abuse (smoking, drinking alcohol, drinking kava, taking tablets, as well as petrol sniffing), the effects of abuse on the individual and the community, and the measures that can be taken at an individual or community level to reduce substance abuse.

There are individual workers within the Northern Territory health system who travel to Aboriginal communities giving advice on nutrition, and there has been some discussion of the need for specific program targeting of nutrition education. At present, however, the main program affecting nutrition is the funding of general stores selling foodstuffs in communities by the ADC. This is done with the aim of developing economic enterprises rather than with the explicit aim of improving nutrition, though the individual operators have sometimes taken on a responsible role by deliberately stocking nutritious foods, and adopting a pricing policy that makes foodstuffs affordable. However, there are instances of the opposite approach being taken, for profit rather than welfare reasons. The funding of licensed clubs as Aboriginal controlled business enterprise ventures may also have an effect on substance abuse, though on some communities which have adopted strict controls on availability of liquor the effect may actually be beneficial.

The Home and Community Care program (HACC) has funded some services aimed at improving nutrition for the elderly and disabled on remote communities. There has been some criticism of the results of this service delivery (Harrison 1987), as it is often based on urban models, and it has dubious value. The norm is for a woman in the community to be funded to prepare meals for those in need and these are sold at a subsidised rate. The meals are often available only on certain specified days and at certain times of day, so the clients may have difficulty planning for their availability. There is also evidence to suggest that those cooking the meals may have insufficient training in nutrition, so that menus are selected for ease of preparation rather than food content, and the results are often unpalatable to the clients. Elderly Aboriginal people in communities often have

particular preferences for bush foods, but these are hard to collect and prepare in bulk, despite their good nutritional qualities. Harrison points out that providing assistance to individual old people in the collection and cooking of the food that they like would be much more effective than a service based on the urban meals on wheels model. Whatever the solution, evaluation of HACC funded meals services indicated fluctuating performance and questionable popularity with the clients.

For people who become disabled through either poor health, injury or age, there are theoretically a range of programs available to assist them in functioning as normally as possible. Most of these are aimed at preventing unnecessary institutionalisation of the aged and disabled, for both economic and humanitarian reasons. Unfortunately the problems of remoteness and lack of administrative resources has made it difficult to arrange the necessary service delivery to people in Aboriginal communities, with the result that premature institutionalisation is a prevalent phenomenon. This has particularly distressing consequences for elderly Aborigines, as physical removal from the home community may be seen as a virtual death sentence, because of the dislocation from kin and from traditional social and cultural infrastructure, as well as because of the breaking of the territorial bond.

So how do the various health-related programs perform against the welfare goals of maximising opportunities and removing constraints? It can be seen that in some instances they may actually work against these goals, as in the case of meals programs. In other areas the services are failing to deliver at all in Aboriginal communities, so that important opportunities are lost. In many cases the programs fail because of a lack of local administrative/political resources to sustain them. There are few successes in this important area.

Social welfare

Although there is a wide range of programs available in urban areas aimed at reinforcing stable social structures, few of these are available in remote Aboriginal communities. Some attempt at providing services in the Northern Territory is made through the community services remote areas team, but resources are so stretched that they are mainly taken up by dealing with statutory problems of child neglect and abuse.

One area of greater service strength has been the creation of Women's Centres in some communities. These have been constructed for various reasons, and some have failed to operate, but in a few cases they seem to meet a range of real needs. Women are able to find shelter when threatened by violence from men, and they have a base within which they can plan particular activities. This includes the provision of communal washing machines, providing a forum for sewing and other craft activities, and preparation of meals for the elderly as well as for malnourished children. However they have often suffered from poor administration, as a result of inadequate management skills among the women charged with running them.

Unfortunately one area of considerable expenditure relating to social programs is detention. The Aboriginal population has an extraordinarily high rate of detention, often arising from comparatively minor offences, but also often involving violence. Many of the offences are related to substance abuse, with crimes or disorderly behaviour occurring while the perpetrator was under the influence of drugs. The costs of juvenile detention or imprisonment are high (estimated in the Northern Territory to cost about \$100 per day per detainee). There is considerable frustration on the part of the government at the high cost of treating social problems at the point of manifestation of antisocial behaviour, and it is

obvious that a redirection of resources into preventative programs might be economically as well as socially beneficial.

The location of police aides and probation and parole officers in particular (not all) communities has been arranged partly with a view to establishing better communications between the authorities responsible for law and order and Aboriginal communities, and partly to facilitate decentralised punishment for minor offences, avoiding incarceration where possible. Some decentralisation of the custodial system to Aboriginal authorities themselves has also been tried on an experimental basis, with Aboriginal elders taking responsibility for supervising the behaviour of an offender over a period of time. The community based officers also have an opportunity to make observations on the possible local causes of antisocial behaviour, though at present there are no established mechanisms for making use of their conclusions.

Sports grants are one example of possible investment to prevent antisocial behaviour, particularly among juveniles. There are a few examples of Aboriginal communities being successful in competing for these funds, but so far the resources have not been deliberately provided with a view to potential savings in other areas, such as substance abuse and correctional services. Where grants have been provided, success has varied, often as a result of administrative performance rather than popularity of the sports activity.

Education programs are mainly limited to the schools system. This normally provides for primary school instruction on Aboriginal communities, with secondary education necessitating boarding elsewhere. The curriculum is determined at the state/territory level, though individual teachers have some discretion in adapting the education delivery to suit their social and cultural environments. Employment of Aboriginal teaching aides is common, and there have been attempts in some areas to bring Aboriginal languages into the classroom, with a view to encouraging cultural pride, assisting students with poor English, and reducing language rifts between parents and children. Some Aboriginal people feel strongly that this is not in their best interests, however, as it reduces students' English proficiency, making it more difficult for them to compete at secondary level.

In the education of children there is an obvious conflict between delivering the service so as to provide least disruption to the values and patterns of life in the community, and the goal of equipping children to compete in mainstream society. It is important to many Aborigines that the children be able to obtain qualifications in white society, hopefully to return and use their skills for the betterment of their home communities. However there may be difficulties in assisting children to adapt sufficiently to mainstream urban society without so removing them from the values of their parents that they will find it impossible to adapt back again to life in an Aboriginal community. If such a model could be found, it would have obvious benefits. At present the education system is not geared to either encouraging or discouraging this.

There are very few opportunities for adult education in Aboriginal communities. There is the possibility for programs to be developed by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Industry and Training, but present guidelines put priority on skill development to overcome skill shortages at state/territory level, which may be an irrelevance in Aboriginal communities except to those intending to leave. The potential for training as a method of empowerment, deliberately enhancing a community's welfare resources, has yet to be realised.

Employment programs themselves have yet to have any impact in Aboriginal communities. Service delivery is largely limited to the provision of money to those without employment, which in most cases is the vast majority of residents. Some

communities have generated their own employment by pooling these funds and paying them out as reward for activities which benefit the community. Again, the lack of administrative skills is a serious constraint to development in this otherwise hopeful area.

Cultural programs on Aboriginal communities are not generally funded through any community service programs. Resources for this area of activity are scarce even in urban areas. Yet it is an area of potential strength in Aboriginal communities, through which a sense of cultural pride could be reinforced. The possibility for art and crafts to bring employment and real economic returns is becoming appreciated by some entrepreneurial individuals, but there are opportunities for a broader involvement.

The success of the various social welfare programs in meeting welfare goals must now be judged. The main problem here seems to be investment in treating problems at a stage when it is too late for the problems to be averted, as with child abuse or juvenile delinquency for example. There is virtually no investment in creating opportunities for social development, or in removing constraints to social development.

Service Interrelationships

In looking at the real social needs of Aboriginal communities, as indicated by the poor social and physical conditions which are prevalent, it is apparent that there should be an interrelationship between services aimed at addressing these needs. Crime is often caused by substance abuse, which also is a major influence on poor nutrition and health. Poor housing conditions result in poor health, and overcrowding is a source of social tension reflected in other areas, such as violent conflict and child abuse. Service delivery generally is affected by the political processes in communities, and threatened by instability and lack of administrative capability.

In practice, however, there is little coordination in timing, budgets, or administration of programs at the community level, and resource distribution assessed within the program boundaries. There have been embarrassing cases of particular needs being identified and services duplicated or triplicated through several programs. More commonly, however, the lack of coordination results in a dearth of services at the community level. Attempts to resolve this at a local level (e.g. through meetings of field officers involved in different programs, which is a promising development in the Katherine area), while they may produce some important benefits, will not be able to capitalise on the potential economic and social benefits of taking a combined approach to planning service delivery across programs. Some potential has been recognised in the creation of flexible multipurpose funding programs such as the NT Remote Areas Funding Program, but these have yet to be allocated resources sufficient to have an impact on the coordination of services at the individual community level.

If it were possible to pool all these resources and start again, what would be the best approach? I support the proposition by Elsegood (1988) that we should return to the community development model, and enhance the ability of the local community to identify its needs, participate in the development of appropriate services, and take administrative control of those services. The starting point for this is supporting the development of stable and fair political systems, assisting in the identification of community needs and the setting of goals, and training to provide administrative skills. In doing this it has long been recognised that it may be more important to set in motion a process of decision making and a direction of change than to chart out specific long term goals (Dahl and Lindblom 1953). This not only ensures that objectives are more attainable, which increases community confidence, but it also makes constant evaluation

and adjustment practicable, as well as enhancing opportunities for community participation.

An encouraging sign here is a study being sponsored by the ADC at Borroloola. This ambitious project is essentially a community development model, aimed at political development and training, as well as a co-ordination of social planning across funding programs. Perhaps this could be a turning point. It is to be hoped that the necessary funding can be brought in at the appropriate times to support the exercise.

The follow on from community development would be the planning of service delivery so that individuals can call on services appropriate to their needs. Some of the innovative Commonwealth programs in the aged hostels and the disabilities fields are based on this client oriented approach (Department of Community and Health Services 1988), but they have yet to be applied to Aboriginal communities. The Area Assessment Teams set up in the Northern Territory form a good basis for the assessment of service needs at the level of individual clients, but there has yet to be funding available to ensure the necessary localised service delivery.

There is justification for putting an emphasis on programs that empower communities or individual clients to address their own welfare needs. The original homemaker service established in the Northern Territory, and the more recent Aboriginal Housing Advice services, have important potential to assist people in making best use of their housing resources (by assisting them in adjusting to living in a house for the first time), but these have yet to attempt to meet needs in remote communities. Seeking opportunities for more Aboriginal employment in housing programs, and developing other employment possibilities such as craft activities and tourism, are obvious means of enhancing empowerment. The ADC charter is potentially one of economic empowerment, and it has particular relevance here.

Perhaps more important than anything else is the need to avoid the development of programs that threaten those cultural values that still remain, or which disempower people from having control over their lives. Institutionalisation programs are an obvious example. Any programs involving delivery of a culturally inappropriate service to a passive client may be threatening. It is of crucial importance to turn around the sense of hopelessness felt by residents of many remote communities.

In closing I would like to make it clear that there are in fact a great many individual residents of remote Aboriginal communities who refuse to be dismayed, and who are working hard to improve the welfare of their people. They often have no funding or program support. We should identify and assist these people wherever possible. We should look for signs of success in community development or service delivery, and use these examples as ways of inspiring other communities to follow suit. But we must avoid putting an unfair burden of expectation on either individuals or communities, and this probably means avoiding bureaucratisation of successful service structures.

I would like to avoid the cynic's definition of a conference as 'a gathering of important people who singly can do nothing but together can decide that nothing can be done' (Fred Allen quoted in Green 1984, 6). It is important to look for things that can be done, and to support all positive attempts to improve community welfare. For my part, I will be watching the Borroloola study with considerable interest!

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HEALTH IN THE BUSH: A STUDY OF PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY IN THE KATHERINE REGION, NORTHERN TERRITORY

Peter d'Abbs*

The provision of human services in the sparsely populated regions typical of Australia's north raises a number of significant problems of social policy. As Holmes has observed, the pastoral zone in Australia, which accounts for large portions of the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia, is characterised by low population density, a pattern of small, dispersed settlements, generally low levels of private infrastructure investment and employment, and increasing demands for publicly-funded services, usually justified on grounds of social equity. Since the costs of providing such services are too high to permit recovery from the small number of remote consumers, they must be subsidised (Holmes 1985). The degree to which this should occur, and the extent of government responsibilities in service provision to remote settlements, constitutes one important group of policy issues.

These issues are exacerbated by the fact that many of the more remote settlements are Aboriginal communities which, in addition to general problems associated with service delivery to isolated settlements, have needs and problems of their own, such as high rates of unemployment and poor living standards. Some 23 per cent of the NT population is Aboriginal. According to a recent NT government estimate, there are 465 populated Aboriginal settlements in the NT, 356 of which (76.6 per cent) have populations of less than 50, while only 66 (or 14.2 per cent) have populations in excess of 100 (NT Government 1988b, 5).

The homelands movement which has developed since the 1970s poses in even stronger terms questions concerning location and equity: to what extent should people have to do without services if they choose to live in even more remote, isolated places than has been the NT norm (Commonwealth of Australia 1987, 78-79; 82ff)? Related to this issue is another: the extent to which service delivery to remote areas should have a distinctively Aboriginal focus.

Recognition by the Commonwealth government of a special responsibility for the wellbeing of Aboriginal people raises yet another issue: that of the proper role of the Commonwealth as a funder and provider of services *vis a vis* the Northern Territory government.

Finally, by way of this cursory catalogue of relevant policy issues, mention must be made of the role of local government. Throughout most of Australia, municipal authorities play an important part in providing essential services; yet in the NT this third tier of government is relatively weak and extremely limited in revenue-raising capacity (Loveday 1982).

* At the time of writing, the author was employed as Senior Lecturer, Welfare Studies, NT University. The views expressed in this paper are the author's own, and not those of the Department of Health and Community Services or any section thereof.

Nowhere are these issues more salient than in the provision of public health services. I use this term in the sense defined by Winslow:

Public Health is the science and the art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting physical health and efficiency through organized community efforts for the sanitation of environment, the control of community infections, the education of the individual in principles of personal hygiene, the organization of medical and nursing service for the early diagnosis and preventive treatment of disease, and the development of the social machinery which will ensure to every individual in the community a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of health (quoted in Hobson 1979, xii).

Public health services, from this standpoint, include both environmental health measures, such as the provision of a safe water supply and sanitation, and measures delivered at the personal, or clinical level, such as immunisation programs.

It has long been recognised that an important contributing factor to the health problems of Aboriginal people is the poor quality of environmental health conditions (Stanley 1984). Waterford has described many Aboriginal communities as a 'pool of infection' (1982, 12). An environmental survey of Aboriginal communities carried out in 1977-78 by the former NT Department of Health likened conditions in Aboriginal communities to those prevailing elsewhere in the 19th century, before the great gains were made in drainage, sanitation, refrigeration and personal hygiene; it also associated environmental deficiencies with the spread of gastro-intestinal disease and respiratory diseases (NT Department of Health 1978, 2). Ten years later, two inquiries conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs - one focusing on homeland centres and the other on support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities - echo similar conclusions (Commonwealth of Australia 1987, 1988).

The homelands centre inquiry found serious deficiencies in the provision of water supply, ablution facilities, housing and sewage disposal facilities. With respect to the last named, for example, it cited a 1985 survey carried out by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs which indicated that out of 460 communities with a total population of 12 060 people, 292 communities (or 63.7 per cent) had no method of sewage disposal (Commonwealth of Australia 1987, 193). The inquiry was also informed that these deficiencies contributed to bringing a disproportionate number of Aboriginal people to expensive secondary, hospital and tertiary medical care (Commonwealth of Australia 1987, 247). Both inquiries drew attention to the urgent need for improvements in environmental conditions as a precondition to better personal health.

A report compiled by Nganampa Health Council on health in the Anangu Pitjantjatjaraku Lands linked poor environmental conditions with high levels of morbidity from diarrhoea disease, trachoma (a major cause of blindness among Aborigines, almost unknown among white Australians), otitis media, skin infections and rheumatic fever (Nganampa Health Council 1984). Concern about these matters, moreover, is not confined to white professionals, as the following remarks, taken from a policy statement by Mr Yami Lester marking the founding of Nganampa Health Service in 1983, bear witness:

When the health service starts (1st December, 1983) we need to make some changes. We can make decisions to improve on health.

We want to find good water and put down bores. People can live well where there is good water. When there is plenty of water people can wash

clothes and blankets and wash themselves and keep their camp clean, taking away the rubbish. When people keep their place clean they won't pick up infections.

A lot of germs are said to live in rubbish and places that are not clean. When there is plenty of water people can wash their food plates, pannikins and billycans. They can keep their cooking things away from the dogs too, because when they lick the billycans and things they leave germs on them.

People need to be able to eat and drink without picking up germs. Keeping things clean is an easy way for people to help themselves. These are good ways to start using Nganampa.

The work of the doctors and sisters comes after this preventative health work (Nganampa Health Council 1986, 6).

A degree of consensus also exists with respect to some underlying reasons. It is recognised, for instance, that service provision to Aboriginal communities is too fragmented (NT Government 1988a, 6), and that insufficient attention has been devoted to developing or utilising appropriate technology. Yet despite the concerns that have been voiced and the co-ordinating committees that have been established, the problems remain and, as I will argue below, are being perpetuated by current policies.

This, then, is the starting point for this paper. I propose to examine the policies and institutions involved in the provision of public health services, both environmental and clinical, particularly with respect to Aboriginal communities. I wish to ask why it is that, despite the widespread and genuine concerns about Aboriginal health, the same old problems recur (and I shall demonstrate that they do recur). And I propose to consider these issues within the context of broader problems of service provision in a remote northern region.

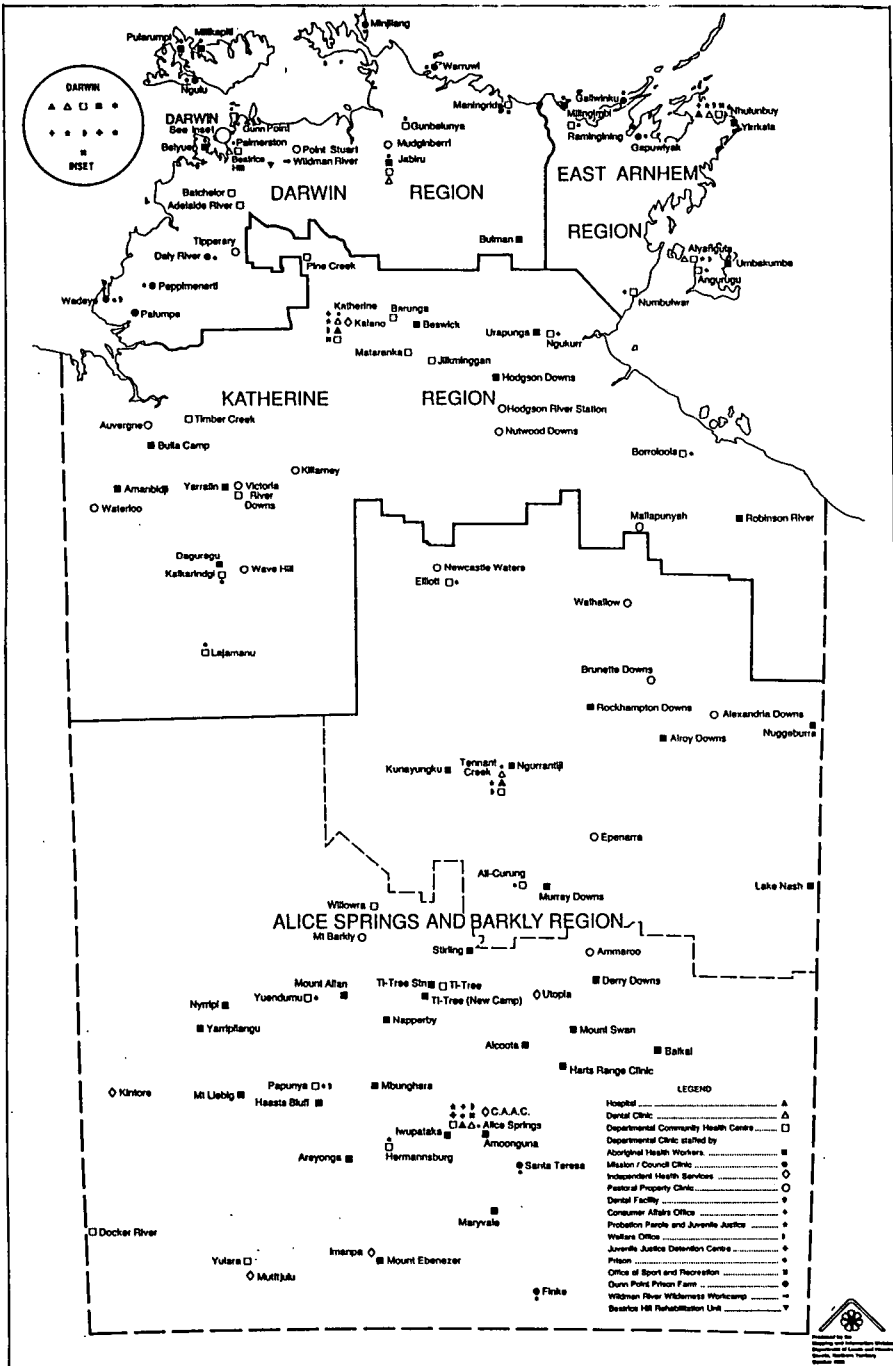
That region is the Katherine region, and within that area I shall use, for case study purposes, the area serviced from the small town of Timber Creek, located in the Victoria River district, nearly 300 km west of Katherine. It is an area rich in pastoral history, magnificent scenery - dominated by the red cliffs that flank the Victoria River throughout much of its sweep into Joseph Bonaparte Gulf - and, today, a dispersed population of Aboriginal and white Australians.

The setting

The Katherine region comprises a broad band across the Northern Territory, from the Western Australian border to the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Queensland border. As Map 1 shows, its northern boundary takes in the township of Pine Creek and southern Arnhem Land, while to the south-west it extends as far as Wave Hill and Lajamanu. The area involved is 341 176 sq km - half as big again as the state of Victoria.

Over this area is scattered a resident population estimated in 1987 at 14 690, a little over one-third of whom (5 370 persons, or 36.6 per cent) were Aboriginal (NT Department of Health and Community Services 1988, 92). Outside of Katherine, the largest town in the region, the Aboriginal proportion of the population rises to 47.3 per cent. In the last few years, Katherine has undergone rapid growth as a result of the establishment of Tindal RAAF base, but this phase has now ended. The estimated population of Katherine in June 1988 was 7 400 (ABS 1988). The town serves as a regional administrative centre,

Map 1 Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services facilities



Source: NT Department of Health and Community Services Annual Report 1987-8

although individual government departments vary in the degree of local autonomy they exercise *vis a vis* Darwin, while in the west some residents look to Kununurra, across the border in WA, as a service centre.

Other major settlements in the region are of three kinds: towns which contain a substantial non-Aboriginal population; major Aboriginal communities, and settlements associated with large pastoral stations. These, together with their populations as enumerated in the 1986 Census, are listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Major settlements in the Katherine region, enumerated population, 1986 Census

Settlement	1986 population			Total
	Aboriginal/ TSI	Non- Aboriginal	Not stated	
Towns				
Katherine	871	4303	517	5691
Borrooloola	463	182	13	658
Mataranka				*
Pine Creek	60	290	43	393
Timber Creek				*
Major Aboriginal communities**				
Lajamanu	566		39	605
Daguragu	220		-	220
Kalkaringi	286		44	330
Barunga	385		41	426
Beswick	292		24	316
Ngukurr	624		46	670
Pastoral stations				
Victoria River Downs (VRD)				*

* In the case of Mataranka, Timber Creek and VRD, the smallest ABS Census unit, the Collection District, includes such a large area around the main settlements (including, in the case of Mataranka, Katherine Gorge tourist area), that it is impossible to estimate the populations of the towns themselves.

** In the Aboriginal communities, 'non-Aboriginal' and 'not stated' have been combined.

Sources: ABS Census 86, Urban Centres/Rural Localities, mf Batch reference No C86.206 (NT).

Outside of these settlements, the remainder of the population is dispersed over a variety of small and usually remote localities, including pastoral stations and homeland centres. A list of Aboriginal communities compiled by the then Department of Community Development in 1986 itemised 60 occupied Aboriginal settlements in the region, in addition to the six communities listed above. These settlements - pastoral excisions, homeland centres and town camps - ranged in population from 4 to 100, with a large majority (81.7 per cent) having populations of less than 50.

The entire region lies within the monsoonal climatic zone, characterised by a summer 'wet' season of three to five months between November and April, and a 'dry' season of seven to nine months, during which virtually no rain falls (Christian and Stewart 1953, 26-

27). One consequence is that during the wet season some settlements become isolated from all but airborne contact. Another is the pattern of health and disease problems associated with the area. These are more closely related to the patterns prevalent in south east Asia, to which the region belongs ecologically, than to problems more typical of urbanised southern Australia (Stanley 1984).

The public health policy system: key concepts

Townsend has defined social policy as 'the underlying as well as the professed rationale by which social institutions and groups are used or brought into being to ensure social preservation or development' (1976, 6). Social policy can be analysed as a system, of which the key elements are:

- *organisations which formulate and implement policies, and linkages amongst these organisations;*
- *laws, statutes, regulations and administrative procedures governing implementation of the policies, and relations between agencies and recipients;*
- *sources of and procedures for allocating financial resources associated with the policy;*
- *staffing of relevant organisations;*
- *information distributed about the services provided, and*
- *services provided (based on Townsend 1976, 9-10).*

All of these components are in turn embedded in and constrained by broader social, political, economic and ecological systems.

