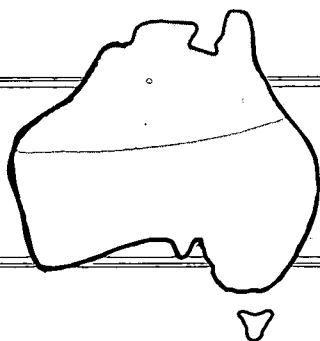