The term 'system' as used here is intended to carry none of the connotations of order or homeostasis sometimes associated with the word. Rather, my usage follows Boudon's concept of an 'interdependent system': namely, a field of activity within which the actions of individual people or groups ('agents' in Boudon's terms) are constrained by, and in turn influence the actions and options open to other agents. Besides the key property of interdependence, such a system has another important attribute, noted by Boudon and relevant to present purposes: it may give rise to effects which are not explicitly sought by any of the agents in the system, but which arise nonetheless by virtue of their interdependence. Boudon calls these 'emergent effects' (1981 59).

In this paper I shall argue that the present policy system not only fails to ameliorate poor environmental conditions in Aboriginal communities, but that it actively reproduces them, and that it does so contrary to the wishes or intentions of any of the agents in the system. In other words, I shall regard these conditions as an 'emergent effect' of the policy system, and seek explanations within that system.

The paper does not purport to be anything like a comprehensive analysis of the public health policy system. I shall say virtually nothing, for instance, about funding arrangements, little about staffing, and shall deal selectively with other aspects. The main focus will be on the services themselves.

Public health services can usefully be viewed in terms of a simple model, composed of three parts:

- *Clinical public health facilities and services;*
- *Environmental public health facilities and services, such as water supply and sanitation, and*
- *Knowledge, beliefs and attitudes pertaining to items of both clinical and environmental public health and affecting the manner in which those items are incorporated into the lives of the people concerned.*

Underlying this model is a distinction proposed by the sociologist and planner Herbert Gans, between what he called the 'potential' and 'effective' environment. The potential environment is an environment as envisaged by those who plan or install services and facilities in it; it may be a park or a public toilet or a house, or whatever. Gans argued that, regardless of the intentions of the planner, the ways in which people used the services or facilities would be determined by their social system and culture. Thus the effective environment is 'that version of the potential environment that is manifestly or latently adopted by users' (Gans 1972, 7).

In this context, the first two components of the model constitute the public health services as a potential environment, the third, as an effective environment. The model can be illustrated by way of a hypothetical example. A private, flush toilet connected to a septic tank is an item in the potential environment, with certain maintenance needs, capacities, etc. As part of an effective environment, it may on the one hand be a status symbol associated with non-Aboriginal, urban lifestyles; on the other its maintenance requirements may be poorly understood. These factors are no less influential in shaping health-related outcomes than more technical matters such as the absorptive capacity of the soil into which the effluent is discharged from the septic tank.

This model, I suggest, serves not only to help organise our thinking and observations concerning existing services, but also provides a framework for policy development, by linking environmental, clinical and educational aspects. The need for such an integrated framework is illustrated by the following observations about public health in the Anangu Pitjantjatjaraku communities:

An alteration to the present pattern of diarrhoeal disease will depend upon a marked improvement in general community hygiene and through the construction and maintenance of adequate water supplies, housing and public health facilities. However, Anangu perceptions of the causes of disease is (sic) quite different from that of the 'Western' disease theory. The construction of adequate public health facilities will not in itself lead to the desired alteration in morbidity patterns, but should be part of an overall programme which includes community education and participation in health awareness (Nganampa Health Council 1986, 46).

In other words, changes in the potential environment are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for improvements in health.

The public health policy system in Katherine

Clinical services

Clinical public health services in Katherine region, as elsewhere in the NT, are provided by the NT Department of Health and Community Services through a network of eight medical officers, eight community health centres and 15 clinics, backed up by the services of Katherine hospital and an aerial medical service. In addition to the medical officers employed by the Department, there are five doctors all located in or near Katherine itself: three in private practice, one attached to Kalano Community Association, an independent organisation serving Aboriginal residents of Katherine, and one at the RAAF base at Tindal, near Katherine.

Departmental medical officers serve both the local hospital and the region as a whole, providing both curative and public health services. An important policy question therefore concerns the optimal allocation of resources so as to meet these quite distinct groups of need. At the time of writing, regional policy was being revised with a view to establishing a dedicated rural medical service made up of a Director of Rural Health and two District Medical Officers. The remaining five medical officers would serve the local hospital. (Also at the time of writing, two of the eight positions were vacant, leaving the proposed new policy more or less on the drawing board.)

Regular visits by District Medical Officers to regional community health centres constitute the first tier of what is, in effect, a three-tier rural health service delivery system. The second tier comprises the community health centres (CHCs) and health clinics. The role played by these centres and clinics can be illustrated by the case of Timber Creek CHC.

Like most of the other CHCs in the region, this centre is staffed by two full-time community health nurses who are the senior health practitioners over an area covering several thousand square kilometres, from the WA border back towards Katherine. Staff administer a number of preventive programs, including immunisation programs for children and adults, old age care, trachoma services and audiometry.

In addition to staffing the Timber Creek CHC, the nurses play a regular supportive role with respect to two clinics located on Aboriginal communities in the area, at Bulla Camp and Amanbidgi (Kildurk) respectively. Both clinics are staffed by Aboriginal Health Workers (AHWs): Bulla Camp by one full-time Senior AHW and one part-time AHW, and Amanbidgi by one part-time AHW.

It is current policy of the department to designate AHWs as the providers of primary health care on Aboriginal communities. Since its inception in 1973, the AHW Program has undergone a number of changes in policy and organisation. In 1987/88 there were 162 AHWs employed throughout the NT, 39 of them in Katherine region (NT Department of Health and Community Services 1988, 129). In recent years the department has taken steps to establish career paths in the program, and is presently revising the training program.

At both Bulla Camp and Amanbidgi, the AHWs operate independently on a day to day basis, although deficiencies in the local power supplies to refrigerators limit the range of drugs that can be stocked. About once a week, staff from Timber Creek CHC visit Bulla Camp, while visits to Amanbidgi are less frequent.

The third tier consists of services provided by a mobile clinic, again staffed by the Timber Creek nurses, which makes regular visits to more than 20 pastoral stations and other isolated settlements. The area involved is shown in Map 2.

On most of these settlements, one person is the designated holder of a 'pastoral kit', consisting of medicines, antibiotics and drugs. The pastoral kit holder is expected to attend to minor day to day matters. The mobile clinics, which visit each settlement about once every six weeks in the dry season, provide a range of preventive services, including immunisation and school screening.

The mobile clinics, like the CHC itself, serve both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients. Of 2 494 client-contacts recorded by the CHC in 1988 for both the centre and the mobile clinics, nearly 61 per cent (1,516) involved Aboriginal people (based on client contact records supplied by Timber Creek Community Health Centre).

This breakdown belies the view attributed to many non-Aborigines in the area that the CHC is essentially a health service for Aborigines that ignores the legitimate needs of non-Aboriginal people. Just how widespread and deeply held this perception is, I have not had a chance to assess. It is worthy of attention, in so far as it may well become a factor in the wider political system within which the health system is embedded, and within which politicians, conscious of constituency feelings, take decisions.

The perception appears to be sustained largely by two factors. The first is what is seen to be a whittling back in recent years of health services to non-Aboriginal residents of remote areas. For instance, until the early 1980s, pastoral stations were visited regularly by a doctor and the aerial medical service. This service has been discontinued and replaced by the mobile clinic service. Objectively, these clinics may provide a service at least as effective as the earlier flying visits from Katherine-based medical officers; nonetheless, a visible service has been withdrawn. One reason for the withdrawal, moreover, was the movement of many Aboriginal people at that time away from the pastoral stations to newly won pastoral excisions, such as Bulla Camp. Thus, the withdrawal of the service may have served to reinforce a belief that the department's rural health services are in truth an Aboriginal service.

Even more closely allied with this belief is the popular perception among Europeans of the role of the aerial medical service in evacuating patients to Katherine. According to this perception, if you are white and you or one of your dependents gets sick and contacts the hospital, the medical officer on duty at the hospital will advise you how to treat yourself or the dependent; if you are black, he will order an aerial evacuation. Like many popular beliefs, this perception embodies distortion and over-simplification, but it is not difficult to see how it arises. A medical officer, on being contacted by someone in a remote area, must decide whether or not immediate evacuation is necessary, and his or her decision will be based in part on an assessment of the degree to which the patient is deemed to be at risk, in part upon the quality of any available on-the-spot treatment, and in part upon the patient's or his/her family's mobility. In general, Aboriginal people in need of treatment are considered less likely to be able to medicate themselves or each other, and less likely to have sufficient resources to travel, and therefore more in need of evacuation. (It should be added, however, that not all medical evacuations are by air.)

The aerial medical service is made up of three programs: the Patients Assistance Travel Service (PATS), for providing isolated patients with access to specialist medical service; an inter-hospital transfer (IHT) service, and Medevac, for evacuating patients requiring non-specialist treatment in emergencies or semi-emergencies. In Katherine region, the service operates through a charter arrangement with Tillair.

Map 2 Area served by Timber Creek community health centre mobile clinics

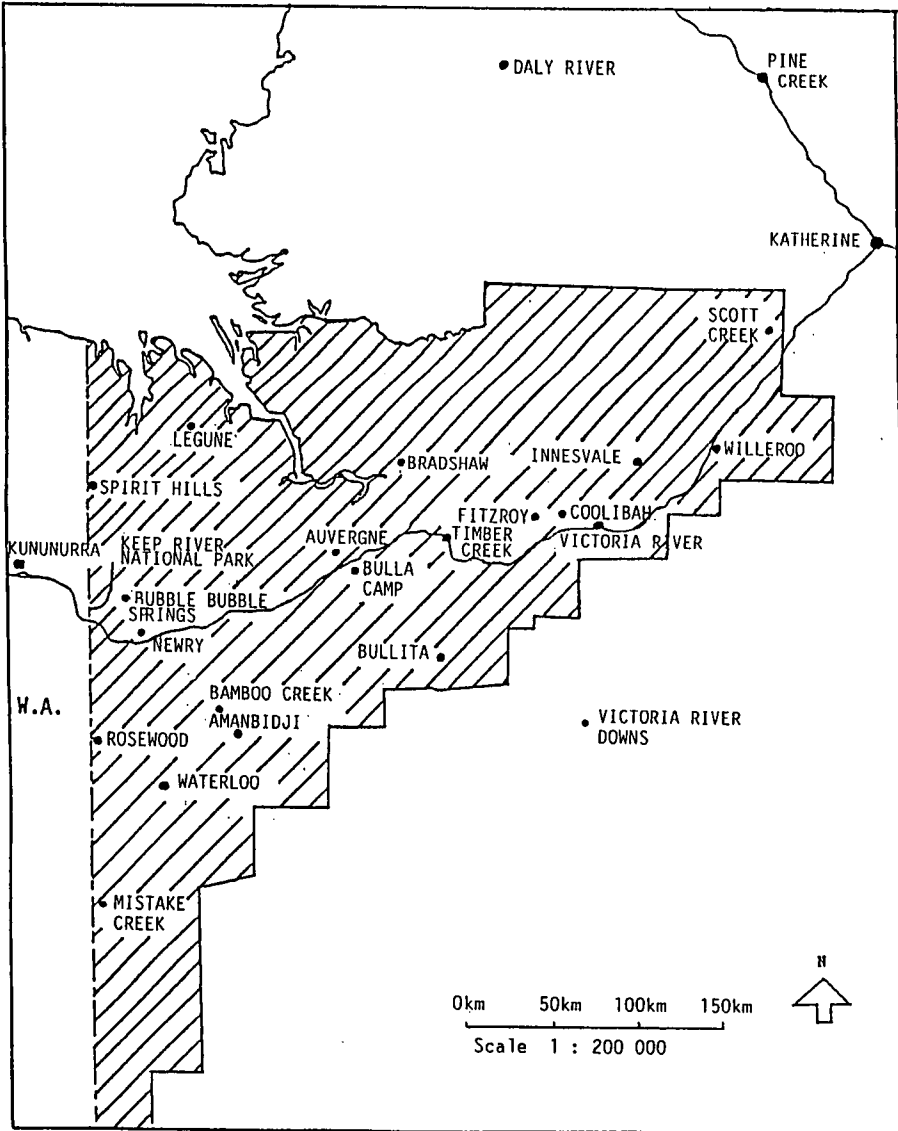


Table 2 shows the number of evacuations in the region in 1987-88. Of the 903 Medevac evacuations, 87.8 per cent involved Aboriginal patients (a similar proportion to that recorded throughout the NT as a whole). The distribution for specialist evacuations under the PATS scheme and for inter-hospital transfers was quite different, with Aboriginal patients accounting for 56 per cent and 59 per cent respectively.

Table 2
Medical evacuations, Katherine region and NT, July 1987 - June 1988

Program	Aboriginal (%)	Non-Aboriginal (%)	Not stated (%)	Total
PATS	426(55.7)	328(42.8)	11(1.4)	765(99.9)
IHT	122(58.7)	79(38.0)	7(4.3)	208(100.1)
MEDEVAC	792(87.7)	98(10.9)	13(1.4)	903(100.0)

Source: Patient Travel Requests, NT Department of Health and Community Services.

Clearly, the aerial medical service does carry a disproportionate number of Aboriginal patients not, I would suggest, because the Department of Health and Community Services cares about them more than it does about rural non-Aborigines, but because health problems continue to be so pervasive in Aboriginal communities.

It is worth summarising the implications of this state of affairs: poor environmental conditions contribute to a high rate of illness in Aboriginal communities; this in turn places intensive demands on the curative health system, especially the medical evacuation and hospital systems. This leads to resentment among non-Aborigines, who object to what they see as the lion's share of health resources being allocated to Aborigines. Yet as long as the poor environmental conditions remain, health authorities will have no option but to keep ferrying out victims of these conditions by means of an expensive ambulance and hospital system.

What, then, is being done with respect to environmental public health? Environmental health services in the region are provided by three major groups: first, community health centre staff and AHWs; second, various departments - both Territory and Commonwealth - involved in funding and installing 'essential services', and third, health surveyors. I shall examine each of these in turn.

Environmental services

Most CHC staff are aware of the consequences of poor living conditions and inadequate sanitation and hygiene on Aboriginal communities, and many of them attempt to do something about the problem. At Timber Creek, for instance, CHC staff formulated their own three month program in March 1988 aimed at improving environmental health and hygiene at Timber Creek, Bulla Camp and Amanbidgi. The program had several objectives, including the promotion of safe disposal of waste water and rubbish; improvement in the health of dogs (in order to reduce the part played by dogs in the transmission of disease), and instruction in the proper use of toilets and showers.

Space does not permit a discussion of the various activities undertaken, except perhaps to refer to the dog program. This was a local implementation of a trial program developed by the then Department of Primary Production in Katherine, and involved injecting dogs with an anti-parasitic agent known as 'Avomec'. In this instance, injections were conducted at the three centres over a three month period.

An evaluation of the three month program carried out by CHC staff in August 1988 concluded that the prevalence of sores and ringworm had been reduced at Bulla, but that little had changed with regard to longer term objectives.

The Timber Creek program is typical of several initiatives that have been taken from time to time by CHC staff on various communities in the region. Whatever its overall effectiveness, the program illustrates two characteristics of such programs in general. Firstly, it did not form part of a broader departmental or regional strategy for environmental health, but was rather a local initiative which owed more to the personal interests of the CHC staff than to any policy. Had the local staff wished to focus on other objectives, such as combating malnutrition or child abuse, they might just as easily have done so. This is not to criticise local initiatives in general or this one in particular, but to draw attention to the status of environmental programs as a peripheral 'add-on' to the main body of clinical work. Secondly, as so often happens with such add-ons, no additional resources were made available to the CHC for the pursuit of these environmental objectives.

It is hardly surprising that, under these circumstances, clinical work normally comes first; it is, by and large, what health centre staff are trained to do, although current proposals to alter training programs for AHWs may lead to some changes. There is also a problem of boundaries. Clinical services belong within the domain of an established, prestigious profession - medicine. This is not true of environmental health services, which are in part educational - teaching basic hygiene, part medical - eradicating sources of infection, and part engineering - designing efficient facilities for sewage disposal, etc. The field of environmental health is not neatly encompassed by any one of these, and in the world of day to day decision-making, environmental health issues tend to fall between all of them, as an examination of the policy underpinning provision of essential services will show.

The term 'essential services' includes environmental services such as water supply and sanitation, as well as other infra-structure items such as roads and airstrips. Essential services in the NT are provided through a complex array of Territory and Commonwealth agencies, listed in Table 3.

Prior to March 1987, the NT government's role was based on a distinction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal settlements. Services to the latter were the direct responsibility of various functional departments, such as NT Electricity Commission (electricity), Transport and Works (roads and airstrips), and so on. Although these departments were also involved in delivering services to Aboriginal communities, overall responsibility for essential services to Aboriginal communities lay with a separate division - the Essential Services Division - of the former NT Department of Community Development.

In March 1987 the government abolished that department, transferring some of its functions to the new Department of Health and Community Services, while essential services to Aboriginal communities were henceforth to be provided under a new policy known as 'mainstreaming'. The essence of mainstreaming was that services would now be provided, not through special departments or divisions serving a specifically Aboriginal client group, but rather by each functional department, which would provide appropriate

services to all NT residents, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike. At the same time, the departments concerned were to recognise the distinctive needs of Aboriginal and other groups, and adapt services accordingly (NT Government 1988a).

Table 3
NT and Commonwealth agencies providing environmental health services to Aboriginal communities in the NT

Agency	Major responsibilities
NT Government	
Power and Water Authority	1 Power, water and sewerage systems (but not domestic septic systems)
Department of Lands and Housing	1 Administers Comm-State Housing Agreement in NT 2 Acts in consulting and supervisory capacity with DAA and ADC in some Aboriginal housing projects 3 Co-ordinates land use planning in communities
Office of Local Government	1 Oversees development of community government 2 Administers grants program to communities
Health Surveyors, Dept of Health & Community Services	1 Surveillance of facilities affecting public health
Commonwealth Government	
Department of Aboriginal Affairs	1 Provides funds for housing and other projects 2 Provides funds for essential services for some minor communities
Aboriginal Development Commission	1 Provides funds for housing in town camps
Outstation Resource Centres	1 Channel funds from DAA and ADC to minor communities 2 Liaise between communities and external agencies

Note: This table does not include organisations set up to co-ordinate the activities of other agencies.

Under this policy, the main NT government agencies involved in providing environmental services are the Power and Water Authority, which is responsible for power, water and sewerage systems; the Department of Lands and Housing, which administers the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement in the NT, acts as a consultant for some housing programs, and also co-ordinates land use planning on Aboriginal communities; and the Office of Local Government, which oversees the development of Community Government throughout the NT and also administers a grants program, some funds from

which are used for service provision. The Department of Transport and Works is responsible for the remaining essential services, namely roads, barge landings and airstrips.

Throughout most of Australia, provision of essential services is the responsibility of state and municipal authorities. Since the 1967 referendum, however, the Commonwealth government has also become involved in providing essential services to Aboriginal communities, through three main agencies: the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal Development Commission, and outstation resource centres. Both DAA and ADC fund housing on Aboriginal communities, although since 1983/84 the latter has not funded housing on minor communities, apart from town camps (Commonwealth of Australia 1987, 180-183). DAA also funds some essential services on outstations and pastoral excisions, although the extent of its obligations in this area *vis a vis* the NT government are by no means clearly defined.

Commonwealth funds to minor communities (such as outstations and pastoral excisions) are channelled through 'outstation resource centres'. These are organisations set up and funded by DAA to serve communities located within a particular area. As well as handling funds for housing and other purposes, letting contracts and overseeing construction, the resource centres act as a point of contact between the respective communities and governmental and other agencies. They also provide financial and advisory services. Although they are essentially a part of the Commonwealth system of service provision, and in the NT receive no direct funding from the NT government, some NT government departments also channel grants through the resource centres.

In the Timber Creek area, to continue with our case study example, some 12 minor Aboriginal communities are serviced by Ngarinman Resource Centre. Two of these communities are town camps located a few kilometres east of Timber Creek, the remainder either pastoral excisions or outstations. The Resource Centre has a full-time staff of three, who report to a board made up of representatives of the constituent communities.

This quick perusal of Territory and Commonwealth agencies by no means exhausts the list of government departments and other agencies involved in providing services to Aboriginal communities; it covers merely those directly involved in providing environmental health services.

Notwithstanding the presence of both Commonwealth and Territory agencies, responsibility for formulating and implementing an overall essential services policy lies, as elsewhere, with the Territory government. In turn, the policy is shaped by two planning mechanisms: a program of formulating Serviced Land Availability Plans (SLAP) for individual communities, and a set of guidelines for the provision of essential services to Aboriginal communities.

SLAP plans are the responsibility of the Aboriginal Programs Branch of the NT Department of Lands and Housing. As their name implies, the plans are intended to provide a framework for the orderly development of infrastructure on Aboriginal communities. By plotting existing facilities for water, sewerage, roads, drains, power, communications and housing, as well as areas designated by community leaders as culturally unsuited to development, they provide a database upon which further development by this and other departments can proceed. To date, SLAP plans have been prepared for some 26 major communities.

The guidelines for service provision are based upon a hierarchical classification of Aboriginal communities, according to population size and stability. At the top of the hierarchy are the so-called 'Major Communities', defined as having a population in excess of 100, a community government or association council and a wide range of existing facilities. Next come 'Minor Communities', also with a population of 100 or more, but without the infrastructure or administrative functions of Major Communities. The remaining categories apply to homeland centres and pastoral excursions: those with populations between 50 and 99 form the third category; 20 to 49 a fourth, and less than 20, the fifth category.

The guidelines then set out what are considered to be an appropriate level of services for each category. I shall not attempt here to summarise these levels, but rather focus on a few points to do with water supply, sanitation and ablution facilities.

At first sight, the guidelines appear to set unequivocal environmental health standards. They state that 'All houses and shelters should be self-contained with water reticulation, shower, laundry and toilet facilities' (Northern Territory Government 1988b, 29). They also state that communal facilities should be phased out as soon as possible. With respect to sewage disposal, they recommend that reticulated sewerage systems may be appropriate for major communities with populations in excess of 400, but that in most other instances septic systems are more suitable, largely because they require less maintenance and overseeing than reticulated systems. Pit latrines, according to the guidelines, are adequate for smaller communities, but elsewhere they should be viewed as a short term measure only.

As a set of engineering principles, these recommendations may be satisfactory - although people with the appropriate expertise may well take issue with some of the specific assertions. From the environmental health policy point of view, however, the guidelines exhibit three fundamental flaws: first, they sidestep questions concerning the provision and maintenance of services in individual households; second, they ignore the issue of responsibility for maintenance of essential services, and third, they ignore the role of regional health surveyors. I shall discuss each of these point briefly in turn.

A perennial issue underlying many environmental health problems on Aboriginal communities is that of responsibility for services in and around individual houses. It is probably no exaggeration to say that individual houses on Aboriginal communities occupy a bureaucratic no-man's land, into which no government department is willing to enter in order to provide or maintain services, but over which the occupiers often fail to exercise what non-Aboriginal people would regard as normal care and responsibility. This is so, largely I suggest, because the occupiers do not subscribe to the concepts of private ownership of property that underpin many of the values and institutional arrangements in the dominant society. The presence of this no-man's land might not matter, were it not for the fact that it is here that many of the most pervasive environmental health problems occur; it is here, for example, that stagnant pools of water appear above blocked drains, for the unblocking of which no-one is prepared to accept responsibility.

The guidelines offer no new directions. 'In general', they assert, 'essential services, especially water, power and sewerage, will be a mains service only and would be provided to points adjacent to each building. Extension beyond the mains internally into buildings would be the responsibility of those requiring the service'. Elsewhere, we learn that this last term refers to the building contractor or the owner of the building (NT Government 1988b, 29 and Appendix 1).

The second flaw is related to the first. In side-stepping issues associated with the provision of services to individual houses, the guidelines also leave unaddressed the question of responsibility for maintenance of domestic facilities. There is little point in simply asserting - as some are wont to do - that it is up to individual householders to maintain their own facilities when (i) most householders are not the legal owners of their houses, (ii) their understanding of how the facilities work is often minimal, (iii) there may be no-one in the community with either the expertise or the equipment to make the necessary repairs, and (iv) there is no budgetary provision for maintenance at the community level.

The third flaw is the omission of any reference to environmental health surveyors. The guidelines are not unique in this. A detailed submission by the NT government to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs inquiry into support services for Aboriginal communities devotes sections to essential services, housing, health, recreation, police, education and other services, but not a syllable to the role of health surveyors (NT Government 1988a). Yet these are the officers specifically charged with overseeing the health implications of physical infrastructure items. By law, for example (although certainly not in practice) the *Public Health (General Sanitation, Mosquito Prevention, Rat Exclusion and Prevention) Regulations 1982* (NT) stipulate that no septic tank may be installed anywhere in the Northern Territory without approval first being obtained from the Chief Medical Officer or his delegated authority, and approvals so given are conditional upon facilities being inspected, upon completion, by a Health Surveyor.

It might be fairly argued that these issues lie outside the scope of a document setting out guidelines for the public provision of essential services. But they would not lie outside the scope of a public health policy which encompassed the three component parts which I mentioned earlier, and which addressed the long-standing environmental health problems of Aboriginal communities. The failure of the guidelines to address these issues testifies, I suggest, to the absence from the policy system of such a public health policy. *Despite the widely acknowledged importance of environmental health issues on Aboriginal communities, environmental health as a field of policy has been effectively marginalised in the planning process.* Neither in the guidelines nor in the SLAP plans does one find evidence of an environmental health policy.

Outcomes of this lacuna in the policy system are readily to hand. For example, at Bulla Camp, six new two bedroom houses were built last year by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs; all of them are now occupied. Not one of them has been connected to the local water supply. Occupants must rely on standpipes that already serve the older houses. In some instances, the nearest tap is only a few metres away. In others, it is about 50 metres distant.

Myatt and Murrungung are two town camps a few kilometres outside Timber Creek. In the past few months, six new houses have been built under a joint program involving the Commonwealth's Aboriginal Development Commission and the NT Department of Lands and Housing. Four of the houses are at Myatt, the other two at Murrungung. When I visited the camps in February the builders had just completed their work, and the new houses were awaiting painters and electricians. Although none of the houses had been officially handed over, at least one family had already begun to move in, and I imagine since then the process has continued. Each house has its own private shower and flush toilet, connected to a septic tank and drain.

There is just one problem. Neither town camp has a mains water supply. Until now the 60 or so residents have hauled water up from a nearby creek. The PAWA has sunk bores

to serve each camp, and stated its intention to equip them and reticulate water to the camps in the near future. In the meantime, six new houses are about to become occupied by families who will have received little or no training in the use and maintenance of the new toilet facilities; should they try to use the toilets, there is no water with which to flush them, and should they damage them, there is no budgetary provision for their repair and maintenance. The environmental health implications are, I think, fairly obvious.

Anyone who has spent time in Aboriginal communities could, I suggest, supply numerous additional examples. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs reported, in its inquiry into homeland centres, several instances of ablution facilities that had been installed in the absence of reticulated water supply systems (Commonwealth of Australia 1987, 191).

The standard response of officials to whose attention one draws situations like this is to stress the need for better co-ordination. Obviously, co-ordinated service provision is better than unco-ordinated provision, and there are plenty of instances to be cited of the latter. But the belief that the problem can be adequately dealt with by better co-ordination of services is an illusion. No amount of co-ordination can compensate for the absence of a coherent policy in the first place, and in this instance, as I have suggested, the policy system as a whole lacks a coherent public health policy.

How has this come about? I suggest there are two stages in the process. First, environmental health issues occupy no more than a peripheral status within the NT Department of Health and Community Services, the department which has responsibility for public health policy. The second stage follows virtually automatically: because they are regarded as peripheral at the intra-departmental level, environmental health issues are all but ignored at the higher, inter-departmental level within which policies for essential services are formulated and implemented.

I have already discussed the peripheral place of environmental health within the range of services provided by community health centres and health clinics. It remains to consider the other arm of the Department of Health and Community Services' environmental health delivery system - the health surveyors.

Legally, as we have seen, health surveyors occupy a strategic position in the institutional complex within which public health services are provided. In reality, their voice is a faint one; the health surveyor function is under-staffed, under-resourced, and - so far as rural environmental health is concerned - constrained by inadequate, inappropriate legislation. In the remainder of this paper, I can do little more than touch on these issues.

In the Katherine region there are two health surveyors, one of whom is engaged full-time in attending to urban matters in Katherine itself. This leaves his sole colleague to oversee a region one-and-a-half times the size of Victoria. Health surveillance, under these circumstances, is a joke. Or more accurately perhaps, to the extent that a regional health surveyor can hope to have any impact on environmental health services, it is essentially as a nuisance in the eyes of the bigger bureaucracies. It is impossible for the health surveyor to pay frequent or regular visits to all communities. If he does find out about a defective or inappropriate installation, and there is every chance that he will not, he has little recourse but to complain to those responsible for the installation and badger them to rectify the mistakes. Under the public health regulations referred to above, the fine for failing to obtain permission to install a septic tank is \$40. If the health surveyor deems an installation to be dangerous to health, the only option under the regulations is to direct the owner of the premises to repair, clean or remove the offending installation by a certain

date, and in the meantime to forbid the occupier of the premises from using it. Failure to comply with such directions carries a fine of \$100.

Some indication of the institutional powerlessness of the health surveyor, and in particular his inability to prevent the installation of inappropriate facilities under present policies, can be gleaned from an extraordinary sequence of events that has occurred over recent years at Yarralin, a pastoral excision with a population of about 100 located on Victoria River Downs (VRD), south east of Timber Creek.

A few years ago, the NT Department of Lands and Housing built four new two-bedroom houses at Yarralin. No private toilets or showers were installed, but instead two ablution blocks were built nearby, each containing two showers, two toilets and two laundry troughs. Each block was connected to a septic tank.

Contrary to the law as stated above, the health surveyor was not informed about any plans to install the new septic tanks; when he found out about them, he complained that in each case the septic tank and its associated drain had a capacity which would normally be considered adequate for six to eight persons. Yet each house alone was believed to house about this many people.

Subsequently, in 1987, another five new houses were built, apparently funded by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Like their four predecessors, these houses lacked their own toilet and shower facilities, but this time no new shower or toilet blocks were built, merely a single pit latrine. Construction of the five additional houses placed a critical burden on the existing facilities, and by late 1987 the Regional Health Surveyor reported that the drainage system linked to the two blocks was blocked, the toilets contained large amounts of faecal matter, excess effluent was rising up the shower wastes to discharge onto the ground around the toilet blocks, and waste water from the laundry, which could not be disposed of through the septic tank, was flowing onto the ground and forming a foul smelling area attractive to flies and mosquitoes. The ablution blocks, which had been built to improve environmental health standards, had now become a health hazard. In response to this, Ngaringman Resource Centre removed the offending toilets early in 1988, converting the erstwhile toilet-cubicles to additional showers, and constructing four additional pit latrines.

The saga of the toilets, however, was not over. Following a subsequent visit to the community by a local MLA, the Department of Lands and Housing made funds available to Catholic Missions in order that the five newest houses might have their own flush toilets and shower facilities. Again, this decision was taken without any reference to the regional health surveyor, who learnt of it by chance. The new toilets were installed a few months ago. At the time I visited the community in February of this year, one of the septic systems was already over-full, with a result that the toilet was partially blocked. Since the other four systems have been built to the same specifications, it seems reasonable to expect that at least some of the others will shortly follow suit if they have not already done so. And who is to maintain the toilets installed by Catholic Missions? At present, no budgetary provision exists.

To this point, the saga has engaged the activities of two Northern Territory government departments, one Commonwealth department, one Commonwealth funded resource agency and a major church organisation. To what extent the recipients of all this attention have been consulted I do not know; what they make of it all one can only speculate.

In dividing their duties between town and country respectively, the two health surveyors in Katherine region have implicitly acknowledged a point which does not seem to be

recognized either in public health legislation or in the more formal administrative structures: namely, that the role of a health surveyor in an urban setting, where a developed service infrastructure is in place and most residents have grown up knowing how to maintain and use the associated facilities, is very different from the corresponding role in a rural area where even basic amenities such as a decent water supply are often lacking and where the people vary greatly in their familiarity with and acceptance of European notions of hygiene and health.

The urban role is, as the title implies, essentially one of surveillance of existing services and facilities. The rural role, by contrast, encompasses provision of services and education - or at least it should do so. Whether it is even appropriate to use the same term 'health surveyor' to cover both roles is debatable; at the very least the fundamental differences between the two roles should be formally acknowledged and taken into account.

In Katherine region, the regional health surveyor has attempted to combine educational, surveillance and preventive activities, largely through a program under which six Community Workers (formerly known as Hygiene Workers) are employed on minor communities in the region. Curiously, this program is funded not by the Department of Health and Community Services, but under a special grant from the Office of Local Government, attached to the NT Department of Labour and Administrative Services.

At the time of writing, four Community Workers were in employment on the communities of Bulla Camp, Bulman, Duck Creek and Yarralin. The workers are all Aboriginal members of the communities concerned, and are equipped with tractors, trailers and pumping equipment. Basically, their duties correspond to environmental functions that would normally, on a larger community, be performed by a local council: refuse collection; cleaning and maintenance of communal shower, laundry and toilet facilities, and control of mosquito breeding areas. They are also expected to play an educative role in promoting the principles of community and personal hygiene.

Again, the fact that this program is funded from outside the department, and that the department has resisted initiatives to expand it by also employing Environmental Health Workers on larger communities, demonstrates just how peripheral environmental health issues are within the department's overall policy.

Two other environmental health initiatives illustrate the same state of affairs. One is the dog injection program which, as mentioned above, was piloted by the then Department of Primary Production, with support from the Department of Health and Community Services. Although some communities continue, with more or less regularity, to inject dogs with Avomec, the program no longer exists as a formal funded program. It appears to have lapsed, not because it was systematically evaluated and found wanting, but simply because nobody with sufficient 'clout' has had the enthusiasm to see that it continued.

The second initiative is the so-called 'Ventilated Improved Pit' (VIP) toilet program. The VIP toilet is based on a design originating in Africa, subsequently modified by the Appropriate Technology Centre in Alice Springs. It is claimed by its proponents to be more suitable than other toilets, especially on minor communities, in that it is cheap to build, easily maintained, does not require a fully-reticulated water supply, and is odour-free.

Perhaps more than any other single item, the VIP toilet program symbolises the marginal status of environmental health as a policy issue: it is tolerated. Some agree with the claims of its proponents, others demur (and I lack the expertise to enter the argument). On

a few communities, demonstration toilets have been erected under the supervision of the regional health surveyor. But the proposal does not appear to be regarded seriously by the providers of essential services on Aboriginal communities, who continue to install communal pit latrines (despite the evidence that communal facilities give rise to chronic maintenance problems) or septic or sewerod toilets, private or communal. Rarely is the installation of septic or sewerod toilets accompanied by any education in use or maintenance.

Conclusions

To summarise, I contend that one important reason underlying the failure to make significant improvements to environmental health on Aboriginal communities, despite the existence of widespread concern, lies in the marginalisation of environmental health issues in the policy system. In the absence of a coherent public health policy, environmental health matters occupy a peripheral position, both in terms of resources and of decision-making processes, within the Department of Health and Community Services; in the broader policy system, they are either peripheral or ignored altogether.

What then should be done? A number of steps are, I suggest, implicit in the foregoing critique. Firstly, there is an urgent need for a coherent public health policy, one that will encompass the three aspects I itemised earlier: clinical services and environmental services as aspects of the potential environment, and relevant aspects of the effective environment. The proper body to assume responsibility for this is the NT Department of Health and Community Services.

Only when this step is taken is the second necessary step possible: namely, the movement of public health issues in general, and environmental health issues in particular, from the periphery of the planning process to a central position.

For this to take effect, a number of other steps will be necessary. Firstly, the role of a rural regional health surveyor needs to be distinguished from that of his urban counterpart. Secondly, additional resources and expertise need to be allocated to public health policy. Thirdly, the legislation needs to be amended to take account of conditions in rural, and particularly Aboriginal settlements.

In conclusion, I might point out that only one of these recommendations has any significant cost implications, and these would quickly be outweighed by savings if issues of environmental health were to be properly tackled.

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HORTICULTURAL ENTERPRISE, THE MARKET AND SMALL TOWN DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY: A THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Robert Crittenden

Market gardening in the Northern Territory (NT) is not new. Maize, bananas, pineapples, coconuts as well as rice were produced by the Jesuit Daly River Mission at the end of the 19th century (Stanley 1985). There were also Chinese market gardeners in the Territory from the 19th century (Knight 1980, 17 in Young 1988b, and Knight 1980, 17 and Rendell 1952, 183-91 quoted in Mollah 1985, 137). Aborigines have also been involved in market gardening - especially associated with the army settlements and farms of the Second World War - casting doubt on the common opinion that Aborigines were not interested in gardening or its produce (Berndt and Berndt 1977, 169). This involvement of Aborigines continued after the war. Young (1988b), citing Stanley (1986, 177-178), wrote that in 1968/69 missions and settlements produced 36 per cent of the Northern Territory's fruit and vegetables and over 14 per cent of its eggs. Young cites the case of communities such as Numbulwar on the northeast coast of Arnhem Land which contributed significant amounts of fresh food to the Grootte Eylandt mining settlement of Alyangula during its growth in the 1960s. However she also pointed out that the motivation and organisation for production was almost entirely non-Aboriginal. Moreover, like the army farms and settlements, the enterprise was not an Aboriginal initiative.

Comparisons of the political economy and development problems of the NT with those of third world countries are, therefore, often made, especially with regard to Aboriginal communities (Stanley 1985). Of course there are significant differences, not the least being that Aborigines are a minority in a population whose majority is not only wealthy but also racially different. In this respect comparison with the minorities of North America or of Scandinavia might be closer. Unlike the inhabitants of most third world countries Aborigines, as a consequence of their minority status, are in a far weaker position to control their own political/economic/social environment. Their resources are scarce and offer few opportunities for sustained development, profits and employment. Policy formulation and decisions are largely outside their control and what little control they have over their resources is tenuous.

Yet Aborigines make up 22 per cent of the population of the NT and 70 per cent of them are rural (see Young 1988b). They are part of the mainstream of the NT society and economy, if only because a high proportion of the economy of towns such as Alice Springs depend to a large extent on Aboriginal administration (Drakakis-Smith estimated that in 1978 this extent was about 30 per cent for Alice Springs - in Young 1988b). As a result, there is pressure on the Aboriginal population to conform. As Young (1988, 111) wrote, they are restricted by administrative organisations and public funding bodies and encouraged at every turn to conform to the ideals of others.

There are also similarities between parts of the white community of the NT (or the whole of remote northern Australia) and the expatriate populations of developing countries. Some people go north, as they go to many developing countries, to make money or advance their careers but rarely to settle. Although there are many permanent residents in

the north, the white community is characterised by a high level of transience (Rowley 1971, 14 quoted in Rumley 1983, 240).

It is in this context that I wish to make some preliminary observations on the proposals and initiatives for horticultural development taken by the government of the NT as part of its program to attract labour and capital to develop and more densely settle the Territory. What does horticulture offer to rural development? Is it to be restricted to 'white' settlement - to the 78 per cent of the population that are non-Aboriginal? Or if Aboriginal groups are to get involved will it be in forms determined by bureaucracy (and that includes Aboriginal bureaucracy) or simply as labourers, as was their contribution to the pastoral industry?

This paper, therefore, sets the theoretical context for a proposed study of the incipient horticultural industry of Tennant Creek and the Barkly Tablelands and its market environment, and the role that horticulture might play in encouraging small town development in remote, rural northern Australia.

The framework I use is the 'market' - its performance, structure and conduct - in order to approach the problem of small town development and horticulture from the view point of the political economist.

The scientific/technical feasibility of developing the horticultural industry in the NT and the rest of northern Australia is not doubted. It is now of such a size that it is seeking further government support in order to increase its market share interstate and overseas (Cann 1988, 48). In order to understand its future contribution to the fabric of the NT economy a number of questions need to be asked. For example, who will benefit from government aid, where are the vested interests, and who will control the capital inputs? Will the horticultural industry in the NT be more than simply exploitative, owned by outside capital with profits being taken interstate - an enclave in the same mould as many other enterprises in the north? Will growth of the industry contribute to community development? The answers hinge, in part, upon the form of the individual enterprises, and their mix within the industry - whether they be family farms, cooperative enterprises or large scale enterprises controlled by out-of-state interests - and, of course, on the interests that the industry serves. The answers are also related to the form and efficiency of the marketing sector of the economy. An efficient marketing sector does not simply link sellers and buyers. A significant share of an economy's resources are invested in the various aspects of marketing, the functions and services needed to handle agricultural produce and inputs. Through developing the channels between producers and consumers, the marketing sector plays a dynamic role in stimulating production and consumption - the essential bases of development - and is thus an important multiplier of economic development.

Horticulture In the Northern Territory

The horticultural industry in the Northern Territory is small compared with that of other states. Over the past five to six years it has grown at a rate much greater than in other states (about 45 per cent per annum, Cann 1988, 44) due largely to government support. Between 1985/86 and 1986/87 the value of fruit crops produced in Australia increased by only 17 per cent and the value of vegetables by 24 per cent. There was a doubling of vegetable production in the NT in the same period. In 1986/7 the value of total fruit and vegetable production in the NT was approximately \$11 million compared with \$2.4 million in 1982/3, and \$162,000 in 1968/69 (Barke and Groszmann 1985, 59). Even so NT production of fruit (including grapes), nursery production (cut flowers and

ornamentals) and vegetables remains less than one per cent of the total Australian production of those commodities (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1987, 1988a), and in 1984/85 accounted for only just over three per cent by value of the total primary production of the NT.

The major horticultural crops grown and sold in the NT for export overseas and interstate are melons (especially rock melons), mangoes, grapes and cashews. Other minor vegetable crops such as capsicums, cherry tomatoes and green beans are also exported interstate as well as sold on the local market. Bananas, citrus and avocados are produced in significant quantities as well (ABS 1988b). Great potential also exists for the production of more exotic tropical fruit and vegetables. At least 40 different fruit species are currently grown in the NT, all with potential for cultivar selection suitable for commercial production (Hearne 1978, 475, 480). Tropical vegetables may be grown in the wet season but as yet still encounter buyer resistance in the market place (Mollah and Daly 1987, 75). The horticultural industry in the NT thus produces predominantly 'traditional', if not temperate, fruit and vegetables under irrigation in the dry season exploiting a distinct seasonal advantage in exporting interstate and overseas (Barke and Groszmann 1985, 53-63; Skerman 1985, 15; Mollah and Daly 1987, 75).

It is unlikely that the future of the horticultural industry in the NT will be constrained by a lack of suitable crop varieties; much of the research on varietal assessment is virtually complete (Hearne 1978, 474-480; Cameron 1982; Scholefield and Blackburn 1985, 192-208). Although lack of understanding of the problems of soils, climate, pests and diseases in the NT is unlikely to be a limiting factor, the ecological problems associated with irrigation using saline groundwater in the semi arid parts of northern Australia like the Barkly Tablelands are far from clear. Other factors that might have restricted opportunities have also been addressed. Communications and transport links with other centres and overseas have improved and the market niches already identified and exploited reflect the advantages of the NT out of season production. The production of fruit and vegetables for export is also underpinned by the NT's internal market which is large enough on its own to sustain the core of the 'infant' industry (Robertson 1982, 46).

In supplying the internal market the industry has developed its 'expertise' both in production and organisation. In turn this has led to growing government support as well as market confidence locally by wholesalers and retailers who previously preferred to contract with more reliable out-of-state suppliers, despite the high cost of transport and storage. The industry thus has great potential for generating income for the Territory and contributing significantly to the economy.

Most production is around Darwin and Katherine. How other areas like the Barkly Tablelands and Tennant Creek might contribute to the growing industry is not known. Tennant Creek is 500 km from Alice Springs and 1000 km from Darwin. Its population is about 4,500. Combined with the logistics of 'cold' trucking, means that Tennant Creek is of marginal importance in the marketing system for fruit and vegetables. Any enterprise initiatives in Tennant Creek would, to be viable, have not simply to cater for the Tennant Creek market but be above the threshold whereby cold trucking would be economic. Given the factors of distance and isolation and the small size of the local market the advantages to an horticultural industry/enterprise locating at Tennant Creek must be demonstrable - cheap land, abundant and cheap irrigation water, fertile soils or a seasonal advantage in production in order to take advantage of market shortages. The impetus for development in such places will probably come from either government or enterprises based interstate, although there is great interest in horticultural production by the business community of Tennant Creek. The present form of government support for the

horticultural industry in the NT assumes that the industry will develop in a fashion that mirrors rural development in the rest of Australia (Cameron 1982).

Government support for horticultural development in the NT

The Commonwealth government is not involved directly in assisting agricultural development in the NT other than tariff protection, subsidies (including those on fuel, transport and freight in the Territory), promotion and credit schemes that benefit all of the nation's economy. Indirectly the Commonwealth government provides assistance through the research of CSIRO, fertiliser subsidies and the development of 'beef-roads' (Martin 1983, 28). Recent support for the horticulture industry is part of the NT government's strategy of encouraging the growth of a diversified economy by investing in agriculture to develop family farming and to encourage a denser pattern of rural settlement.

The NT government is fostering broad-acre farming systems producing, primarily for export markets, a number of crops especially suited to the NT climate and environment (Martin 1983). Much of the primary industry research and extension in the Territory is geared toward providing farm technologies (both for particular farm enterprises and for the whole farm) suitable to the soils, climate, distance from the market, the high cost of inputs and supplies and the overall lack of infrastructure within the Territory (Martin 1983, 19-20). The intention is for the NT agricultural industry to become, through redevelopment of pastoral leases in selected areas, more than simply an extensive cattle run with small cropping enclaves around Darwin, Katherine and in the Ord basin (Crawford 1985, 6).

This development strategy stemmed from a study commissioned by the Legislative Assembly of the newly self governing NT (July 1978) and carried out by officers of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI 1979). The report of the study was evaluated by a working party from several of the NT government departments (including Primary Production). The working party concluded that:

agriculture is unlikely to succeed in the Territory unless there is a planned development program with substantial government involvement and provision of basic infrastructure (QDPI 1979 in Martin 1983, 21).

The report recommended comprehensive government support for agricultural and horticultural development through the establishment of a new horticulture section within the Department of Primary Production and of a development and marketing authority for both agriculture and horticulture (QDPI 1979).

The Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority

The Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority (ADMA) was set up in 1980 under the *Agriculture Development and Marketing Authority Act*. Establishment of the authority was firmly in the mould of previous attempts to stimulate agricultural development in the Territory; to replicate in the north the farming systems and landscape of the rest of Australia by white settlement. Development projects which antedate ADMA include the unsuccessful attempts to grow rice (Territory Rice Ltd at Humpty Doo and the Commonwealth Pilot Farm Scheme at Adelaide River), and sorghum (Tipperary Land Corporation and the National Agricultural Development Corporation at Willeroo) (see Mollah 1980, 1982 for details). All were large scale settlement schemes in extent, in projected costs, and ultimately in the degree of their failure.

The ADMA was given responsibility for farm design, settlement and development as well as the marketing of agricultural and horticultural produce. It was a two phased development program (Steel 1980 in Martin 1983, 23). Phase One was the development of a small number of project based broad-acre farms as a pilot scheme. If successful it was to be followed by Phase Two in which two areas of the Territory - Adelaide River and Douglas-Daly - were to be fully redeveloped, sub-divided and settled as family farms. Successful establishment of the pilot project based family-sized farms and their assured viability was dependent upon the research and design of an appropriate whole-farm system based upon grains and legumes (Cameron 1982, 42; Cameron and Hooper 1985, 488-503).

The research effort of ADMA concentrated upon the biological and physical aspects of the environment and the agronomic/technical aspects of individual crops and varieties in order to identify appropriate whole-farming systems (although Mollah has suggested that too little effort was made to elaborate sound cropping systems - Mollah 1985, 129-139). The lack of infrastructure and marketing support in the NT was also recognised. The consultant's report recommended that ADMA institute an integrated management program to service the horticulture industry and appoint a Horticultural Marketing Officer (Martin 1983, 24). Other lessons from the failure of previous projects were incorporated into the program - both in the proposed agricultural development component and that for encouragement of horticultural production.

The most important failing in previous development projects was their inability to achieve either the scale or timeliness of operation necessary to enter and stay in the 'market place'. In other words, to take advantage of what seemed to be the propitious land and climatic resources of the north, an agricultural industry needed to grow quickly to a minimum critical size to be commercially viable (Martin 1983, 19). The following factors, unless there was adequate government support and investment to overcome them, were seen as preventing viability. There were few farms in the NT technically competent to grow either broad-acre crops or horticultural produce; the most favourable agricultural land was tied up in pastoral leases; the cost of inputs and marketing were high because of the high transport costs in the NT; consequently the marketing chain for horticultural and agricultural produce was poorly developed, and thus the capital requirements for developing either broad-acre farming or horticulture would be extremely high, both on- and off-farm, and moreover it would be difficult to attract capital to the NT (Martin 1983, 19-20).

Initiation of an integrated management program recognised that socio-economic, if not community factors were an integral part of any agricultural development program. If labour, capital and management expertise were to be attracted to the NT then the profitability of investing and settling in the NT would have to be demonstrated; not simply technical viability. In the context of producing a farming landscape typically Australian (see Mollah 1985, 136-137) this includes identifying market niches and estimating their potential, and assessing the competitiveness of the proposed commodities in terms of yields, production and marketing costs (including quality control, off-farm storage, processing, transport and handling), compared with produce from other areas. Without government support attracting capital, labour and experienced management to the NT would be difficult because it goes against the current trend in the agricultural sector of the rest of the country.

The family farm is no longer the lynch-pin of the rural economy and community. Many rural communities are in decline. The NT, on the other hand is attempting to initiate family farming of horticultural and arable crops as a vehicle for settlement and community development. A tightening cost-price squeeze is forcing the agricultural sector in the rest

of Australia to change from one dominated by family mixed farms to one of large business interests specialising in one or two farming enterprises (Lawrence 1987). This is being accompanied by the penetration of industrial and finance capital into the sector (Marsden *et al.* 1987, 297-308). Family arable/horticultural farming in the NT must become highly efficient, if it is to contribute significantly to the market economy, not only in order simply to compete and survive, as is the case in the rest of Australia, but also to grow and develop in an otherwise much more difficult environment.

The analytical framework: farming systems and the market

Development is a political process. An understanding of this process, the interaction of the social, economic and technical parameters in the agricultural sector is critical to the success of policy interventions and development programs. It is not enough to examine the vertical linkages beyond the farm gate, nor to analyse the agricultural sector simply in terms of use of land, labour and capital. This was recognised, to some extent, by those originally advocating what is called the Farming Systems Research and Extension (FSR/E) approach to agricultural and rural development.

FSR/E is a multidisciplinary approach to improvement in agricultural productivity. It involves the farming community in the process of research (Remenyi and Coxhead 1986, 136). It is primarily a technique that was adopted and used in developing countries in response to the failure of the diffusion strategies of the Green Revolution (Chambers 1983), and Integrated Rural Development Projects (IRDPs) to get agriculture moving (Mosher 1966). Similarities may be seen between IRDPs and earlier large scale agricultural programs in the NT. An FSR/E approach was partially adopted by ADMA and the NT Department of Primary Industries to develop whole-farm systems of agriculture and to encourage growth of the horticultural industry. Simmonds emphasised that FSR/E is directed at identifying the socio-economic interests and capabilities that will cause farmers to adopt new technology (Simmonds 1984, 7). In the NT, it is more a question of encouraging farmers to settle and take up either arable farming or horticultural production.

Programs implemented under the green revolution/IRDP strategies in developing countries did not reach the majority of farmers. They simply made available technical inputs to increase yields and productivity. And, like the large scale agricultural development programs of the NT, took little note of the context in which they were being developed. Agricultural development programs in the NT were simply attempts at transplanting temperate agriculture into the seasonally arid tropics, despite the wealth of knowledge about the biophysical environment. Little thought was given to the socio-economic context of farmer settlement, of the potential of existing settlement or the contribution that could be made by Aboriginal forms of enterprise.

The objectives of FSR/E are to be sharply contrasted with the IRDP and the 'diffusion' approaches. FSR/E may be summarised as the development of research and extension programs 'that are cost-effective in generating technologies appropriate to increasing the productivity of farming systems within the context of specific micro-environments' (Davidson 1987, 70, see also Farrington and Martin 1988). Such an approach represents a paradigm shift in rural development practice (Chambers 1987, 229-231) and not simply in the context of developing countries. Agricultural research and extension services, in Australia as much as in developing countries, are more often than not founded upon the theory of diffusion models (for example see Hyami and Ruttan 1971). The extension officer is an agent for fostering and accelerating the adoption and diffusion of new crop technologies and agricultural techniques which were developed on agricultural research

stations. Client farmers are assisted to obtain inputs, credit and marketing. Through 'trickle-down processes' and 'demonstration effects' new ideas and innovations are then expected either to diffuse to the mass of farmers or attract new settlement.

In contrast FSR/E was formulated around the central tenet that new or improved technologies could only be developed through a dialogue between researchers, extension officers and farmers. The objective is not to maximise optimal production practices in the technical sense but to develop improved systems that are better (but not necessarily the best technically) for each environment and appropriate to each socio-economic and cultural context and are thus sustainable. In this process the key elements are farmer participation and dialogue. It is a much needed replacement for the old notion of extension, through 'leading farmers', of new technology already tried and tested on research stations.

What has tended to happen in the Australian context including the NT, however, is that FSR/E has become as narrow as conventional agricultural research and extension - discipline based and narrowly problem orientated. To some extent this also happened in the developing country context (Crittenden and Lea 1989 in press). As Remenyi and Coxhead note:

In the developing country context, FSR (sic) asks first and foremost: why do farmers do what they do? This is not a question that comes naturally to developed country agricultural researchers, most of whom presume that they share a common understanding of farming practices and mores with their farmer clients. In developed country agriculture, therefore, far less time is given to diagnosis. Researchers are more likely to jump in at the deep end and set directly to grappling with constraints to increased productivity and efficiency, content in the belief that they already understand 'why farmers do what they do' (1986, 142).

In the NT the danger is not so much that researchers are content in their belief that they understand why farmers do what they do but that they know what new farmer settlers ought to do. Coupled with a natural tendency for agricultural researchers to embrace the familiarity of discipline based cropping systems research this has led to a false sense of understanding of the whole-farm system and the agricultural (and horticultural) industry as a whole and its linkages through the economy/community.

However, simply involving farmers, or potential farmer settlers, or Aboriginal groups (business cooperatives, councils etc) with researchers from various disciplines is also no guarantee that a successful, ecologically sustainable horticultural industry will support local rural communities and economies. It is essential to consider the politico-economic context (the institutions and agencies involved in planning and implementation), of agricultural development programs (Crittenden and Lea 1989, in press). Agricultural/horticultural development and its associated whole-farm systems research must therefore be conceptualised in more than the technical terms of the soil scientist, agronomist, agricultural economist and marketing experts. One way to examine the horticultural industry in the context of settlement and small town economies - the political economic context - is through a study of the market (see also Loveday 1977 and Mollah 1985).

Market performance, structure and conduct

Markets are exceedingly complex. The marketing of agricultural products begins on the farm, with the planning of production to meet specific demands and market prospects. It ends with the sale of the fresh or processed produce to consumers. Agricultural marketing includes the supply, to farmers, of fertilisers and other inputs to production. The performance, structure, and conduct of agricultural markets is, therefore, a reflection of their encompassing virtually all kinds of human decision making. Consequently, study of them must utilise the methods and skills of several social sciences and not just economics (see Helmberger *et al.* 1981, 514). Nevertheless what tends to happen is that in the study of markets, their performance, structure and conduct are simplified.

In a similar way to the study of farming systems, the study of markets is reduced to single disciplinary measures. In most cases a single economic measure of market efficiency is used, usually 'price' or quantity produced and how it is achieved in a competitive situation. It does not, therefore, reveal anything about the behavioural aspects of the market. Instead, it is assumed that the behaviour of producers, buyers and others in the market is profit maximising. In this regard the study of price trends and margins also assumes that markets are perfectly competitive with respect to price. Such analyses indicate little about policy interventions and their success or otherwise, not simply in achieving market development in terms of throughput, but in the broader sense of encouraging the growth of an agricultural/rural community rather than just a sector of the economy.

Fleming has recently criticised this emphasis on 'pricing' in assessing the performance of markets and by implication the industries associated with them (Fleming 1986). In recent studies of market development in the South Pacific the changing ratio of the value of agricultural raw materials and processed exports to the value of food imports was used as a measure of market performance in achieving developmental objectives over time (Fleming 1986; Hardaker and Fleming 1986). A positive trend indicates an improvement in market performance and implies that the food industry is contributing positively to the development of the local economy. Although still a single measure of performance it need not reflect the degree to which the marketing system approximates a perfectly competitive state and therefore efficiency. Indeed tariffs, subsidies and government intervention and monopolies positively work against perfect competition. What it might indicate is the degree to which government objectives in terms of promoting agricultural production, and thereby reducing imports, are being met.

In the case of the NT it is these interventions and objectives and their effects that are of interest, rather than the pricing mechanisms of the markets. The single measure of market performance used by Fleming might, therefore, be applied as easily to the horticultural industry and market in the NT. However, Fleming's single measure still hides the effect of government policy on promoting economic and community growth and rural settlement and reveals little about the participants, interested parties, vested interests, political pressures and the distribution of wealth in the market system.

These elements of a market's structure and conduct are hard to measure. The usual methodology used to measure structure and conduct is related to price (Harriss 1979). Market structure is taken to consist of the characteristics of the organisation of a market which seem to influence strategically the nature of competition and pricing within the market (Bain 1959, 7 in Harriss 1979, 196-197); for example the degree of seller and buyer concentration, entry conditions, the distribution of market information and its role in reducing risk, and equating price with quality. Market conduct is defined as the pattern of behaviour which enterprises follow in adapting or adjusting to the markets in which they

transact their business (Bain 1959, 9 in Harriss 1979, 198); the methods used to determine price, sales promotion and tactics employed to exclude new participants or against established rivals. It is assumed that market systems, in their structure and conduct, operate to satisfy the need to maximise profits and thus achieve efficiency through the pricing mechanism of perfect competition.

Again this assumption is not particularly helpful in understanding, in terms of human behaviour, how a market develops, how its structure and conduct evolves or how it functions and the effect of government policy. The agricultural development policy of the NT government is a case in point.

An alternative way to assess the structure and conduct of a market is to compare it with the developmental process of other existing markets. Fleming adopted this method when analysing agricultural markets in the countries of the South Pacific. As Fleming stated, this enables the essential attributes of agricultural marketing systems to be distilled (1986, 9). This can then provide a basis for explaining not only the current conduct of market participants and market structure, but also for assessing policy. The implication is that markets are dynamic, that market structure and conduct evolves from present conditions and that policy may intervene to modify that process.

Such analysis hinges on the assumption that ideally all markets develop and promote economic growth and development in the same way. Comparisons between markets highlight any divergence thus helping to understand a particular market. The same is true of policy. It would appear that in the NT it is assumed all agricultural markets have similar form, function and development. Scant acknowledgement is made of the particular behavioural conditions shaping market development in the NT. Policy decisions in the NT, therefore, to a large degree reflect the agricultural policies of the other Australian states.

It might be argued that this assumption is not unreasonable for the horticultural industry and market of the NT. There are no technical reasons (agronomically etc) why fruit and vegetables cannot be grown. Promoting horticultural development in the NT through interventions in market structure and conduct could be seen as no different from the wheat, sheep or beef industries. If it is assumed that there are no special characteristics of the NT distinguishing it from the rest of the country, promoting development of the NT economy is no different from the rest of the country (except that there are problems of distance, climate/weather, and the harshness of the environment in respect of European settlement). The essential ingredients are the same - ports, roads, raw materials, minerals and other resources, and agricultural land.

Nevertheless, that is not the case. The economy of the NT, its structure and its linkages to the rest of Australia and overseas, let alone its small size and dependence upon a small number of primary products make it unique. The failure of many agricultural development programs in the NT emphasises the point. Moreover, as already explained, the NT government in encouraging the growth of family farming is seeking some direct reversals in the Territory to what is taking place elsewhere in the national economy. Consequently an appropriate benchmark for studying the market structure and conduct in the NT might be to draw contrasts with the process of agricultural development in the rest of Australia and other countries in the Pacific.

The comparison involves dissecting out the current structure, conduct and performance of the market and relating that not only to past but also future structure, conduct and performance.

In essence the approach is as follows:

Each [market] participant responds to his environmental situation and the aggregate consequence is a change in environment. The changes in the environment contain the benefits and costs for individuals and groups which follow from behavioural response. Changes in participants' perceptions of the environment and appropriate behaviour follows from the change in the environment/the sequence continues, the system evolves. Call the total flow of consequences which follow from the organisation of the political economy [the satisfaction of agricultural product and marketing service needs], performance. Then we can say that the evolving system is driven by this basic three-term sequence of environment, behavioural responses, and performance. ... the task is to classify strategic characteristics of the environment, classify outcomes and develop meaningful hypotheses about their relationships (Shaffer 1980, 311, in Fleming 1986, 10).

The stages of agricultural market development

A historical sequence of market development was outlined by Breimyer (1976) for the now developed countries/economies (Table 1). Fleming used Breimyer's sequence of four epochs (self-sufficiency, agrarian organisation, agricultural organisation, commercial organisation), to propose a parallel set of periods for the development of agricultural markets in the South Pacific countries (Fleming 1986; 1987). It was assumed that the South Pacific countries were destined to follow the same sequence as occurred in the developed world. Fleming then modified Breimyer's sequence by adding two more stages; a fifth period characterised by the development and dominance of agricultural marketing institutions reflecting the present dominance of large public and private corporations in the agricultural marketing systems of developed countries; and a sixth period characterised by more recent innovations in organisational structure within established marketing corporations - intrapreneurship (Fleming 1986, 11-14; 1987).

Intrapreneurship is poorly defined but has long been recognised as an important element in the success of marketing systems dominated by large public institutions. The NT does not have a well developed cadre of entrepreneurs in its agricultural marketing system. Hence the need for the ADMA to take a major role along with other government institutions in agricultural marketing. The key to success, however, is to generate entrepreneurial functions within this public institution. Intrapreneurship is therefore the development of entrepreneurial attributes within large public institutions.

The pattern of agricultural market development in Australia has diverged from that model sequence as much as has market development in the South Pacific countries. The superficial similarities between market development in the NT and the countries of the South Pacific are remarkable. In each case the implied gradual transition from one stage to the next outlined in Table 1 did not take place. The pressures causing the marketing system to be transformed from one period to the next were either not present or were entirely different and whole stages were thus missed out.

Table 1
A model of the stages of market development

- A. **Pure subsistence:** trading in agricultural products and inputs restricted mostly to within the extended family. Exchange is based on prestation, reciprocal rights and obligations, usually based on kinship links. There is limited outside market contact. There is only a very limited specialisation of labour or differentiation of production and marketing tasks.
- B. **Village market organisation:** limited trading of food inter- and intra-village has developed. Communal based relationships still dominate as do exchange and prestation.
- C. **Independent agricultural producers:** there is a growing class of independent agricultural producers, middlemen and entrepreneurs. A market structure is developing based upon competition. There is also a growing specialisation of production as well as function. Decision making beginning to be based upon individuals rather than kin or community.
- D. **Commercial marketing organisation:** independent producers, middlemen and entrepreneurs are being replaced by large scale organisations. The structures associated with corporate finance now dominate to produce agri-businesses.
- E. **Dominance of the agricultural marketing institution:** large public or private agribusinesses specialising in marketing now dominate. Vertical integration through the market has taken place to meet consumer demand. These institutions are powerful influences upon government policy.
- F. **Emergence of intrapreneurship:** with the development of inertia in the institutions it is countered by entrepreneurial activity within them.

Source: condensed from Breimyer 1976, Fleming 1986.

The pressures or marketing forces (Fleming 1986, 14) precipitating change may be endogenous or exogenous to the market system in their origin. They are summarised in Table 2. More importantly elements of all the stages may co-exist and the seemingly smooth linear progression is but a simple model of an extremely complex situation. For example the process of colonisation and the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the Aboriginal population in the NT - hunter gatherers rather than farmers - makes it difficult to draw parallels with stage A and B of the model.

Nevertheless in the NT some components of the market forces of stages A and B are present and provide an important underpinning to any Aboriginal development initiative (Young 1988a, 182-200). These components are important in most third world countries, including those of the South Pacific, and are related to kinship networks and associated social structures as the underlying rationale for ways of life and behaviour. Associated with them is very often a lack of interest in capital accumulation, competition, profit or entrepreneurial success except where associated with prestation and distributive exchange. Where a commercial ethic has intruded it has either 'fixed' those factors characterising the rural/village way of life into a peasantry (Howlett 1980) as in PNG, or created a landless class of fringe urban poor (Collmann 1988) dominated by a wealthy few, as in Australia.

Table 2
The elements in the transition from one period to the next
in agricultural market development

1. **From stage A to B - pure subsistence trading to village market organisation:** the gradual specialisation in productive activities (at its simplest between men and women in the same household) leads to development of specialists in production and marketing, and thus money becomes an exchange medium. Demand may then force closer connections with other villages and the development of an incipient regional exchange/bartering economy.
2. **From stage B to C - village market organisation to independent agricultural producers:** the development of individual marketing businessmen is prompted by the emergence of producers who are more market orientated. As the system develops then some entrepreneurs emerge to find new markets. Individuals accumulate capital to finance new ventures.
3. **From stage C to D - independent agricultural producers to commercial marketing organisations:** increased sophistication in marketing takes place - vertical integration - as urbanisation increasingly separates producers from consumers. Marketing takes on a crucial role in the economy offering many entrepreneurial opportunities.
4. **From stage D to E - from commercial market organisation to dominance of agricultural marketing institutions:** growing urban dominance and a growing permanent role of government in planning leads to policy being pushed through the agricultural marketing system. Regular food supplies at good prices is a political necessity. Growing regional planning. There is increasing manipulation of demand - demand creation.
5. **From stage E to F - agricultural marketing institutions and the emergence of intrapreneurship:** as the institutions become unwieldy and suffer from inertia so they are restructured to internalise entrepreneurial skills and activity in the market.

Source: condensed from Fleming 1986.

The era of the independent agricultural producer (stage C in Table 1) is common to all developed countries but has taken a special form in developing countries - the private plantation (as distinct from the plantations of the commercial companies - stage D). Its counterpart in the NT is the private, family-owned pastoral station. Throughout Australia stage C was an imposed development brought from Europe rather than evolving endogenously in a natural sequence from stages A and B (if indeed those stages could be said to have existed at all, in that sedentary agriculture had not developed in Australia prior to 1788). The form of stage C may be crudely summarised as the result of colonialism and, it might be argued, still persists. In effect the pure subsistence system/village trading agricultural system stage of market development was penetrated by agents of a more advanced and powerful system - both its government representatives and its commercial enterprises.

The motives for such penetration were numerous - the need for cheap agricultural products and raw materials, the need for new markets for commercial and industrial products, the need for strategic bases from which to compete against other penetrating powers, and the activity of religious missionaries - but the effect was to forestall or at least control any

further transformation of the indigenous system. The development of a class of independent agricultural producers, middlemen and entrepreneurs (stage C of the market development model in Table 1), based on individual rather than clan or communal decision making was stifled. In nearly all cases the penetration involved taking large tracts of land.

The eventual result was the growth and dominance in the market of the commercial organisations typical of stage D of the hypothesised market development (see Table 1). Thus the NT was developed as a 'cattle-run' providing beef for the rest of the country. Its own internal economy was (and remains) very small and dominated by a few large commercial enterprises (stage D of the sequence). It was, in effect, a colony of settlers exporting either primary produce or profits to the metropolitan economy. They in their turn dominated the residual indigenous economy of the original inhabitants.

The effects of this colonial penetration in the NT have clear parallels with those in the South Pacific. For example food consumption patterns of the indigenous inhabitants were drastically altered and associated food acquisition strategies changed. The development of towns and settlements, initially by settlers, were encouraged and the role of labour altered by the imposition of the plantation system or pastoral leases (and a system of Aboriginal settlements and outstations). The process of agricultural market development was thus in the case of the NT dominated by external factors and indigenous systems were either destroyed, drastically changed or ignored. Likewise the laws of the colonising power were imposed upon the indigenous economy and in some cases further polarised it from the penetrating socio-economy.

The dominance of the colonial marketing/production system also brought with it a new order of class relationships and marketing links. Post-harvest developments were adversely affected and the pattern of trade was such that raw materials were exported/transported out of the country for manufacture in the metropolitan centres. At the same time new products, the production of the colonial power, were brought into the country for sale.

This process of incorporation of the NT to the Australian economy was accompanied by biases in the development of the market infrastructure. The development of roads and ports were designed to serve the pastoral industry and mineral exploitation, and not the needs of the local populace (both indigenous and settlers) - the production of food or a staple food marketing system. Conversely processed food distribution systems emanated from the ports or from the metropolitan centres. However, as in the development of the army farms some foods were produced locally, including vegetables, for domestic consumption. On the pastoral stations meat was corned, and with tea, sugar and flour represented the main ration items. Although the staple - meat - was thus produced locally previous ways of obtaining food locally - 'bush tucker' - were replaced. Dependence on refined foods brought with it associated health problems.

The manner of countering the market biases inherited by the South Pacific countries at independence from the colonial era also highlights similarities between those countries and the NT. It took the form of increased direct government intervention to develop the internal economy. In the South Pacific this intervention in agricultural market development took the form of marketing boards. Indeed many of these boards were inherited from the colonial era. In the NT the ADMA and its role in developing whole-farm systems, the production and marketing of horticultural and other crops, is characteristic of stage E in the sequence (Table 1).

Thus in the NT, as in the South Pacific, except for a shortlived time, the intervening period from A to D were largely skipped over. The agricultural marketing system of the NT is, therefore, fragmented and accentuates the differences between the various categories of its participants. The NT government, however, is not simply taking a growing role in planning and policy making within an agricultural marketing system that has evolved through some combination of the stages of market development (as outlined in Table 1) in order to pull it together. It is trying to create and impose a ready-made agricultural marketing system of a different order: one dominated by a large agricultural marketing institution. For this to be successful there must be present a large amount of 'intrapreneurial' activity within it.

The agricultural marketing system of the NT

In summary the NT agricultural marketing system can be characterised as a result of a number of interacting factors: 'colonialism' (in the sense that the NT economy is dominated by the metropolitan economies to the south); biases in infrastructural development, and not least those associated with the vast distances involved; capital investment from interstate in processing, wholesaling and transportation; the small size of its domestic market; the large degree of government intervention; its poor position and lack of market power in its trading relationships; its small population and the sparse settlement of its territory; and the dichotomy between white settlement and ways of life and those of the Aboriginal people. Tennant Creek is a microcosm of the NT economy.

Consequently it can be posited that the form of the agricultural market in the NT is an amalgam of a number of the stages outlined in Table 1. Overall, the marketing firms characteristic of period C - the independent agricultural producers, middlemen and entrepreneurs - are few in relation to those commercial marketing organisations characteristic of stage D. In Tennant Creek, except for the Aboriginal Resource Centre, there are no independent agricultural producers in the horticulture trade. Ornamentals and vegetables are purchased either from Darwin or down south and sold through retail outlets in Tennant Creek which, with one exception, are sponsored by major suppliers of irrigation equipment. Moreover these small firms and organisations are the result of exogenous influences on the agricultural marketing system rather than the result of evolving endogenously in a natural sequence from period C or B. The forms of organisation found in period B have thus persisted. And, it might be argued, hobby farming may be part of this category. Even Tennant Creek has its community of hobby farmers. Period B does not simply reflect attributes specifically affecting Aboriginal enterprise development (Young 1988a, 183-185). Periods E and F - the dominance of large public and private marketing institutions and associated emergence of intrapreneurship - are incipient. There is a possibility that a large commercial organisation will establish a table grape holding in the area. And the Aboriginal Resource Centre is seeking to expand its operations. This incipience, however, is only partially the result of endogenous processes. Again it is the push of exogenous forces - both private and public - that is promoting change in market performance, structure and conduct.

Conclusion

That the horticultural industry in the NT is dynamic is not in doubt. That it will eventually provide exports to south east Asia as well as metropolitan Australia is also not in doubt. The industry will contribute substantially to the economy of the NT. What is in question is its ability to contribute to sustained rural development - the multiplier effect. To go some way to answering that question the agricultural marketing system of the NT must be

analysed. The analysis must be not only in terms of its structure, conduct and performance as narrowly defined by analysis of its ability to match supply and demand through price, but also from a political economy point of view - the vested interests, the hidden agendas, the political interests and who benefits, who loses and why.

Any study of the development of the horticultural industry in the NT and its potential role for encouraging community development, settlement and family farming must therefore recognise the fragmented nature of the market and the industry. Assessing the multiplier effect of a commercially viable and ecologically sustainable horticultural industry in Tennant Creek can be answered through four questions. Firstly what form will the horticultural industry take, and related to this, what will be the enterprise mix - small family enterprises, market gardeners, or large owner operated plantation type developments, or managed properties belonging to national and multi-national interests, or cooperatives, government sponsored settlement schemes, hobby farms and Aboriginal enterprises? Thirdly what will be the major commodities produced - ornamentals and cut flowers, annual fruit and vegetables, or perennial crops (grapes, mangoes, cashews etc) or 'bush tucker', and fourthly for what market - the NT, interstate, overseas, Tennant Creek? Indeed the objective may simply be for self sufficiency or for specialist markets requiring either 'bush tucker' for restaurants or 'organically' grown produce. To some degree its structure might be simply viewed as bimodal, the dominant portion being those participants connected with the large public institutions. It is, nevertheless, in the form of the connections between the two parts where the potential of the system to encourage settlement and all that goes with it lies. That in turn is dependent upon a whole series of barriers to intrapreneurial development being broken down - bureaucratic inertia, lack of institutional capacity, malpractice, political interference, cultural conflicts, and inefficiency. In short only through researching the political economy of the market will an understanding be gained of the forces of change or inertia that exist and their contribution to the horticultural industry's potential for rural development.

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THE IMPACT OF TABLE GRAPE FARMING DEVELOPMENTS ON THE COMMUNITY OF TI TREE

Stuart Phillpot

Government sponsorship of farming development in the Northern Territory has always had a 'closer settlement' ethos. This ethos has been based upon the premise that closer settlement promotes regional town growth. It has been used throughout the history of Australian agriculture to justify a variety of agricultural development and land redistribution schemes, for example the Selection Acts of the 19th century, the soldier settlement programs following the two World Wars and schemes like the Ord River Project.

The record of successful establishment of a farming sector in the Northern Territory has not been high. Martin's (1983) reasons for this are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1
Factors limiting the development of agriculture in the Northern Territory

Factor	Reason
Research	How level of research limits the environmental knowledge and the response of the environment to agriculture production.
Scale	The need for large scale production to off-set low local demand.
Opportunity	Potential returns from agriculture are greater elsewhere than the NT.
Yield levels	Relative to the cost of production are low.
Transport	The NT is located at the periphery of the Australian domestic market.
Crop response	Unknown.
Managerial skills	Limited knowledge and a relatively small labour pool to draw skills from.
Land Tenure	Access to land and difficulty of land clearing is costly.
Infrastructure	Lack of infrastructure for transportation, marketing and storage.

Source: after Martin 1983

As a consequence of these limitations, agricultural and horticultural growth have been based upon an agro-economic development model. The developments in infrastructure, research and population growth that have occurred since self government indicate that some of these limitations may have changed, although the difficulties experienced by the broad acre farms on the Douglas Daly and the Katherine areas, as a consequence of highly variable wet seasons, suggest they have not.

The situation is somewhat different with regard to horticulture. Scholefield and Blackburn (1985) argue that some of these factors have been reduced, or no longer apply to the horticultural sector in the Northern Territory. As a consequence they suggest that it is horticulture and not broad scale agriculture that will establish an economic farming sector in the Northern Territory, with commensurate regional growth. The development of a horticulture industry valued at \$10.6m in 1988, from an industry worth \$1.6m in 1981, would support this argument.

This view has not been given any great consideration by commentators on agricultural development and regional growth, the tendency being to examine the effect of general agriculture or the pastoral industry. Holmes (1985, 24) in his discussion of policy issues relating to rural settlement and the pastoral zone argues that more and smaller pastoral properties of an economic size will lead to the growth of regional towns in the Northern Territory rural areas. There has been no similar discussion on the effect of horticultural holdings in the Northern Territory.

This paper examines the development of four farms in the Ti Tree district and the effect of those farms upon the community of Ti Tree. Specifically it will describe the following: a brief history of horticulture in central Australia; the process that led to the establishment of the four farms; and any identifiable multiplier effects that have occurred.

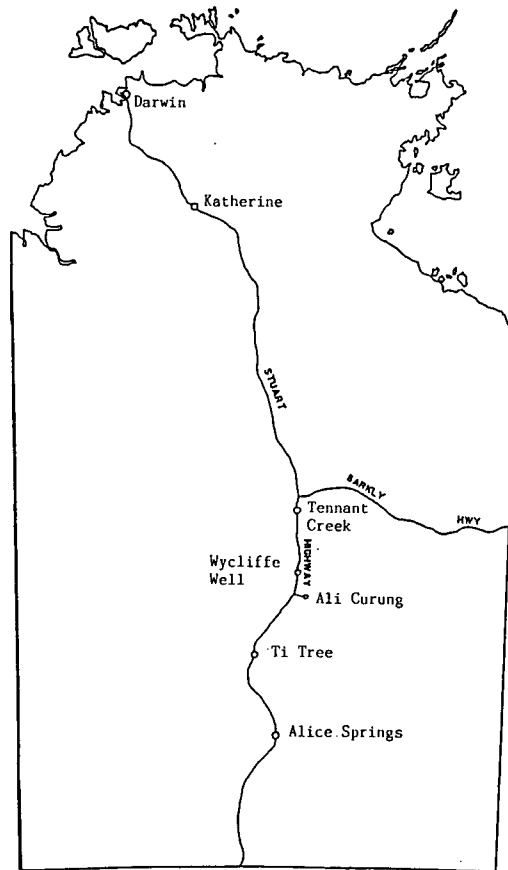
Background on the Ti Tree community

Ti Tree is located approximately 150 km north of Alice Springs and is typical of the roadside hamlets that have developed along the Stuart Highway (see Figure 1). Ti Tree was established initially as an overland telegraph stopover and latterly as a social and service centre for the surrounding pastoral properties and Aboriginal camps.

The 1986 census indicated that the population of the Ti Tree district was 269, of which 58 were non-Aboriginal, the majority of whom live in Ti Tree itself, while the Aboriginal population resides in three camps located at Ti Tree Station, The Six Mile and Woola Downs.

The community has a school that is capable of catering for 250 pupils, although the current average enrolment is 80 pupils. The community has fully reticulated water and power, the latter having been extended to Ti Tree Station, The Six Mile Camp and Ti Tree Farm. (These locations are shown in Figure 2.) Apart from the industry involved in the delivery of government services, the community also derives an economy from demands generated by tourism, pastoralism and the horticultural farms in the area, although it should be appreciated that the community's ability to meet such demand is limited.

Figure 1 *Location of Ti Tree, Wycliffe Well and Ali Curung Horticultural Projects*



Brief history of horticultural farming in central Australia

Horticulture in central Australia has always been driven by the dual needs of self sufficiency and profit. For example, until World War Two, central Australia was self sufficient in the production of fresh fruit and vegetables (Phillpot 1977). The need for a measure of horticultural self sufficiency during this period was particularly important because of the isolation of the area and the associated poor transport system. This often meant that the town of Alice Springs and the surrounding districts could be isolated from interstate supplies of fresh fruit and vegetables for several weeks at a time.

As a consequence, a farm area near the town of Alice Springs became well established. It was located approximately where the Oasis Motel is now and stretched as far as the southern side of Heavitree Gap (see Figure 3). These farms drew upon the groundwater supplies of the Todd River. Similarly the more remote pastoral properties and the remote Aboriginal communities also maintained horticultural gardens. The gardens in the Aboriginal communities had the additional function of providing work for those who would be otherwise unemployed.

Figure 2 *Ti Tree district location of Farms and Aboriginal groups*

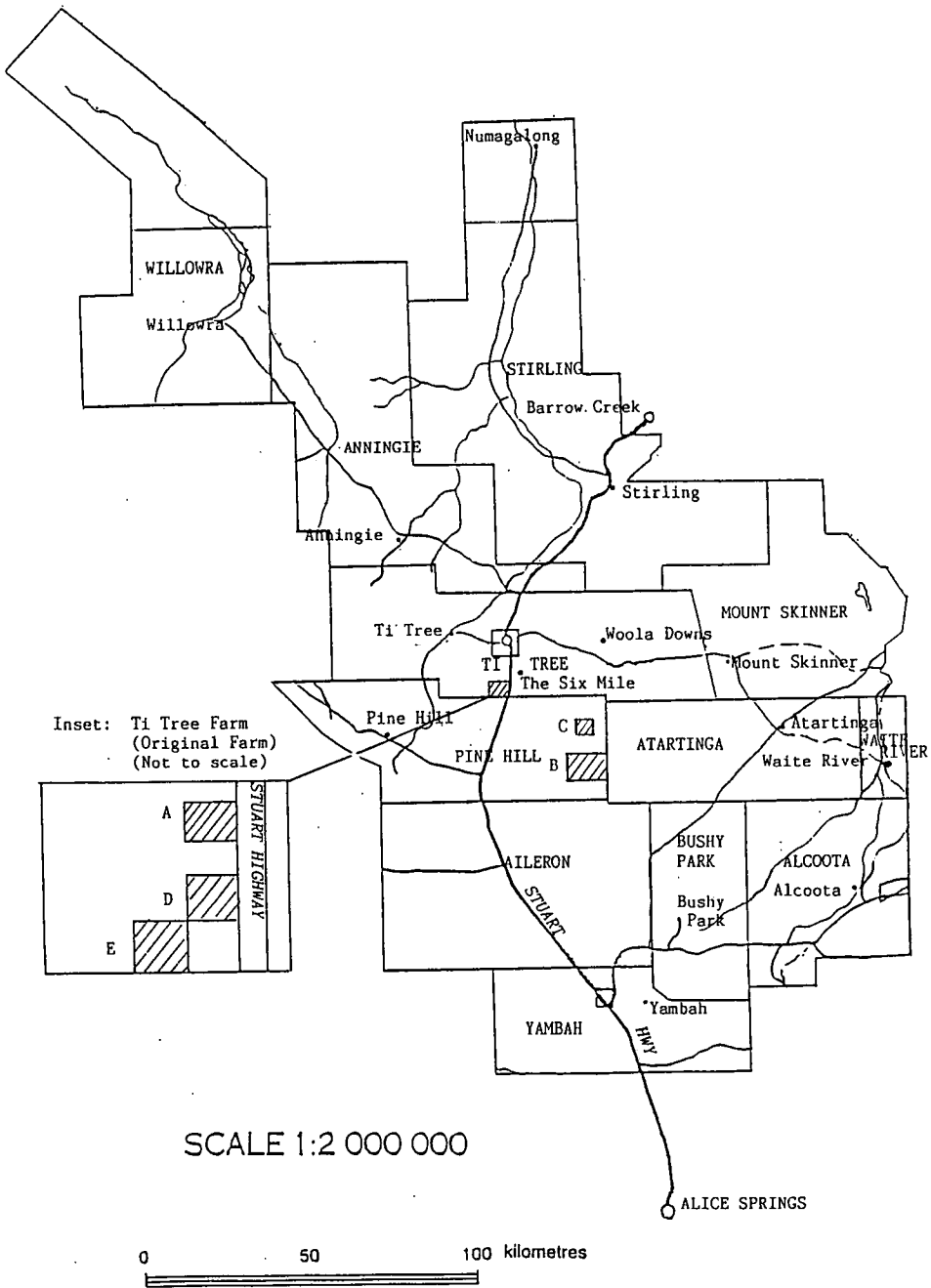
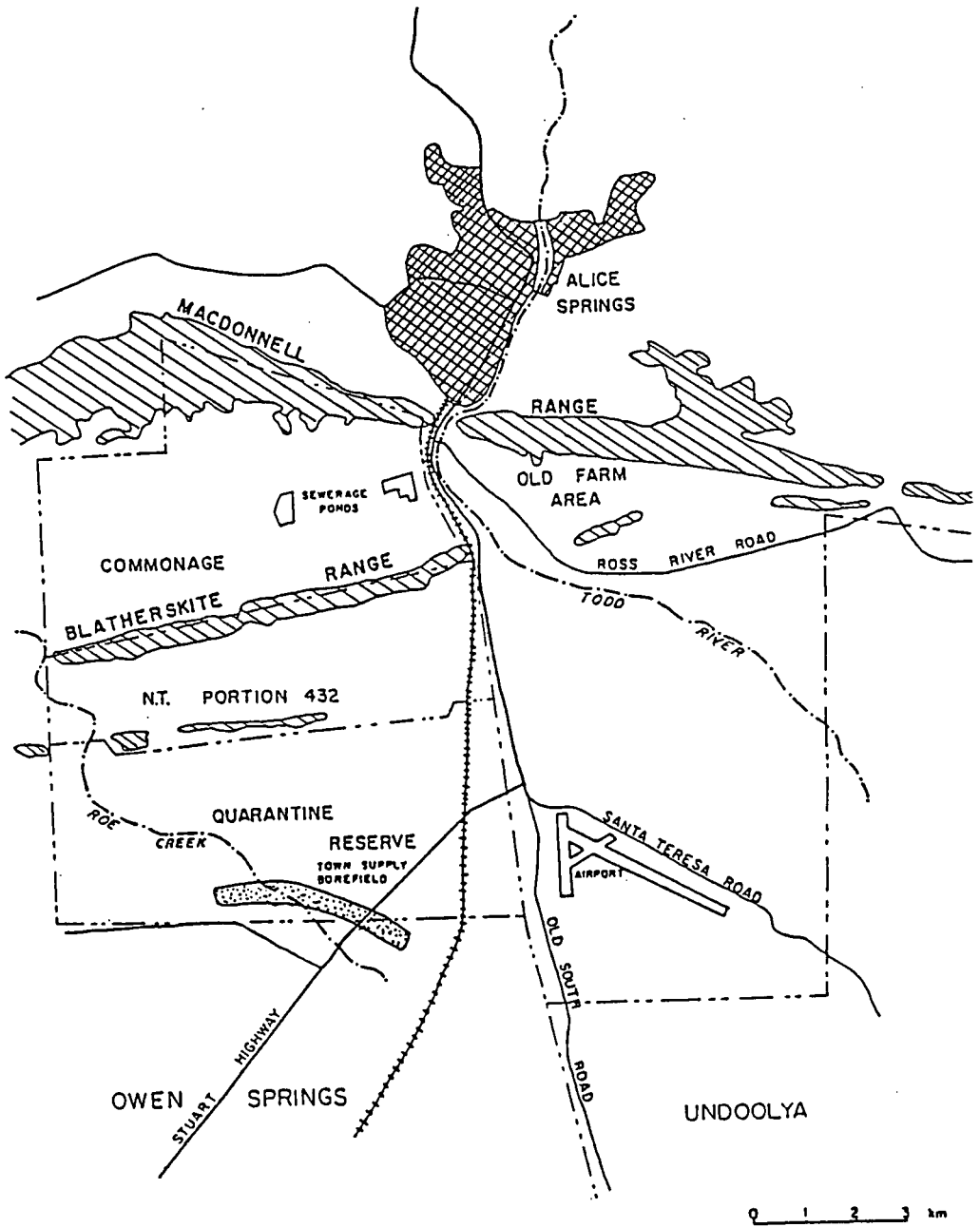


Figure 3 Original horticulture area in Alice Springs



Source: McColl and McEllister 1982

Until the 1970s the produce from these sources contributed significantly to the total NT horticultural production (Stanley 1986, 177-8; Young 1988, 106). The self sufficiency need was significantly reduced as the development of beef roads improved transport, and work commenced on reconstructing the rail link to divert it from flood prone areas. However despite these developments, the 1974 floods in central Australia isolated the area for some three weeks and all fresh food had to be supplied by air.

The changes in transportation coincided with a series of other changes that were to affect the viability of the existing horticultural projects, for example the establishment of vertically integrated national supermarkets and an improved rail system meant that local produce had to compete with national markets. The Alice Springs groundwater supplies were reduced because of an increase in town population and the development of a Social Security based cash economy in the Aboriginal communities contributed to the readjustment and reduction of horticultural production in central Australia.

The experiences of this period however defined some of the parameters that future horticulturalists would need to consider in any new developments. For example it was known that seasonal differences enabled certain crops to be grown earlier or later than in other areas and could therefore fetch a higher market price. For horticulture to avoid the risk of frost damage in central Australia, the industry had to be located above the frost zone. In addition, there had to be adequate supplies of potable water and ideally the soils should be sandy and deep draining. By 1974 there were three horticultural projects established north of Alice Springs that met these requirements: Ali Curung, Wycliffe Well and Ti Tree (see Figure 1), but only the Ti Tree Farm remains today.

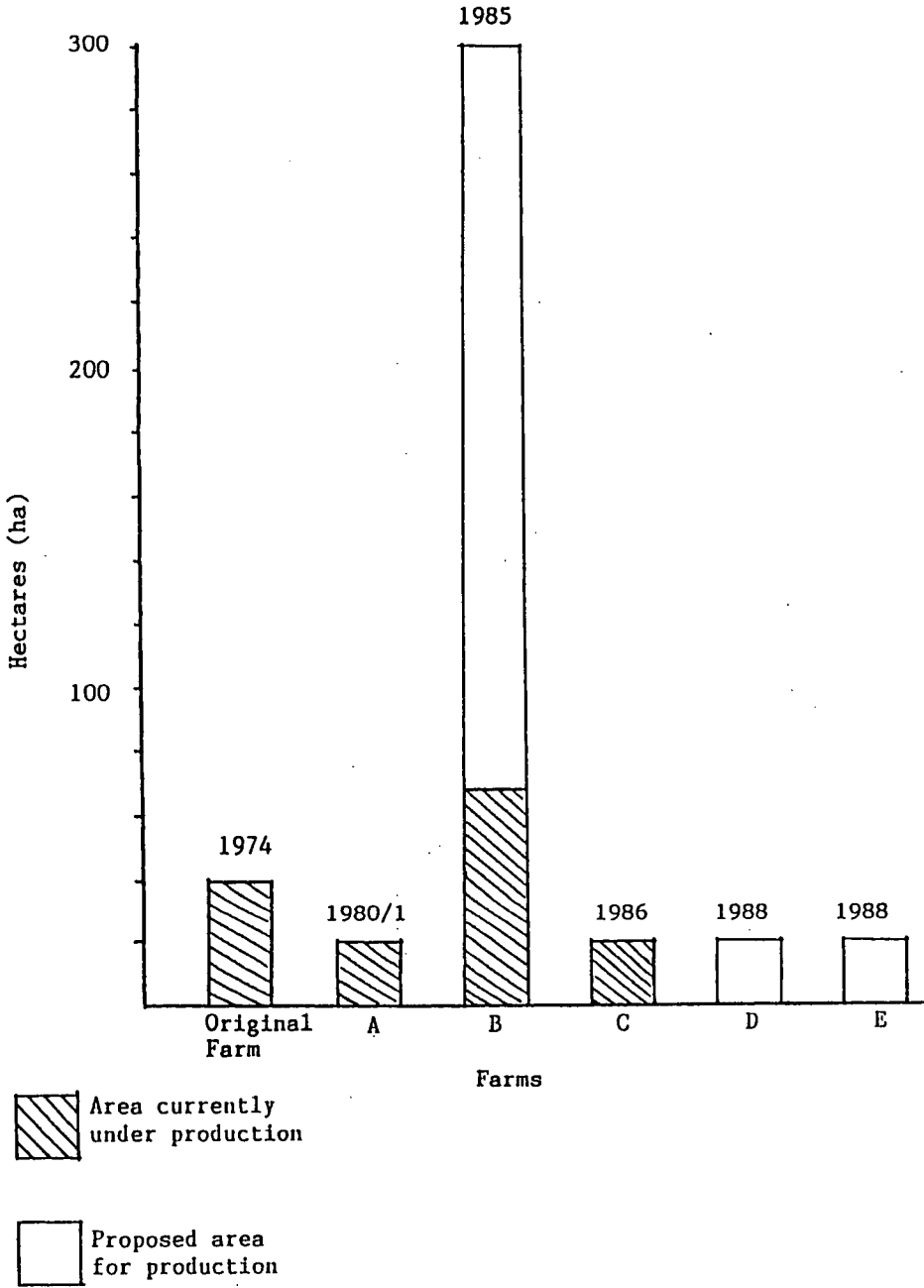
The development of horticulture in the Ti Tree area

The establishment of a horticultural farm at Ti Tree by an experienced horticulturalist was the result of several factors: the grower's extensive grape production experience; his awareness of the latest research results, and the availability of land with appropriate water supplies. Production focused on table grapes and cucurbits. This focus has varied over the last fifteen years as a variety of crops were experimented with including fodder production. However the market advantage of these crops is such that they have remained the major enterprise on the farm.

The establishment of the farm also enabled NT government agencies to maintain a research program in an area that had been identified as climatically suitable for horticulture. This program had two thrusts: the identification of water resources in the area and the search for better suited varieties of the known marketable crops as well as additional crops. As a consequence the Department of Primary Production contracted the farm to undertake a variety of crop trials. At the same time the Water Authority expanded their water investigation. The assessment work culminated in the publication of a report by McColl and McEllister (1982) on the potential of horticulture in central Australia. The report analysed in detail and identified the potential of all known areas where suitable water was available and the potential crops for each area. Because of the earlier focus of research work on Ti Tree, the report was able to clearly define an area in the Ti Tree district on Pine Hill Station, as being suitable for horticulture.

In response to these results, two developers approached the Northern Territory government with proposals to establish table grape farms in the area. Coincidental to this development, the original pioneers at Ti Tree commenced to subdivide their property. The result of this initiative was the establishment of three additional horticultural blocks in the Ti Tree district over the next three years (see Figure 2). There was a significant difference in the size of each of the new blocks. Figure 4 shows the year of establishment and the

Figure 4 Establishment date and farm size in the Ti Tree district



size of the production unit. In 1988 two further sub-divisions were made on the site of the original development. One was purchased by the NT government for research purposes and the other was purchased by a private individual as an investment development.

The intended purpose for each of the horticultural blocks established is described below.

Original farm

The original farm was established as a table grape and mixed vegetable production unit, aimed at providing early season grapes to the national market, and vegetables to the immediate district and Alice Springs. The farm's original size was 320 ha, but only 40 hectares were developed.

Block A

Twenty hectares appear to have been established as a hobby farm and speculative investment by an Alice Springs resident, with access to substantial off-farm investment. The farm has concentrated on the production of table grapes and pumpkins and has an area planted to low chill stone fruit.

Block B

A 100 sq km sized block was established by a partnership of three national table grape producers, whose intention was to establish 300 ha of table grape production, to capitalise on the early harvest and capture the high priced market in November and December. The reason for the additional area of land, other than that required for production, was to protect water access. Currently they have 67 ha under production and if the water supplies are confirmed by the NT Power and Water Authority, this will be increased to 300 ha.

Block C

This consists of a 1 500 ha land excision and was to produce grapes and fodder. The size was to allow for a possible cattle fattening operation. However on establishment, the owners concentrated on the production of table grapes and mixed vegetables. The initial establishment was 20 ha.

Block D

This was established as a research project and is limited to 20 ha. Its primary purpose is to enable evaluation of different crop varieties and development of production techniques appropriate for the area.

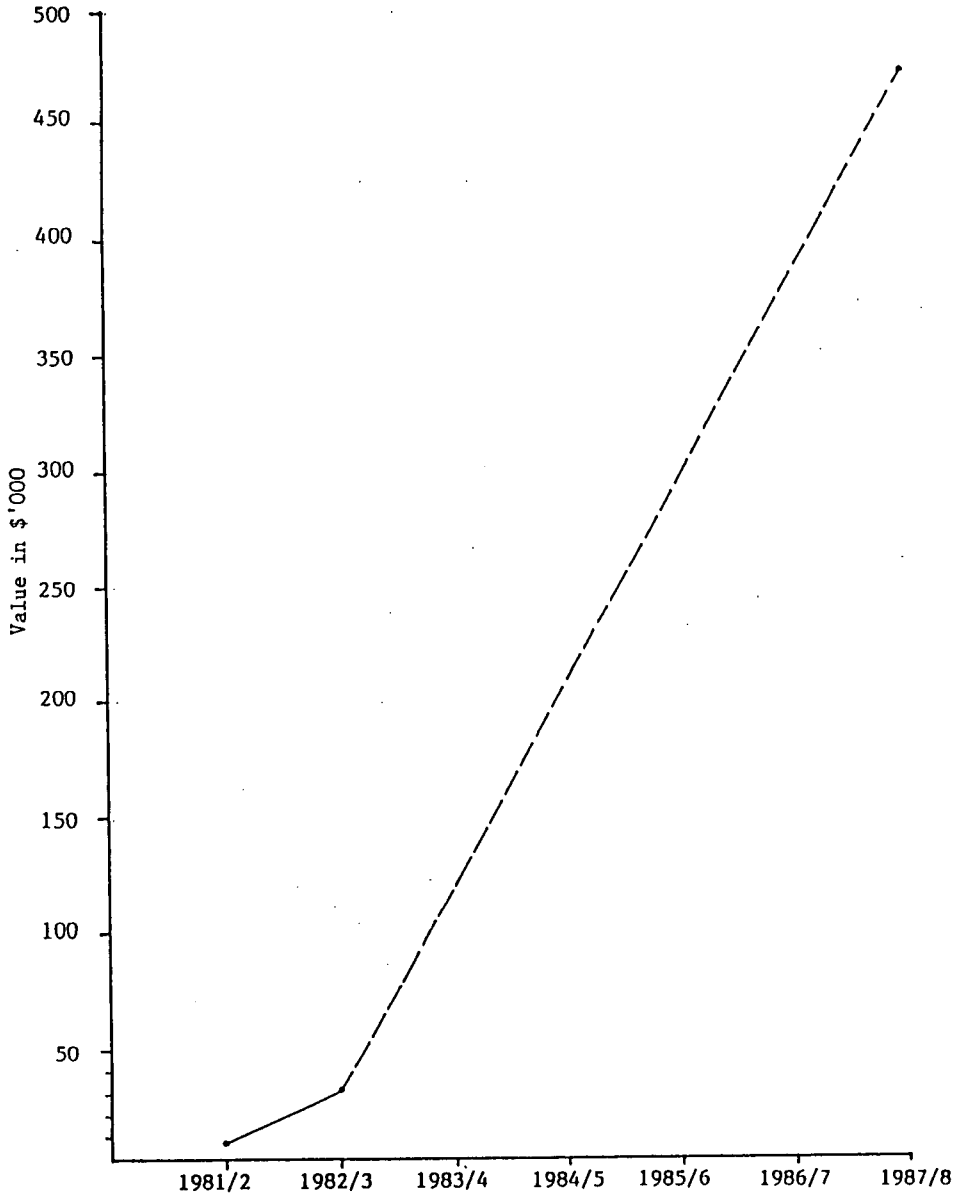
Block E

This is an investment/development project and is still in the process of development.

The expansion in the farms has had a dramatic effect upon the volume and value of production as shown in Figure 5. It has also resulted in significant physical development activity during the 1984-1985 period. As a consequence, there has been increased demand for labour and capital equipment, some of which has been drawn from the Ti Tree district.

Figure 5 Value of grape production, central Australia 1981/2 to 1987/8

- Notes**
- 1 No records were kept on the value of central Australian grape production for years 1983/4 to 1986/7
 - 2 1987/8 data is for whole NT



Sources: NT Department of Primary Production 1982, 37
NT Department of Primary Production 1984, 49
NT Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries 1988, 25

Differences between the establishment of table grape farming at Ti Tree and other agricultural developments in the Northern Territory

In the last two decades three major institutional support schemes to develop agriculture in the Northern Territory have been in operation. All of these schemes have been based upon an agro-economic development model and have involved substantial government institutional support. This has been in addition to considerable research and extension support. These support schemes are the Adelaide River Pilot Farms, the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority (ADMA), and the Northern Territory Government Crop Contract Scheme.

The Adelaide River Pilot Farms were a Commonwealth sponsored scheme established in the late 1960s. The subsequent collapse of this scheme involved a substantial write-off of capital by the Commonwealth government.

The ADMA scheme has been in operation for seven years. The NT government provided cleared land, a house and a living allowance, together with a provision for write-off in the event of crop failure. This scheme is currently being wound-up as farmers either buy their properties or sell out. The scheme is estimated to have cost approximately \$15m over the last seven years.

The Crop Contract Scheme involves the underwriting of specific crops by the NT government. Contracts are made available each year. The scheme costs approximately \$320 000 annually.

None of the above assistance applied to the farmers at Ti Tree. The institutional support by the government to the farmers has primarily been limited to the extension of information on the results of research conducted by scientific and technical staff from the Arid Zone Research Institute and the Power and Water Authority.

There has been some financial support in the form of low interest government backed loans to two farmers, and significant administrative support has been provided by the Department of Lands and Housing in arranging the release of land.

The role of Northern Territory government research and development in the establishment of the farms

The primary thrust of government support has been in the areas of research and extension, in other words agro-economic support.

This program model is based upon market analysis, crop identification, variety assessment, soil identification, water resource evaluation, commercial pilot crop production, harvest techniques, post harvest assessments, and commercial expansion.

This model has subsequently developed into a strategic development program which has since become part of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries corporate plan.

Because of the lack of available data, it is difficult to quantify any further impact of the farms. Between 1984 and 1988 no production data on the Ti Tree area was gathered by the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, the reason being the refusal of local farmers to provide the data. This refusal was largely based upon each producer's fear that the provision of such data for public purposes would give the other producers in the area a competitive advantage. This lack of data makes it impossible to identify clearly the

multiplier effects on the Ti Tree community. However, there are a number of changes in the Ti Tree community that have occurred during the expansion of horticultural production in the area.

Identifiable changes in the Ti Tree community during the development of the farms

The observable effects of changes that have occurred at Ti Tree during the establishment phase of the farms can be described as follows.

A local contractor has been used by all farmers and his business has expanded from a gross capital value of \$200 000 to \$7.5m with a commensurate increase in turnover. Furthermore the nature of the business has changed from primarily being involved in yard building and fencing, to a business with an increasing emphasis on light engineering and the original one-person operation now has two permanent and two part-time employees.

The overall employment opportunities in the district have increased, particularly at budding time (July-August) and harvest time (November-December). Only a limited access to this employment has been available to Aboriginal people in the area and then only on the basis of a subsidised training scheme. The majority of the horticultural producers appear to rely on transient labour recruited on an opportunity basis or in the case of the large plantation (Farm B), imported from their other farms in southern Australia.

The large plantation has tended to purchase all its capital requirements from South Australian suppliers, while the smaller growers purchase the bulk of their capital equipment through Alice Springs suppliers.

The location of the farms to the south of Ti Tree limits the gateway role of the community for the farms, although most young children at the farms attend school at Ti Tree and the local hotel acts as the bus depot for the area.

There has been an increase in the quantity of fresh vegetables available in the district. This is a major improvement given the often low levels of nutrition among the Aboriginal population.

There have also been some organisational changes in the community that have occurred during the development of the farms. In the late 1970s a Progress Association was formed. The membership included The Six Mile Aboriginal camp, but not the people at Ti Tree Station, nor the people at Woola Downs. The Progress Association has acted as a *de facto* community council and is currently considering adopting community government. During its existence the Association has successfully negotiated the provision of funds to construct recreational tourist facilities and an all weather aerodrome.

A growers organisation has been established (Southern Growers Association) which includes growers from Alice Springs and Ti Tree. However since the bulk of the growers reside in the Ti Tree area, the Association holds half its regular meetings at the Ti Tree school.

Conclusion

It has been suggested that in order to achieve greater regional development and growth of towns in the pastoral zone, a measure of land redistribution is necessary (Holmes 1985). The development of six horticultural blocks in the Ti Tree district represents both a change in land use and a *de facto* land redistribution.

The establishment of the farms in the Ti Tree area has been a non-institutional development deriving from entrepreneurs' desire to obtain commercial advantage from the results of research. In this process, the farms have had very little non-agro-economic institutional support. Equally they have not been burdened with any other objective than making a profit.

Some social and economic changes are discernible but because of the lack of data are not quantifiable. It appears that most of these changes accrue to the larger towns such as Alice Springs and Adelaide, rather than to Ti Tree.

In the community of Ti Tree some individual businesses have benefitted from the increase in economic activity that has occurred during the establishment of the farms. At this stage the major benefits to the community of Ti Tree appear to be in the form of increased use of the facilities and the main impact is the establishment of a research facility with residential staff.

The changes described in this paper typify the growth suggested by Holmes (1985) that would occur with a greater number of agricultural holdings in a district. The benefits in this case appear to have been limited to specific areas. The major deprived group in the area, the Aboriginal people, have not been able to capitalise on the increased demand for employment. The major discernible effect has been the increase in public investment. It also represents a successful case study in the use of an agro-economic development model.

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CANDIDATES IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN THE NT, MAY 1988

Peter Loveday

Local councils play an important part in government and administration in small towns even though central government also plays its part directly through such departments as Education, Health, Transport and Works and others. The functions of local councils are both legislative and executive, as they are in South Australia (Robbins 1977, 367), but these functions are combined in the councils rather than separated between a ministry on the one hand and the government in parliament on the other as they are in the parliamentary system. Councils differ from parliament in other ways too: they are not organised on party lines and they are not organised into 'government' and 'opposition' groups.

Indeed, it is usually said that party politics has no place in local government: 'one cannot have a political decision about a footpath, a drain, or a building application' (Painter 1975, 126, quoting a NSW Liberal MLA in 1968). However, Bowman (1983, 178) points out that 'most councillors in their private capacity are members or supporters of one or other party', that not all local government is non-partisan and that party involvement is growing slowly, chiefly in metropolitan areas.

Even when it can be said that there are no party politics in local government, this is not to say that there are no politics at all in local government. Painter points out that it is:

characteristic of the role of an alderman, then, that he is expected to intervene in the administrative process (1975, 129).

and he goes on to explain that this intervention is part of the politics which arises in connection with the allocation and distribution of goods and services at this level of government and administration. Halligan and Paris (1984, 59) see local government as 'the scene of diverse conflicts fought over a wide range of issues'. They distinguish broadly between conflicts over resources and services, which are 'typically channelled through routinised bargaining procedures', and conflicts which link local council affairs to wider politics. These might be disputes between municipalities and public authorities or between state and local governments or they may even reflect 'more fundamental social conflicts and cleavages'. For them, then, local government politics is one 'significant expression of power relationships within society'. It then becomes important to know what kind of people stand for election to local councils and what kind of people become councillors and whether there are linkages between them and political action on a wider stage.

Writing in 1981, Ron Wild contended that local government was not only bureaucratic and therefore 'inherently conservative', but it was also representative of only a 'narrow range of interests' and therefore elitist as well. He summed up by saying that the 'typical local government councillor is male, middle aged, middle class and conservative in outlook' (Wild 1981, 196-7). This paper is not concerned with the bureaucratic aspect, or with the network linkages of aldermen or other aspects of local politics but with the question of whether northern small town councillors, or candidates for council differ from Ron Wild's typical councillor elsewhere.

The survey which we carried out in May 1988 was designed to provide us with data on the kind of people who stand for election to councils. We contacted all candidates for both mayoral and aldermanic vacancies (in Litchfield for president and councillor vacancies), including those who were returned without a contest. A total of 94 candidates out of 115 (82 per cent) provided data about themselves, including education, occupation and religion, their previous electoral experience, their methods of campaigning in the local government elections and the issues they emphasised. The candidates in the supplementary election in Richardson ward in Darwin were included in the survey. Of those elected, 47 out of 50, or 94 per cent, answered the questionnaire.

Characteristics of candidates

Age

The percentages of candidates and aldermen (this term is used here to refer to men and women and to include councillors, mayors and president) in the various age groups are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Age groupings of candidates and aldermen

	Candidates %	Aldermen %
20-29	2	2
30-39	29	24
40-49	51	61
50-59	12	7
60 and over	6	6
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N =	93	46
no data =	1	1

Note: All percentages are rounded in this and following tables

Twenty six per cent of aldermen are below the age of 40 - compared with 21 per cent of South Australian councillors in 1977 (Robbins 1977, 368). A smaller proportion (six per cent) was over age 60 than in the South Australian study (18 per cent) but there was still a majority of 68 per cent in the middle age group 40 to 60 years.

Sex

In the 1977 South Australian study, an overwhelming proportion of councillors (97 per cent) were male (Robbins 1977, 367). In 1980, Australia wide, there was little change - 92 per cent were male (Walmsley 1982, 66).

The candidates in the Territory in 1988 and those returned in the election included a far higher proportion of women. One quarter of the candidates were women and 36 per cent of those returned were women. This indicates a slightly higher success rate for women candidates, but there is no way of knowing whether this is part of a trend. Research in Victoria indicates that although women have always been under-represented in local government, especially in country areas, there is a trend towards increased representation

by women, especially in urban areas and larger provincial towns (Sinclair 1987, 111, 135; also Bowman 1983, 178). Given that there were only three women out of 36 aldermen in the Territory in 1980, or eight per cent, it seems likely that there has been an increase in the number of women standing for election greater than the increase in the number of men standing, or that those standing were more successful than the men candidates.

Religion (church affiliation)

Most of the candidates answered the question asking them their religion and the data are shown in the following table.

Table 2
Religious self identification, candidates and aldermen

	Candidates %	Aldermen %
Catholic	24	33
Anglican	34	33
Uniting	9	18
Salvation Army	3	-
Presbyterian	2	2
Christian	3	2
Lutheran	2	2
None	23	9
<hr/>		
N =	92	45
No data =	2	2

These figures indicate that, on this occasion at least, candidates who did not have a religious self identification stood less chance of election than those who were adherents to one of the churches. Although candidates did not identify their religious affiliation in the campaign, it is probable that those professing no religion are perceived locally as 'radical' or 'left' in some vague sense by a predominantly conservative electorate and, in addition, that candidates without church affiliation lack a useful organisational base through which to make themselves and their interest in local affairs known and through which to build personal connections useful at election time.

Occupation and business

Over half of these people were operating businesses of one kind or another.

When men and women candidates are considered separately, 40 per cent of the men but only 19 per cent of the women operated small businesses, and in reverse, 67 per cent of the women but only 34 per cent of the men did not operate any business at all.

None of the women candidates reported housewife as an occupation. The women included four teachers, four NT government employees, three managers, three in small retail business and one each as nurse, journalist, technician, secretary and shop assistant.

The occupations reported by candidates were mostly those in the professional, managerial, technical and small business categories along with a significant proportion of public servants.

Table 3
Occupations of candidates and aldermen

	Candidates %	Aldermen %
Professional, technical	24	34
Public servant, administ	22	23
Managerial	15	7
Small business	20	30
Agric, horticulture	3	5
Other	7	1
<hr/>		
N =	89	44
No data =	5	3

Table 4
Types of businesses of candidates and aldermen

	Candidates %	Aldermen %
Professional	13	18
Managerial	14	-
Small business: retail, blder, cntrectr, gardn	35	32
Agric, horticulture	2	5
Not operating business	45	45
<hr/>		
N =	91	44
No data =	3	3

In the Northern Territory local government is almost entirely town government and only marginally encompasses rural land and occupations. Consequently there were only two farmers and one horticulturalist among Territory candidates. In South Australian and Western Australian studies which included rural councils farmers were one of the largest groups on the councils: 56 per cent in the South Australian study and 49 per cent in the Western Australian (Robbins 1977, 368; Pervan and Sharman 1979, 119). Councils in the Territory are therefore likely to be similar to the councils of provincial towns elsewhere in Australia rather than to councils of rural areas. Margaret Bowman (1976, 50) contrasts these by remarking that the local provincial town councils tend to be drawn 'from a much wider range of social backgrounds than rural councils though they are still often unrepresentative of some important groups'. She goes on to say that 'the ordinary working man, process worker, tradesman or truckie, the employee and his wife, are under-represented on these councils, and the local shopkeeper or small businessman over-represented'.

Although occupation and type of business are not very good indicators of class position, the data for the Territory suggest clearly that aldermen and candidates alike are drawn from what are popularly recognised as the middle and lower middle class positions in the general class structure of the Territory (see Jaensch and Loveday 1983 esp. ch.6).

Education

In education there was no significant difference between those returned as aldermen and all the candidates.

Table 5
Education of candidates and aldermen

	Candidates %	Aldermen %
Primary only	1	2
Attended secondary	20	18
Completed secondary	45	42
Completed college	21	24
Completed university	13	13
<hr/>		
N =	92	45
No data =	2	2

Residence

Candidates were asked to say how long they had lived in the Territory and in the town where they were living at the time of the election.

Table 6
Length of residence in Territory and town, candidates and aldermen

Years	Territory		Town	
	Cands %	Ald'mn %	Cands %	Ald'mn %
1 - 3	1	-	11	7
4 - 7	14	13	19	20
8 - 10	13	7	14	9
11 - 15	18	17	18	20
16 - 20	20	26	14	17
20 - 29	11	15	9	13
30 and over	23	22	15	15
<hr/>				
N =	93	46	93	46
No data =	1	1	1	1

These data show that aldermen in the Territory are chosen from citizens with long residence in the Territory - 80 per cent have had more than 10 years in the NT - and with fairly long residence in the town in which they stood for election. However, only a little over a quarter (28 per cent) had been resident in their present town for over 20 years whereas in the South Australian study two thirds had been more than 20 years in their area (Robbins 1977, 368).

Party membership

In local government elections in the larger metropolitan areas in Australia, political parties are increasingly important: 'all major national parties have officially supported candidates in municipal elections' in one city or another at one time or another, most often in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne (Halligan and Paris 1984, 68).

In the Territory, political parties do not nominate or openly support candidates. It is possible to speculate that the parties would gain little and suffer considerable costs if they did intervene to nominate or support candidates in Territory local government elections. Besides the financial costs, which could be similar to those for Assembly elections, there would be the political cost of increased local factionalism. The Labor party's prospects of winning council seats would be poor and the CLP's calculation may well be that 'their' kind of candidates were getting elected anyway.

The party affiliations of many candidates are, of course, well known in the local electorate from earlier contests for the Assembly or federal parliament or from local political party activity, including the writing of party columns in the local press. Just over half of the respondents in the survey said that they did not belong to a political party; the remainder - 44 per cent - told us which party they belonged to. In a Western Australian study (Wood 1979, 32) just over half the councillors were members of a political party now or in the last five years, all but three per cent of them in either the Liberal or National Country parties. These proportions are much higher than the proportion of the electorate in general who say they are paid up members of a party. National surveys carried out in the late 1960s showed that four per cent of electors were paid up members of a political party (Aitkin 1980, 403).

Table 7
Party membership of candidates and aldermen

	Candidates %	Aldermen %
Country Liberal	25	30
Labor	8	4
National	11	11
None	56	54
<hr/>		
N =	92	46
No data	2	1

Given that the proportion of Labor voters ranges from about 24 per cent in the Alice Springs urban area to about 35 per cent in the Darwin urban area (Jaensch and Loveday 1987, 216) and that six out of 25 members of the Assembly (24 per cent) are Labor, the low proportion of candidates belonging to the Labor party must be noted. Even as a proportion of those who acknowledged their party membership, candidates from Labor were no more than 18 per cent of all candidates.

These figures are similar to those obtained in Western Australia, where a random sample of 130 councillors included 49 per cent who were members of political parties. Only three per cent were members of the Labor party; 29 per cent were members of the Liberal party and 19 per cent belonged to the National Country party (Pervan and Sharman 1979, 118). In the South Australian study the level of party membership of councillors was somewhat

higher (64 per cent) than it was in Western Australia (Robbins 1977, 369). Even if there is no 'ladder' from local politics to politics at other levels (Spann 1979, 232), the high proportion of candidates who are party members suggests that for many people local politics is an important training ground for a political career which might or might not lead from local politics to some other arena. In the Western Australian study it was concluded that 'local government has been and still is an important recruiting ground for the conservative political parties' in the state (Pervan and Sharman 1979, 119). The present survey did not gather data on this question from Territory candidates.

Campaigning

The authors of the Western Australian study commented that councillors were rarely endorsed, as candidates, by political parties and that none of them acknowledged support from a political party (Pervan and Sharman 1979, 118). A small proportion, 13 per cent, did have some support from other local organisations.

To ask about party membership also leads to questions about the candidates' experience of politics and their membership of and support from other organisations.

Previous electoral experience; other organisations

In the Territory local government elections, nearly half of the candidates (49 per cent) had stood in an election before. Most of them had stood in local government elections - 41 per cent of candidates and 55 per cent of aldermen - but a few had stood for election to the Territory Assembly and two had stood in federal elections.

Table 8 shows the categories of organisations of which candidates and aldermen were members and reports the percentages of candidates and aldermen who were members of an organisation in each category.

Table 8
Membership of organisations, candidates and aldermen

	Candidates %	Aldermen %
Rural	18	9
Professional	37	43
Business	37	40
Service	46	49
Church	18	26
Charity	21	30
School	19	23
Trade union	16	9
Other incl sporting	29	26
<hr/>		
N =	94	47

It will be noted that the proportion who were members of rural and trade union organisations are lower in the alderman list than in the candidate list, while the proportions of those in the other categories are higher. For a candidate, it is a disadvantage to be a trade union member, to have no religious affiliation and to be a member of the Labor party.

Of the candidates, 17 per cent reported help from other, that is non-party, organisations. Four reported financial help, four reported help in the form of publicity, three had help with how to vote cards and 12 had help in campaigning. The cost of campaigning could be substantial, depending on the methods used and the size of the electorates. In Alice Springs where there were 29 candidacies all told, there were approximately 8000 voters and in the three contested wards in Darwin (counting the supplementary in Richardson) there were 22 candidates and well over 5 000 voters in each ward (Loveday 1988, 7,15).

The single most popular method used was the how to vote card, employed by 71 per cent of candidates. Fifty seven per cent used newspaper advertisements, 29 per cent used personal letters, many of which were distributed by hand to letter boxes, 29 per cent personally canvassed their electorates, 24 per cent had helpers in the canvass and 27 per cent reported that they had appeared on the media. When asked how many houses they had personally canvassed 49 per cent said none. Only 12 per cent used paid radio advertising and only five per cent used paid advertising on television. Personal canvassing by the candidate was judged the most effective method of campaigning by 39 per cent of candidates and 52 per cent of those who were elected. The personal letter, the newspaper advertisement and the how to vote card, in that order, were judged the next most effective methods of winning votes. (Note that the how to vote card referred to by candidates usually recommended a number one preference only, not a set of preferences. (See Loveday 1988, 15). Thirty per cent of candidates printed up to 2 000 leaflets, 24 per cent printed 2 000 to 5 000 and the rest, 46 per cent, printed over 5 000 leaflets. Of the 41 candidates who said they canvassed, 58 per cent estimated that they visited up to 200 houses, 27 per cent estimated they visited over 500 houses and the rest, 15 per cent, said they visited between 200 and 500 houses. The evidence suggests that the more serious contenders were taxed quite heavily by the campaign and that they chose the cheapest methods - which they also thought the most effective - to reach the electors.

Even so, 29 per cent of the candidates who replied (N = 86) reported spending \$1 000 or more on their campaigns. Seven per cent said they spent over \$3 000. Twenty eight per cent spent between \$500 and \$1 000, leaving 43 per cent who spent less than \$500. In the 1987 NT Assembly election, a higher proportion, 60 per cent, spent \$1 000 or more on their campaigns, but expenditures were of the same general magnitudes (Jaensch and Loveday 1987, 105).

Fifteen candidates (17 per cent of those answering) said they had financial assistance in their campaigns, the donors being a friend in business (2), resident (4), politician (1), relative (1), Aboriginal group (1), group and pressure group (3), unspecified donation (4). Two candidates said they had unspecified help from political parties on polling day, others mentioned help from volunteers and family members but the data obtained was incomplete and cannot be quantified. Only four candidates said they used any special methods to contact Aboriginal voters, three by visiting town communities personally.

Finally we asked candidates to name the three issues which they emphasised most in their campaigns. When the figures were aggregated there were 204 responses from a possible 280 responses from those who answered the question. The various issues mentioned were all listed and we then categorised them as follows. Of the 204, 17 per cent emphasised town development, 15 per cent town administration, 19 per cent town maintenance, 26 per cent town government, 16 per cent town facilities and seven per cent personal issues. The responses of those who became aldermen were not significantly different from the responses of candidates.

Conclusion

Wild's comment that local government councillors are typically male, middle aged, middle class and conservative is not wholly true of aldermen, mayors and councillors in the Territory. There are now a substantial number of women among them and at least a quarter who are below the age of 40, if that is where one places the beginnings of middle age. We do not have comparative data over time to indicate whether there is a trend in these matters, although there is little doubt that more women have been standing and standing successfully in recent years.

The survey provides only a little data on the question of class and conservatism. The occupational and business data, admittedly inadequate indicators of class, do suggest that candidates and aldermen are predominantly middle class. They are also predominantly either 'non-political' in a party sense, or from the non-Labor side in politics, that is, the side which is usually regarded as conservative. In these two respects, they are probably not much different from local government councillors elsewhere, in Wild's characterisation.

Wild's method of analysis is much more sophisticated than the headline 'male, middle aged, middle class and conservative' suggests. In his analysis he takes account not only of bureaucratic tendencies in local government administration, but also of ethnic communities and their place in local government politics, the role of citizen action groups and other local organisations, the sense of community and various other factors. From this detailed and complex web of data, he develops his remarks about class and conservatism.

In this study, we had no scope to obtain similar data, although we did touch briefly on the local organisations to which election candidates belong. But we could not discuss them and their place in local politics adequately, nor go behind them to the personal networks of friendship and personal obligation which are often so important in influencing the process of allocative decision making.

We were also unable to determine whether there was an ethnic component in the elections, although there were ethnic candidates. In the NT, the ethnic composition of the population of towns is complex and may well be a factor in local politics.

Finally, we made no attempt to determine what part Aborigines may have played in the elections. Although there are difficult questions in all towns about allocating goods and services to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents, there has apparently been little *active* Aboriginal interest in local elections in earlier years. In 1988, five candidates were Aborigines (three in Katherine, one in Tennant Creek, one in Alice Springs). Two were elected, Mai Govan in Katherine and Robert Liddle in Alice Springs. Apart from personal impressions and some fragments in the press about Aboriginal organisations in Tennant Creek supporting Chris George (*Barkly Regional*, 25 May 1988) and about disagreements in Alice Springs, little or nothing is known about the level of interest of Aboriginal voters or about the relationships between Aboriginal candidates and Aboriginal organisations.

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ELECTORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL NORTHERN TOWNS

Dean Jaensch

This paper analyses data of recent elections in small towns in Queensland (Qld), Western Australia (WA) and the Northern Territory (NT). These data were drawn from:

Qld: Longreach, Cloncurry, Julia Creek, Camooweal, Mornington

WA: Derby, Kununurra, Broome, Wyndham, Wiluna (Shire)

NT: Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nguiu (Bathurst Island), Jabiru, Alice Springs

and they include federal and state/territory election contests from 1974. A set of data from the 1988 local government elections in the Northern Territory is the base for the second theme of this paper.

The overall questions for the comparative electoral data are whether these small towns are different (i) from each other, (ii) from larger places, and (iii) from the rest of Australia, in regard to electoral characteristics. To answer these questions, the analysis focuses on a range of indices, including contestants, turnout, levels of informality, and patterns of party support across towns and over time. The last involves consistency of electoral support (such as support for the same federal candidate across towns and over time in any one town), and stability of party support (across federal and state/territory elections, and over time). The analysis also sets out to test some 'conventional wisdoms' about voting in the region, small town electoral patterns, and patterns of electoral participation and party support in Aboriginal communities.

The local government data, drawn from the Northern Territory elections in 1988, were used to examine such questions as the nature of candidatures, turnout, the impact of multi-member electorates, the effects of the generally non-party nature of local elections in the Territory, and the peculiarities of the method of relating votes to seats.

The towns

Census data provide the overall social picture of the towns under study (see Tables 1, 2 and 3).

'Smallness' involves considerable variation, from a 1986 population of 315 in Camooweal to the 22 759 in Alice Springs. On the other hand, the range is firmly within a small town category, especially in comparison with the metropolitan and provincial cities and urban centres elsewhere in Australia. The towns of Tennant Creek and Katherine virtually comprise the relevant electorate, and Alice Springs contains three electorates. In Queensland and Western Australia, the towns are only a very small component of the much larger electorates, in area and population as shown in Table 4.

Table 1
Population growth 1976, 1986

		1976(1)	1986(2)	Growth (%)
Western Australia				
Broome	(UC)	2920	5778	98
Derby	(UC)	2411	3258	35
Kununurra	(UC)	1540	3137	104
Wyndham	(UC)	1383	1329	(4)
Wiluna	(S)	*879	1832	108
Queensland				
Camooweal	(L)	282	315	12
Cloncurry	(UC)	2079	2297	10
Longreach	(UC)	3354	3159	(6)
Julia Creek	(L)	650	624	(4)
Mornington	(S)	nd	872	nd
Northern Territory				
Tennant Creek	(UC)	2236	3503	57
Katherine	(UC)	3127	5691	82
Alice Springs	(UC)	14149	22759	61
Jabiru	(UC)	nd	1410	nd
Nguiu	(L)	nd	1111	nd

Key: (L) Bounded Rural Locality
(UC) Urban Centre
(S) Shire

- Sources:**
- 1 ABS 1976 Census of Population and Housing, Collection District Summary Data, 9 page format, mf, WA, NT and Queensland.
 - * ABS 1976 Census of Population and Housing, Local Government Area Summary Data, 9 page format, mf, WA.
 - 2 ABS Census 86, Persons and Dwellings in Legal Local Government Areas, Statistical Local Areas and Urban Centres/(Rural) localities, Catalogue Nos 2468 (NT); 2464 (Qld) and 2468 (WA).

Comparisons of federal and state/territory results need to take these differences into account. They also need to take account of variations in parties and candidates across the electorates and contests. Comparing over time, and across the sub-set of federal results is the least complex. All five towns under study in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and four of the five towns in Queensland, were within one federal electorate (Kalgoorlie, Northern Territory, Kennedy, respectively), and hence each contest had the same candidates (Table 4). The sets of state/territory results, on the other hand, contain different parties, contests, and candidates within many of the towns.

In small communities, and even Alice Springs can be so described, there is a potential for local issues and personalities to be more important in electoral contests than in large electorates and large urban centres. Where a small town is defined as an electorate, or where it dominates the population of an electorate, there is enhanced potential for change

in voting patterns because of local or personality factors. The first hypothesis therefore follows. Comment on this and other hypotheses will follow later in the paper.

Hypothesis 1

Small populations may result in a degree of inconsistency and instability of electoral support.

The fifteen towns show considerable variation in population mobility (Table 2). On the basis of the proportion of the population which was in the same place of residence in 1981 and 1986, Nguiu is the most stable population, and Jabiru the most unstable, with the majority of the towns in the range 25-40 per cent who remained at the same address. The index for Australia's population as a whole was 49 per cent, for the Northern Territory 31 per cent, Queensland 43 per cent, and Western Australia 41 per cent. The towns in the Territory (except Nguiu) were below the overall figure, in Queensland near the mean, and in Western Australia slightly lower than the levels in Queensland. Overall, most towns showed a higher degree of population mobility than the state and national means.

Table 2
Population Mobility

(Per cent of population 1986 who resided at the same address 1981)

Western Australia		Queensland		Northern Territory	
Broome	27	Camooweal	35	Tennant Creek	30
Derby	29	Cloncurry	36	Katherine	23
Kununurra	25	Longreach	45	Alice Springs	29
Wyndham	34	Julia Creek	40	Jabiru	18
Wiluna	39	Mornington	50	Nguiu	80

Source: ABS Census 86, Urban Centres and (Rural) Localities, 7 page format, mf, Batch Reference Number C86.206, NT, Q and WA

The potential effects in the electoral arena of instability of population in small towns may differ across state/territory and federal contests. Population movement within the Northern Territory, for example, would result in people probably enrolling in a different Territory electorate but remaining within the same federal electorate. Overall, however, it can be argued that a high level of population mobility has the potential to result in a higher level of instability in patterns of party and independent support than where the population is more stable.

This leads to:

Hypothesis 2

The greater the instability of the population, the greater instability of patterns of party support can be expected.

Table 3 sets out the proportion of the populations of the towns of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island descent. Three towns/areas contain a majority of Aborigines: Nguiu, Mornington, and Wiluna/Meekatharra. The towns of Longreach, Jabiru and Julia Creek contained only a miniscule proportion of Aborigines, while the other towns ranged from 16 per cent in Alice Springs to 54 per cent in Camooweal.

Table 3
Proportion of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders
in Population, Census 1976, 1986
 (Per cent of total stated)

	1976(1)	1986(2)
Queensland		
Camooweal	40	54
Cloncurry	23	25
Longreach	1	2
Julia Creek	9	4
Mornington	nd	88
Western Australia		
Broome	35	25
Derby	32	30
Kununurra	21	24
Wyndham	27	41
Wiluna	*60	82
Northern Territory		
Tennant Creek	15	21
Katherine	13	17
Alice Springs	12	16
Jabiru	nd	5
Nguiu	nd	91

- Sources:**
- 1 ABS 1976 Census of Population and Housing, Collection District Summary Data, 9 page format, mf, WA, NT and Queensland.
 - * ABS 1976 Census of Population and Housing, Local Government Area Summary Data, 9 page format, mf, WA.
 - 2 ABS Census 86, Persons and Dwellings in Legal Local Government Areas, Statistical Local Areas and Urban Centres/(Rural) localities, Catalogue Nos 2468 (NT); 2464 (Qld) and 2468 (WA).

Data from these towns provide a means to test a number of questions, most based on conventional wisdoms. First, is there evidence that Aboriginal people cast their votes (i) as a bloc, and (ii) as solid support for the Labor party? Second, does an Aboriginal candidate attract solid Aboriginal electoral support? Third, as the towns with the highest Aboriginal population also show the lowest population mobility, is there evidence of stability over time in voting patterns? Fourth, as electoral education programmes (AEIS) have been in place in the Northern Territory and Western Australia for some years, but not in Queensland, is there evidence of higher informal voting in Queensland? Fifth, is there a

significant difference between 'Aboriginal' and 'non-Aboriginal' towns in regard to turnout and informal voting?

The third hypothesis follows:

Hypothesis 3

A high proportion of Aborigines will result in:

- 3.1 *a high level of support for the Labor party;*
- 3.2 *stability of Labor support over time and across state/territory and federal contests;*
- 3.3 *a high level of support for Aboriginal candidates, regardless of party;*
- 3.4 *a higher level of informal voting (with Queensland higher than Western Australia and the Northern Territory).*

Towns, electorates, incumbents

Table 4 sets out the towns, electorates, and major incumbency details for elections 1974 to 1987. These data allow for meaningful comparisons across towns and across time, and the means to test the hypotheses.

The five Northern Territory towns are all in the same federal electorate, but are in different Territory electorates (with Alice Springs containing three electorates). In Territory electorates, the CLP has won every contest (except in Tennant Creek in 1987, which was won by the former CLP incumbent under his new National party membership). On the other hand, as will be shown below, there are major differences between patterns of party support in the towns and in the larger electorates. In federal contests, the Territory was won by CLP in 1974, 1977, 1980, 1984, and by Labor in 1983 and 1987. Further, both Territory and federal contests have included Aboriginal candidates.

In Western Australia, all five towns are in the federal Kalgoorlie electorate, and four are in the same state electorate. This allows for a better comparative analysis, across towns, with the same contestants. Western Australia also includes an Aboriginal member (Bridge). Both federal (Kalgoorlie) and state (Kimberley) electorates have shown long term majority support for Labor, although the Murchison-Eyre electorate has been consistently Liberal.

The Queensland situation is different again. The federal electorate of Kennedy (four towns) has produced solid support for the National party member, Katter, while Leichhardt has 'swung' from National to Labor. In state contests, three of the towns are in the Mt. Isa electorate (Morningson only until 1983), and all three state electorates have shown long-term overall support for National Party members.

Table 4
Towns, Electorates, Incumbents

	State	Long Term Incumbent	Federal	Long Term Incumbent
	Electorate		Electorate	
Queensland				
Camooweal	Mt. Isa			
Cloncurry	Mt. Isa			
Mornington	Mt. Isa ¹	National	Kennedy ²	National
Longreach	Gregory			(Katter)
Julia Creek	Flinders			
Western Australia				
Broome				
Derby	Kimberly	ALP	Kalgoorlie	Liberal
Kununurra				1975-80
Wyndham				ALP 1980-
Wiluna	Murchison	Liberal		
Northern Territory				
Alice Springs	3	CLP		
Tennant Creek	Barkly	CLP/NAT ⁴		
Katherine	Elsey		Northern Territory	CLP 1974-83
	Katherine	CLP		ALP 1983-84
Jabiru	Arnhem			CLP 1984-87
	Arafura	ALP		ALP 1987-
Nguiu	Tiwi	CLP		
		Arafura	ALP	

Notes:

1 1974-83, Cook 1986

2 1974-83, Leichhardt

3 Three electorates

4 Tuxworth incumbent 1974-

We therefore formulate the fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4

Incumbency, especially long-term incumbency, more important in state/territory contests, will tend to be reflected in relatively stable patterns of party support.

Patterns of party support

Table 5 sets out the data for state elections in the 15 towns; Table 6 sets out complete data for all elections, including turnout and informal.

Table 5
Patterns of Major Party Support: State Elections
(Per cent of first preference votes)

Queensland		1974	1977	1980	1983	1986
Camooweal	ALP	13	18	25	27	15
	NAT	61	68	58	70	68
Cloncurry	ALP	39	47	41	54	46
	NAT	44	47	51	45	54
Longreach	ALP	53	55	52	48	46
	NAT	47	45	48	52	54
Julia Creek	ALP	30	33	37	34	32
	NAT	65	65	63	59	68
Morningside ⁽¹⁾	ALP	12	6	80	87	64
	NAT	58	9	14	12	36

(1) 1977 Independent 85%

Western Australia		1974	1977	1980	1983	1986
Broome	ALP	46	55	55	64	64
	LIB	52	43	43	36	36
Derby	ALP	44	47	49	58	59
	LIB	53	51	49	42	41
Kununurra	ALP	20	34	37	39	49
	LIB	70	62	59	62	51
Wiluna	ALP	35	30	38	38	34
	LIB	65	70	45	52	44
Wyndham	ALP	39	51	51	62	68
	LIB	58	48	48	38	32

Northern Territory		1974	1977	1980	1983	1987**
*Alice Springs	ALP	26	37	26	24	25
	CLP	68	52	60	69	44
Jabiru	ALP	na	na	17	29	32
	CLP	na	na	78	68	41
***Katherine	ALP	27	nc	18	23	26
	CLP	69	48	53	52	46
Nguiu	ALP	3	62	65	65	na
	CLP	92	35	32	21	na
Tennant Creek	ALP	54	28	29	36	16
	CLP	47	46	57	65	14

Notes:

na not available; nc not contested; *Total of all electorates in the town

** National party contested for first time: Alice Springs 21%, Katherine 29%, Jabiru 27%, Tennant Creek 42%; ***Independents (1977) 52%

Table 6
A Summary of Elections 1974-1987

Note: Party support - per cent of formal votes
 Informal; voted - numbers of ballot papers; persons
 Other - 3/3 indicates 3 per cent obtained by 3 candidates
 A single number indicates only one candidate

Western Australia

	FED 74	STATE 74	FED 75	FED 77	STATE 77	FED 80	STATE 80	FED 83	STATE 83	FED 84	STATE 86	FED 87
Broome												
ALP		46	51	46	55	47	55	59	64	58	64	55
LIB		52	47	49	43	43	43	34	36	33	36	34
NAT				1								4
OTHER	n.a.	2	1	5/2	3	10	2	7/2		9/2		8
INF		38	12	32	33	16	31	19	38	61	43	73
VOTED		591	650	697	678	806	837	888	922	1194	1206	1570
Derby												
ALP	51	44	47	45	47	40	49	51	58	51	59	56
LIB	46	53	52	50	51	49	49	33	42	42	41	34
NAT				*								4
OTHER	4/3	3	1	5/2	3	11	2	17/2		7/2		7
INF	19	31	11	24	24	31	22	13	34	58	18	71
VOTED	658	736	653	580	538	712	630	651	656	880	849	1056
Kununurra												
ALP	27	20	28	26	34	29	37	35	39	42	49	37
LIB	69	70	71	62	62	64	59	57	62	49	51	47
NAT				1								9
OTHER	5/3	10	2	12/2	5	7	5	7/2		9/2		7
INF	9	24	4	18	35	13	13	10	37	50	22	50
VOTED	422	394	441	489	505	597	542	642	696	925	874	1012
Wiluna												
ALP	35	35	26	16	30	27	38	50	38	38	34	49
LIB	60	65	73	65	70	64	45	48	52	58	44	41
NAT				5								6
OTHER	6/3		1	14/2		9		3/2	11	4	22/4	3
INF	12	13	5	21	9	11	9	6	10	22	26	32
VOTED	305	329	310	263	268	282	262	280	339	340	347	402
Wyndham												
ALP	48	39	51	42	51	45	51	68	62	59	68	56
LIB	50	58	48	51	48	47	48	25	38	36	32	29
NAT				1								5
OTHER	3/3	3	2	7/2	1	8	1	7/2		5/2		10
INF	7	26	12	9	25	14	18	9	28	52	21	20
VOTED	330	398	366	314	299	445	366	404	377	463	484	397

Table 6 (continued)

Queensland

	FED 74	STATE 74	FED 75	FED 77	STATE 77	FED 80	STATE 80	FED 83	STATE 83	FED 84	STATE 86	FED 87
Camooweal												
ALP	20	13	24	9	18	12	25	7	27	26	15	14
LIB		26					14			6	17	14
NAT	80	61	75	87	68	85	58	81	70	68	68	72
OTHER			1	3/3	14/3	3	4	12	4			
INF	3	1	0	1	2	2	1	0	0	1	4	4
VOTED	96	91	97	88	86	70	82	57	79	81	82	100
Cloncurry												
ALP	38	39	40	45	47	39	41	45	54	47	46	51
LIB		17					7			3		6
NAT	62	44	59	52	47	58	51	52	45	47	54	43
OTHER			2	3/3	6/3	3	1	3	1	3		
INF	13	20	12	19	26	14	18	12	26	59	29	78
VOTED	815	867	818	826	843	895	834	957	946	1118	972	1204
Longreach												
ALP	47	53	52	51	55	51	52	52	48	53	46	52
LIB										2		6
NAT	53	47	47	45	45	46	48	45	52	44	54	42
OTHER			1	4/3		3		3		2		
INF	32	18	13	23	16	30	21	24	15	69	44	84
VOTED	1830	1728	1582	1580	1617	1676	1686	1481	1501	1636	1694	1405
Julia Creek												
ALP	35	30	40	41	33	41	37	40	34	37	32	36
LIB		5										7
NAT	65	65	57	55	65	56	63	57	59	58	68	57
OTHER			2	4/3	2	3		3	6	3		
INF	4	3	4	5	3	7	3	1	3	25	11	26
VOTED	343	364	267	248	246	270	302	305	373	426	357	395
Mornington												
ALP	48	12	17	46	6	28	80	31	87	61	64	59
LIB		30	20				6			3		12
NAT	17	58	28	49	9	58	14	69	12	31	36	28
OTHER	35		35/2	5	85	14	*		1	5		
INF	12	45	17	5	45	58	24	26	12	34	9	43
VOTED	195	236	173	166	262	282	341	293	346	321	303	298

Table 6 (continued)

Northern Territory

	FED 74	STATE 74	FED 75	FED 77	STATE 77	FED 80	STATE 80	FED 83	STATE 83	FED 84	FEDSTATE 87	FEDSTATE 87
Alice Springs												
ALP	37	26	39	34	37	34	26	37	24	31	40	25
LIB	60	68	60	57	52	54	60	57	69	63	44	44
NAT											16	21
OTHER	3	6	1	10/2	12	12/6	14	6/4	7	6/3		11
INF	111	323	150	208	134	279	178	211	189	313	481	219
VOTED	4745	4233	4649	4514	5040	5677	5920	5676	7616	7310	7912	7227
Jabiru												
ALP						25	17	36	29	37	48	32
LIB						57	78	62	68	58	34	41
NAT											18	27
OTHER			N.A.			18	4	2	3	5		
INF						30	5	9	8	28	26	16
VOTED						249	111	389	443	574	510	429
Katherine												
ALP	41	27	34	37	-	34	18	40	23	39	39	26
LIB	57	69	65	55	48	55	53	56	52	56	43	46
NAT											18	29
OTHER	2	5	2	8	52/2	12	29/4	4	26	6		
INF	21	18	24	19	10	57	22	47	30	88	153	70
VOTED	862	914	891	930	942	1233	1256	1372	1463	1931	2330	1738
Ngulu												
ALP	29	3	28	42	62	46	65	42	65	60		
LIB	66	92	67	54	35	21	32	36	21	23		
NAT												N.A.
OTHER	6	5	5	5	3/2	34	3	22/4	14	17/3		
INF	44	10	97	66	98	88	85	124	17	82		
VOTED	225	256	348	312	326	470	489	465	437	503		
Tennant Creek												
ALP	45	54	43	36	28	38	29	48	36	46	44	16
LIB	51	47	56	49	46	48	57	42	65	51	27	14
NAT											29	42
OTHER	3		1	16	25/2	14	14	10		3		28
INF	20	35	24	47	34	81	39	56	31	74	107	50
VOTED	580	635	818	791	878	995	988	987	1112	1397	1465	1207

The following table attempts to classify the results in the towns in terms of consistency and stability of party support.

Stable CLP/LIB/NAT dominance

Qld : Camooweal, Julia Creek
WA : -
NT : Alice Springs, Jabiru, Katherine, Tennant Creek

Stable 'balanced'

Qld : Cloncurry, Longreach

Sources:

Increasing ALP support

QI : -
WA : Broome, Derby, Kununurra, Wyndham
NT : -

Non-Labor dominance; significant 'other' support

Qld : -
WA : Wiluna
NT : -

'Turnover' of support patterns

QI : Mornington Island
WA : -
NT : Nguiu

The first point to emphasise is the stable hegemony of the CLP (and in 1987 the National Party) in four of the five towns in the Northern Territory, and of the National Party in Camooweal and Julia Creek. Despite the significant differences in population across these towns (Table 1), and the high level of population turnover, especially in the Northern Territory, the patterns of party support over 14 years and 12 elections, over differing party contests, and in both state and federal arenas, show anti-Labor hegemony. As well, this stability was evident in Julia Creek with only four per cent Aborigines, in four towns in the Northern Territory ranging from five per cent to 21 per cent Aborigines, to the 54 per cent proportion in Camooweal (Table 3). The last clearly poses a question concerning the stability of anti-Labor support in a town where Aborigines are in a majority, especially in comparison with Mornington (Q), Nguiu (NT) and Wiluna (WA), where patterns of party support are significantly different. One reason for Camooweal may be the small population: a population of only 315 in 1986 is clearly not the best statistical base.

Before analysing the impact of Aboriginal population, some comment is needed on the other 'patterns'. Cloncurry and Longreach show party patterns which would be expected in a marginal electorate anywhere in Australia. These are the 'large' towns of the Queensland set, and show an occupation and industry profile in the 1986 census which partly explains the 'balance'. In comparison with most of the other thirteen small towns, Cloncurry and Longreach are 'urban' centres as well as rural towns, and exhibit patterns of party support evident in the much larger country towns elsewhere in Australia.

Four towns in Western Australia showed a trend of increasing Labor support, a trend evident across the time-line of state and federal contests, which turned relatively safe Liberal towns into equally relatively safe Labor towns over the fourteen years. The probable explanation is in the incumbent since 1977 - Ernie Bridge - Labor and Aboriginal. Each town (Table 3) contains at least a quarter of the population Aborigines, and up to 41 per cent in Wyndham, and these would be expected to offer strong and stable support for Bridge. It should be noted that the trend to Labor is generally less strong in the federal contests in these towns.

The Wiluna shire, incorporating the town of Meekatharra, could be included in a set showing non-Labor dominance and stability. In only one election, federal 1983, did Labor achieve a majority of formal votes, and on only one other occasion, federal 1987, did Labor achieve a plurality.

Four towns in the Northern Territory show not only a remarkable stability of voting patterns over fourteen years and twelve elections, but also show a stable anti-Labor hegemony. This was most obvious in Alice Springs where Labor has never even come close to winning a plurality against anti-Labor, and where Labor has never won a seat since the inauguration of the Legislative Assembly in 1974. These four towns show the highest population mobility of the fifteen under analysis (see Table 2) which makes both the stability, and the anti-Labor hegemony, surprising. A major survey in these towns in 1982 (Jaensch and Loveday 1982) identified one reason, that a significant proportion of the survey sample retained Labor party identification in national politics when they moved to the Territory, but shed this, or even changed to the CLP, in the context of Territory electoral politics.

There were some variations in the patterns in these four towns. In Katherine, for example, independent candidates were important in 1977, 1980 and 1983 Territory elections. In Jabiru, the 'company' town for the Ranger mine, non-Labor was consistently strong, but the dominance was more evident in Territory elections. Tennant Creek was the least stable of the four, with Labor actually achieving a plurality in 1974 (Territory) and 1983 (federal) elections. As well, independent candidates eroded major party support in 1977 and 1987 Territory elections.

Both Katherine and Tennant Creek emphasise a factor which should not be underestimated in small-town electoral politics - the potential influence of personality. This may be more important in the Territory, where a party system was a late development in comparison to the rest of Australia (see Jaensch 1979). The two-partisan contests of Labor v anti-Labor did not develop in the Territory until the 1970s, and the dominance of Labor and CLP remains weaker than elsewhere. Results in two Territory electorates emphasise the weaker party salience. In Tennant Creek, the CLP incumbent since 1974, Ian Tuxworth, held the town in the 1983 election. In 1987, he contested the electorate for the National party and won, with about two-thirds of Labor's usual support transferred to an independent. In Katherine, in the Assembly elections in 1977, Pat Davies stood as an independent (and almost won the seat of Elsey), while the combined vote of the two independents outpolled the incumbent CLP member in the town. In 1980, four independents (including the mayor) together won 29 per cent of the vote, while in 1983 a single independent won over one quarter of the votes. Personality and local factors clearly played an important role.

Alice Springs, on the other hand, provides a different pattern, one better described as 'party based', in the pattern of electoral politics 'in the South'. The pattern of Labor, and anti-Labor support over the twelve elections, across three electorates, and through a range of candidates, shows remarkable stability.

In four towns there was a majority of Aboriginal people (Table 3): Camooweal (54 per cent), Wiluna Shire (82 per cent), Mornington (88 per cent), and Nguiu (91 per cent). But there was no pattern of consistency of party support across the towns, nor of stability of party support in three towns over time. Camooweal does show very strong and stable National party support over the twelve elections. The other three show varying degrees of instability in the 14 year period.

In Nguiu (Bathurst Island), the comparison is only possible to 1984, as the votes in 1987 were amalgamated with other polling places. In the four Territory elections, 1974 to 1983, the voters of Nguiu changed from massive CLP support in the first election of 1974 (when they played a large part in the election of an independent), to strong and consistent support for Labor candidates in the following three elections. In 1977, the independent had joined the CLP, and in 1983 the community was placed by a redistribution into the electorate of Arafura, held by popular local member, Bob Collins, who is married to a local Aborigine. The patterns of Labor support were by no means as strong in federal elections - in fact, in the federal elections of 1980, 1983 and 1984, the Labor party did badly in Nguiu. In 1980, also, the candidates included Yunupingu, the Aboriginal chairman of the Northern Land Council, who won 34 per cent of the vote cast at Nguiu. That is, an Aboriginal candidate received just over one third of the votes cast in a community that was 91 per cent Aboriginal.

Results in the Wiluna Shire in the five state elections showed stable minority support for Labor, at the level of only one third of formal votes, but with decreasing Liberal support as independent and minor party candidates intervened. In federal elections, there was an increase in Labor support overall.

Mornington provides the clearest example of instability in voting patterns over time. There is no evidence of consistent patterns of party support, even within the sub-set of state/federal elections. In federal elections, Labor support varied from 17 per cent in 1975 to 61 per cent in 1984. In Queensland state elections, Labor support ranged from six per cent in 1977 to 87 per cent in 1983. Instability also characterised National party support, from a low of only nine per cent in 1977 (state) to a high of 58 per cent in 1974 (state) and 1980 (federal). Further, independent candidates were very successful: 35 per cent in 1974 (federal), 35 per cent for two candidates in 1975 (federal), and in 1977 (state) independent candidate Gavenor won 178 of his total of 233 first preference votes from Mornington.

The data provide a means to compare the levels of informal voting across the 15 towns, across differing numbers of candidates, and across towns of varying Aboriginal populations. The overall patterns of informality across most of the towns, and for most elections, reflected patterns evident elsewhere in Australia, ranging from one to six per cent in most contests. This general range was apparent across different contents, although there was some suggestion of a correlation between an increased number of candidates and a slight increase in the proportion of informal votes.

In terms of the four towns containing a majority of Aboriginal voters, there were wide differences. Wiluna and Camooweal were in line with patterns over the set as a whole; in fact, Camooweal showed the lowest level of informal votes. Mornington, however, showed significantly higher levels of informal voting, up to 21 per cent of total votes in the 1980 (federal) election, while in some elections, for example the three percent in 1977 (federal) and 1983 (state), the levels were no higher than the overall average. The town of Nguiu, however, showed the highest levels of informal votes - 30 per cent in 1977 (Territory) - and generally above the levels in Mornington.

The hypotheses revisited

1. There is consistent evidence in these electoral data to support the assumption that small populations, especially small communities which are isolated, provide an environment where personality, local issues, and idiosyncratic factors play a more important role than in elections in large centres. The stability of apparently 'party-line' support in the large town of Alice Springs provides a 'control'. This is not to say that the inevitable result in small town electoral politics is instability. Local issues and personalities can also be associated with relatively consistent support over time, as in Julia Creek and Longreach.
2. There is little evidence of any correlation between population mobility and instability of patterns of party support. Alice Springs, for example, which showed the third highest level of mobility with only 29 per cent of the people residing at the same address in 1981 and 1986, showed the greatest stability of voting patterns. And, at the other end of the scale, in Mornington, and especially Nguiu, with relatively (and in the latter very) stable populations, there was inconsistency and instability in voting patterns.
3. Conflicting evidence is obvious in regard to these hypotheses.
 - 3.1-2 None of the four towns with high Aboriginal populations showed a pattern of strong Labor support over the whole set of elections. In Nguiu, there was an apparent shift to stable majority Labor support from 1977, but only in Territory elections. Mornington showed a significantly higher, and more consistent Labor support in state elections, but with generally lower support in federal elections. Camooweal and Wiluna showed consistent majorities or pluralities for anti-Labor parties.
 - 3.3 There was evidence, from the few such contests, that Aboriginal candidates could expect to win significant support from Aboriginal voters. But there was no evidence of an 'Aboriginal vote' for Aboriginal candidates, as shown by the candidature of Yunupingu in Nguiu in 1980. His support in Nguiu was higher than in the other four towns, but he received only one third of the total votes in Nguiu (see also Loveday and Jaensch 1984, 56-62).
 - 3.4 The data do not support any general hypothesis of higher informal voting in Aboriginal populations. Camooweal, with 54 per cent Aborigines, showed the lowest rate of informality of the fifteen towns. Further, the higher informal levels at Nguiu (where electoral education programmes had been in place for some time) than at Mornington (where no such educational programme was available) suggests that some other explanation is required.

One reason may be an increasing readiness of Aboriginal electors to use their right for assistance in voting. Such assistance should decrease the number of informal votes, and there is some evidence to suggest that this is the case (see Loveday 1987, 144-5) in the Territory and NT federal elections in the 1980s. According to observers, in the 1987 election the Nguiu people tried to vote without assistance, but there are no data to allow comparisons, for example, with Mornington and other towns.

4. This hypothesis is possibly the most difficult to test. In federal elections, long term incumbency occurred in the Queensland electorate of Kennedy (Katter, National Party, 1974-1987). Ian Tuxworth was the Territory member for Barkly (Tennant Creek) 1974-1987. In Western Australia, some comparison is possible across four towns in the Kimberley electorate where Ernie Bridge was the Labor incumbent 1977-1986. In Queensland, a similar comparison is possible across three towns (Camooweal and Cloncurry 1974-1986, Mornington 1974-1983) in the Mt. Isa electorate where there was stability of incumbency at federal (Katter, National Party) and state (Bertoni, National Party) levels. Longreach also was represented by Katter and by Glasson (National) over the whole period. Julia Creek's representatives were Katter and Katter.

The data provide for very different interpretations of the hypothesis. The instability of Mornington can be compared with the stability of Camooweal and Cloncurry, suggesting that there is more to be considered than incumbency. On the other hand, the increasing support for Bridge (Labor) in Broome, Derby, Kununurra and Wyndham suggests that incumbency is important. Longreach showed very stable support for the incumbent Katter. In Tennant Creek, Tuxworth was able to carry his personal support with him as he changed parties.

There is no doubt that an 'incumbency factor' exists; establishing its level is the problem. There is some evidence that there is a correlation between the extent to which the election contest is 'exclusive' to the town and the potential advantage of incumbency. Where an incumbent represents a relatively small population in a relatively small area, especially in a rural, isolated situation, then that member would have the opportunity to build up his or her own local organisation, to establish networks, and to strengthen personal relationships. Such is the case in the NT elections in towns like Katherine and Tennant Creek. In contrast, where the town comprises only a small part of a larger electorate, the incumbent may not have been able to develop the local organisation, networks, and relationships to the same extent. The Queensland towns are such cases. Further, in the federal electorates, there would be the least opportunity for development of such local networks.

Local government elections - Northern Territory 1988

Local government, like political parties, is a relatively recent development in the Northern Territory. Darwin was granted its Council in 1957, Alice Springs received its local government in 1971, and Katherine (1978), Tennant Creek (1978), Palmerston (1985) and the Litchfield Shire (1985) have been created as local governments since then.

As elsewhere in Australia, local government in the NT is subordinate to the Territory legislature. As elsewhere, local government in the Territory receives its funds from local rates, and Territory and federal taxation. As elsewhere, local government is perceived as a 'pathway' to a political career. In Queensland, for example, Hughes (1980, 116) found that over one third of the members of parliament had served in local government. But there is a problem for intending political careerists in the Territory: there are few vacancies in the Legislative Assembly. The factors outlined above - small electorate populations, and the consequent potential for local contacts, organisations, personalities and issues to be more important than in the larger electorates elsewhere - have resulted in a high level of stability of representation in the Legislative Assembly. In the 1980, 1983 and 1987 Assembly elections, only one, three and zero incumbents were defeated.

Further, given the fact that the Labor party holds only one seat within local government boundaries, the possibilities of a political career through local government as a first step are virtually confined to the CLP. As well, political parties have not officially intervened in local government elections in the Territory. In this, the NT has followed the South Australian, rather than the NSW or Queensland models where parties are firmly entrenched in council contests.

Election system

The first point requiring emphasis is that unlike local electorates elsewhere in Australia, three of the six local government areas in the Northern Territory contain a greater population than the Assembly electorates. In Alice Springs, local representation is based on a single electorate (enrolment 10 501 in 1988) which is divided into four separate electorates for the Assembly. In Darwin, the mayoral contest in 1984 (uncontested 1988) was based on an estimated enrolment of 26 945 and each ward contained an enrolment equivalent to almost three Assembly electorates. The Litchfield Shire also contains more electors (4 180 for president in 1988) than the mean Assembly electorate enrolment. Hence, in contrast to the situation in other states (excepting the Brisbane City Council), the larger local areas in the NT may, in fact, decrease the importance of local networks and issues.

The non-party nature of local government contests has at least two implications for comparison with the party-dominated contests in federal and state/territory elections. Without the influence of party labels and party identification we could expect less consistency and less stability in local government elections. Second, it makes more complicated the arrangement (by candidates) and use (by voters) of a preferential voting system. Without parties, the preferences lack an in-built political structure. This may also have a flow-on into levels of informal voting, especially in the absence of how to vote cards in the more complex contests.

The NT local elections include compulsory enrolment and compulsory attendance - usually referred to as compulsory voting. In this regard, the NT has followed Queensland and New South Wales rather than allowing a voluntary vote as is the case in the other four states. This allows a comparison of turnout to be made: where the voluntary voting states rarely achieve a turnout of 40 per cent, a turnout of 70 or 80 per cent is achieved in New South Wales and Queensland (ACIR, 9), and the mean turnout for the Northern Territory in 1988 was 71.9 per cent.

One major difference in the NT is that between the election counting system for the council contests, and that used for parliamentary elections (for details, and a summary history of the development of the local electoral system, see Loveday 1988). The Legislative Assembly and House of Representatives elections are based on the same preferential system in single-member electorates, local government included multi-number electorates and a unique, and complex method of translating votes into seats. The council elections, in fact, combined single and multi-member electorates, and this provided an element of complexity for the voters who would be familiar with the normal preferential voting system in single-member electorates, and the means and implications of preference distributions, but the mechanics of preferences and distributions in the multi-member electorates were probably not understood by most voters. This may result in variations in the levels of informal voting, between local government and other elections, and within the local government results.

The counting system, in the multi-member contests inaugurated in 1988, involved a series of discrete counts. The first vacancy was filled under the same process as in filling a single vacancy, with preference distributions if necessary. The second, and subsequent vacancies, were treated as a new contest, using the same first preference votes as a starting point. The candidate elected on the first count was deleted, and his or her first preference ballot papers were distributed according to the second preference. The count then proceeds, with preference distributions if necessary, and is repeated (from first preferences) until all vacancies are filled.

The whole process, especially in contests such as Alice Springs where 24 candidates nominated for ten vacancies, was complex for voters, candidates and counters. It was especially complex for voters who attempted to 'plan' their preferences, and for candidates who attempted a 'planned' distribution of preferences for their supporters. Voters were required to record a full list of preferences which may have resulted in relatively high levels of informal votes in the more complex contests.

A second important difference was that the local government contests were not party contests. The candidates generally nominated as independents and most did not form groups (formally or informally) with other candidates. Voters therefore had no party labels to guide them, especially in the more complex contests, and candidates had some difficulty in producing how to vote cards which would be meaningful to the voters and would produce the overall results they wanted.

A third complication was a result of the right granted to candidates to nominate for both mayor (president in Litchfield) and alderman. A dual candidate who was elected as mayor (counted first) would then have to be deleted from the aldermanic count, and his or her second preferences distributed before the proper count could begin. For some voters, then, their second preference was, in effect, their first choice for alderman, but they would not know this at the time of voting.

Contestants and turnout

The local elections in 1988 produced a large number of candidates, and in some multi-member contests produced a complicated decision for the voters. But the ratio of candidates to vacancies was, in fact, lower than that for the Legislative Assembly. In 1987, in the latter, 85 candidates nominated for the 25 single-member electorates, with the five candidates in Fannie Bay producing the most complex contest. The 51 vacancies in the local elections in 1988 produced 117 candidates, with the most complex single-member contest the seven candidates for the supplementary election in Richardson ward. Most single-member contests, however, produced a similar ratio of candidates, 37 for eleven vacancies, as the Assembly contests.

Where the contests became complex for candidates, voters, and counters, was in some multi-member electorates: 11 candidates for three vacancies in Lyons ward, 12 and 14 for six vacancies in Katherine and Tennant Creek, and 24 candidates for ten vacancies in Alice Springs. But the overall ratio was less than in Assembly and House of Representatives elections. One reason is the fact that some of the Council electorates are much greater in population than the Assembly electorates, in contrast with the situation elsewhere. A second reason is that the Assembly contests, involving political parties, would produce at least three party candidates in every electorate, where the non-party nature of the Council elections would not contain this 'automatic' contest. In other states, the influence of party controls the numbers of candidates to a considerable degree - in preselection and party rules excluding intra-party contests, in discouraging independent

candidates by the party-dominated environment, and with party financial support is available to party candidates - hence, local government elections often produce a higher ratio of candidates. In the Northern Territory in 1987-88, the impact of party reversed that.

Table 7 sets out the candidates, contests and turnout in the 1988 elections (Loveday, 1988). One mayor (Darwin) and five aldermanic vacancies were filled uncontested. In Richardson ward, however, only two candidates nominated for three vacancies, resulting in a supplementary election at which seven candidates nominated for the remaining vacancy.

Dual candidatures occurred in all electorates except Darwin (where the mayoral vacancy was uncontested), and in Tennant Creek all five mayoral candidates also nominated as aldermen. Katherine, Tennant Creek, and especially Alice Springs with 24 candidates for 10 vacancies, provided the most complicated contests for candidates (in terms of preferences and the design of how to vote cards) and voters.

There are problems in attempting to compare turnout data for Assembly and Council elections. The first, and most important, is the combination of rolls which are out of date, and of the mobility of the population which rapidly, and certainly over the year between the elections, makes the rolls more out of date. Even with directly comparable contests, that problem remains. The second problem is that the Council turnout data had to be calculated on different bases. In Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, and Katherine, the turnout for mayoral and aldermanic elections was the same in each town. In the Darwin region, however, the data were aggregated as follows: Palmerston, mayoral/aldermanic; Litchfield, president only (turnout in the wards varied from 57.4 to 75.2 per cent); Darwin, turnout in three of the four wards for aldermanic elections (Mayor and Waters ward uncontested).

Given these problems, the comparative data are surprisingly similar for three of the towns:

<u>Town</u>	<u>Turnout (Per cent of enrolment)</u>	
	<u>Council 1988</u>	<u>Assembly 1987</u>
Alice Springs	76.2	68.6
Tennant Creek	72.4	65.8
Katherine	75.7	73.2
Darwin	63.3	76.5
Mean	71.9	71.0
(Mean NT turnout 1987)	(71.2)	

Sources: Jaensch and Loveday 1987; Loveday 1988

The dissimilar result in Darwin is probably due to the absence of a mayoralty contest which would have been expected to generate more publicity than the aldermanic contests. As supporting evidence for this assumption, it needs to be noted that turnout for a mayoral contest in Darwin in 1981 was 74.8 per cent, and was estimated at 87.0 per cent for 1984 (Loveday 1988, 33).

The analysis of informal voting showed a clear correlation between complexity of contests and levels of informality. In all but one single member contest - mayoralties, and aldermen in Litchfield - the informal vote ranged from four per cent to a high of six per cent in Howard Springs. On the other hand, the supplementary election in Richardson

Table 7
Candidates, contests, turnout Local Government, NT, 1988

Mayor/President	Candidates	(Dual)	Roll (N)	Voted (N)	(%)	Formal (N)	Informal (N)	(%)
Darwin	1		4180	2972	71	Uncontested	150	5
Litchfield	2	(1)	2999	2182	73	2097	85	4
Palmerston	5	(2)	2745	2078	76	2000	78	4
Katherine	4	(2)	1741	1260	72	1204	56	5
Tennant Creek	5	(5)	10501	8001	76	7655	346	5
Alice Springs	5	(3)						
Aldermen		Candidates						
Darwin: Chan	3	4(-)	8406	5579	66	5067	512	10
Lyons	3	11(-)	7735	5368	69	4872	496	10
Richardson*	3	2(-)				Uncontested		
Waters	3	3(-)				Uncontested		
Richardson*	1	7(-)	8707	5746	66	5185	561	11
Palmerston	6	8(2)	2999	2182	73	2044	138	7
Litchfield:								
Humpty Doo	1	3(1)	1539	1157	75	1097	60	5
Noonamah	1	2(-)	699	401	57	382	19	5
Howard Springs	1	2(-)	1517	1121	74	1057	64	6
Darwin River	1	1(-)				Uncontested		
Katherine	6	14(2)	2745	2078	76	1886	192	10
Tennant Creek	6	12(5)	1741	1260	72	1173	87	7
Alice Springs	10	24(3)	10501	8001	76	6893	1108	16

(* Supplementary election required)

Source: Loveday 1988

ward produced 11 per cent informal. The multi-number elections generally produced higher levels of informal voting, ranging from seven per cent in Tennant Creek to 16 per cent in Alice Springs.

Direct comparisons with the 1987 Territory Assembly elections are not possible, due to the different bases of the elections. But some broad comparisons can be made (Table 8). The levels of informal voting were at similar levels in the single-member Assembly and mayoralty contests, but were much higher in the multi-member contests.

Table 8
Levels of Informal Voting, NT Assembly (1987) and NT Local Government (1988) Elections

(Per cent of votes)

	1987	1988	
	Assembly	Mayor	Aldermen
Alice Springs	3.0	4.3	13.8
Tennant Creek	4.4	4.4	6.9
Katherine	4.2	3.8	9.2
Darwin	3.4	nc	10.4*

Sources: Jaensch and Loveday 1987, Loveday 1988.

nc no contest.

* mean of three contested wards in Darwin

These data provide evidence to support a further hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5

The more complex the contest, and the less salience of party, the higher will be the levels of informal voting.

Preferences and Results

(The following paragraphs are drawn from Loveday 1988)

In any contest for a single vacancy including more than two candidates, there was advantage for candidates who were able to come to an agreement to exchange preferences (and advantage for voters in terms of 'guidance'). The advantages became greater in the multi-member contests, although once the contest is as complex as in Alice Springs, arranging groupings so as to derive the maximum benefit from preference exchanges becomes very difficult, and was not seriously attempted at any significant scale (see Loveday 1988 for the discussion on which this section is based).

Of the 29 candidates in the six single-member contests in which more than two candidates nominated, 21 used how to vote cards. In multiple-vacancy contests, omitting Alice Springs, 34 of the 49 candidates issued HTV cards. In Alice Springs, 24 candidates nominated for 10 vacancies, and two HTW cards were distributed: one reportedly from a ratepayers' association; and one on behalf of rural voters and candidates.

Table 9 provides the preference distributions in selected cases where candidate groupings were formed and how to vote cards were issued. Katherine provides a classic case of the benefit of preference exchange. Incumbent alderman Mehay, and candidate Jim Forscutt contested the mayoral contest against incumbent Davies and outsider Donnellan, and exchanged preferences. The second preferences of the fourth candidate Donnellan divided almost evenly, and sufficient voters for Mehay followed the how to vote card to elect Forscutt.

Table 9
Selected Preference Distributions

Katherine (Mayor)

	First Pref					
Davies	647	(+24)	671	(+135)	806	
Donnellan	77	-				
Forscutt	847	(+29)	876	(+318)	1194	(elected)
Mehay	429	(+24)	453	-		

Darwin (Chan Ward - 3 vacancies for aldermen)

First Count: First Pref

Black	1762	(+138)	1900	(+663)	2563	(elected)
Elix	1378	(+498)	1876	(+628)	2504	
Land	783	-				
McCallum	1144	(+147)	1291	-		

Second Count

Black	1762	-				
Elix	1378	(+1225)	2603	(elected)		
Land	783	(+319)	1102			
McCallum	1144	(+218)	1362			

Third Count

Black	1762	-				
Elix	1378	-				
Land	783	(+2486)	3269	(elected)		
McCallum	1144	(+654)	1798			

The second example in Table 9 is a contest for three vacancies between four candidates. The counting process therefore involved three stages, excluding each elected candidate in turn. In this contest in Chan Ward, three candidates formed a group and exchanged preferences, and the benefits of such a decision are clearly evident. The ungrouped candidate, McCallum, won 1 144 of the 5 067 first preference votes (23 per cent) and came third in this primary count. However, the preference exchange between Black, Elix and Land was followed by the overwhelming majority of their supporters, ensuring that Land, with only 15 per cent of the first preference votes, defeated McCallum to win the third seat.

This attempt to benefit from groupings and/or exchanging preferences depended, in the final analysis, on two factors: on the exchanging candidates receiving sufficient votes so as not to be immediately excluded (that is, not to run third in a three person contest); and on the voters being willing to follow the suggested preferences. The last, of course, can only be 'guesstimated'. In the examples in Table 9, these factors were attained with the planned results. Table 10 provides data for a contest where the groupings and exchanges did not have the planned result.

Eleven candidates nominated for the three aldermanic vacancies in Lyons ward. Three sets of exchanges were arranged: Gurd, Wheeler, Thomas; Fuller and Ellis; Robertson, Mangan and Ellis. As well, Truman identified himself with Osgood and Fuller as members of the Small Business Association, and issued a how to vote card placing Mangan, Ellis and Robertson in last position. The three groups secured 29, 30 and 29 per cent respectively of the first preference votes, hence, even with a full following of how to vote cards, no group had sufficient support within the group to secure election.

Table 10
Summary of Preference Distribution, Lyons Ward
(Three vacancies, exchanging candidates shown)

First Vacancy		First Pref		Final		Second Vacancy	Third Vacancy
Gurd		695	739	1240	-		2904(el)
Wheeler	(20%)	301	398	-			
Thomas		324	348	-			
*Fuller		756	799	1261	2954(el)		
Ellis	(30%)	398	415	-			
Robertson		916	944	1340	1918	2029	1968
Mangan	(29%)	408	429	-			
Galton	(17%)	759	800	1031	-	2843(el)	
*Osgood		92	-				
*Truman		151	-				
Wilson		72	-				

*Members of Small Business Association
(el) elected

In the count for the first vacancy, after distribution of preferences from the three least supported candidates, the question was whether the exchanges would hold. Thomas and Wheeler second preferences did flow strongly to Gurd, Mangan's flowed to Robertson, and Ellis' second preferences also flowed to Fuller. Hence the exchanges had been accepted by a majority of voters within the groupings. The three vacancies were filled by two candidates who had participated in a preference exchange (Gurd, Fuller), and one who had not (Galton). The second and third counts also showed patterns of majority voter acceptance of how to vote cards. However, this complex contest did not exhibit the benefits from exchanging preferences as in the more straightforward contest in Katherine (Mayor) and Chan ward. In such complex examples as Lyons, the success of

groupings/exchanges rests on the combined vote of the candidates concerned being, in total, at or near an absolute majority of total votes.

Conclusions

The data analysed in this paper have shown evidence of a strong 'neighbourhood effect' (Johnston 1977, 4) in small towns in north Australia. In summary, this 'effect' suggests that a neighbourhood political socialisation becomes sufficiently important to provide electoral outcomes which are different from patterns evident in the wider context of which the local area is a part. This tendency of local effects to warp a broader political pattern has been identified in other environments (see, for example, Butler and Stokes 1969, 144ff; Taylor and Johnston 1979, 232ff), and is evident at various levels in Australia. At the territory/state level, for example, analysts have consistently suggested that the different environments of these sub-national regions produce different patterns of political socialisation and different political outcomes (see: for the NT, Jaensch and Loveday 1983; for Queensland, compare Charlton 1983 with Hughes 1980; on Western Australia, Reid n.d.).

The small towns analysis suggests a strong influence of a 'neighbourhood effect' at the micro level. That is, effects of 'different milieux' which confront the electors, 'both those raised and socialised' in the local areas, and 'those who move into them from other environments' (Butler and Stokes 1969, 233). The latter point is emphasised in the Northern Territory (Jaensch and Loveday 1983) where a significant proportion of immigrants take on different political attitudes.

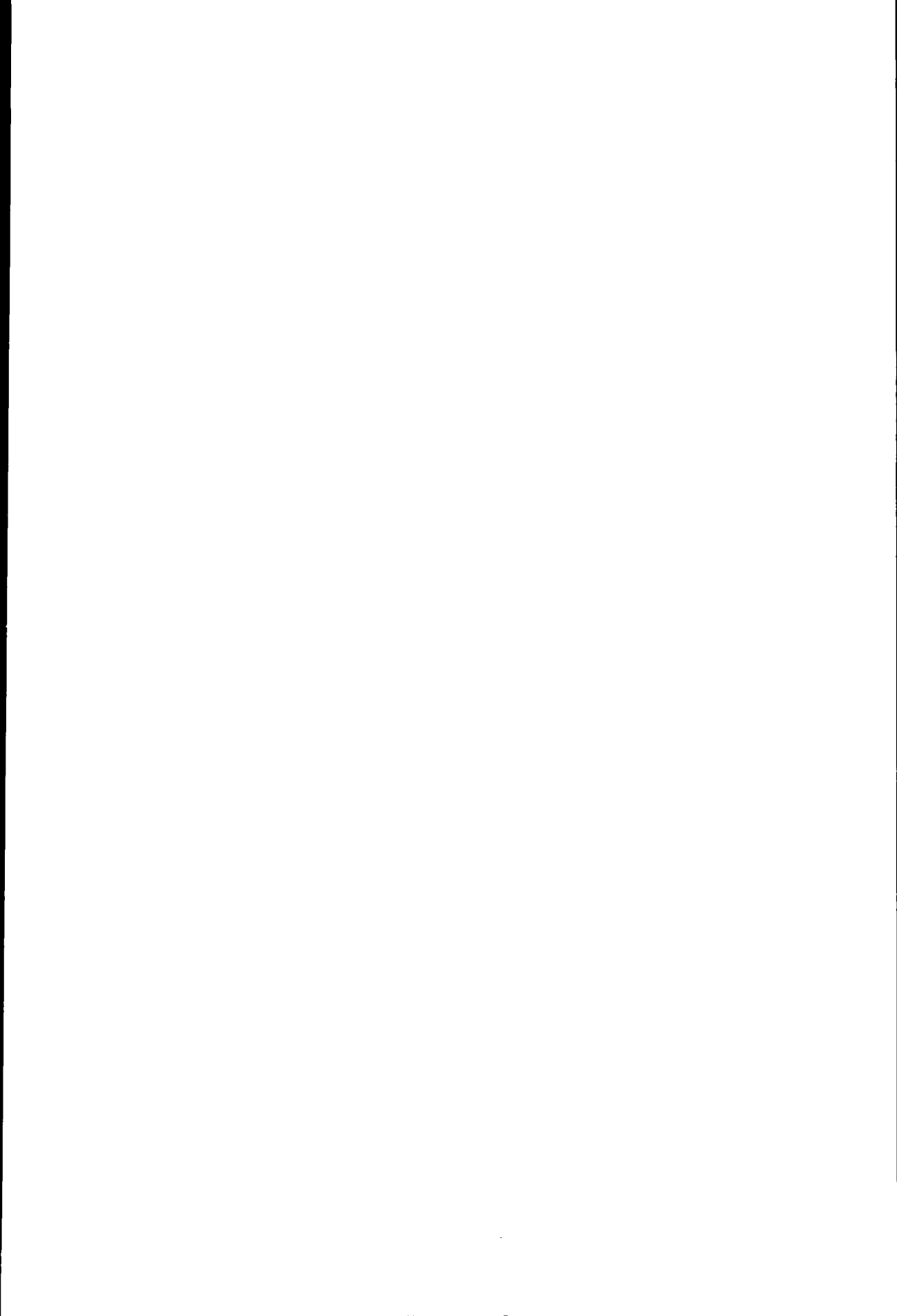
This 'neighbourhood effect', described by Johnston (1977, 17) as 'environmental contagion', offers at least a partial explanation of the patterns of party support in the small towns. In Alice Springs, for example, the high mobility of the population but the stability of patterns of party support, could well be a product of 'environmental contagion'. Equally, the evidence of change, whether from dominance by one party to dominance by another (as in Derby and Wyndham, state elections), or in terms of massive shifts of opinion (as in Nguiu and Mornington) is that of 'neighbourhood effect'.

Each of the fifteen towns studied has its own distinctive characteristics, both in its nature, and in electoral patterns. There is no uniformity of patterns of aggregate electoral behaviour simply because they are all small towns. The analysis has identified some of the possible factors explaining the differences; only local field-work, preferably with longitudinal studies could go further into explanations. The data to suggest that each individual pattern is significantly different from the patterns in the longer context - whether territory, state, or national - but whether the small towns studies are different from small towns 'in the north' needs more research.

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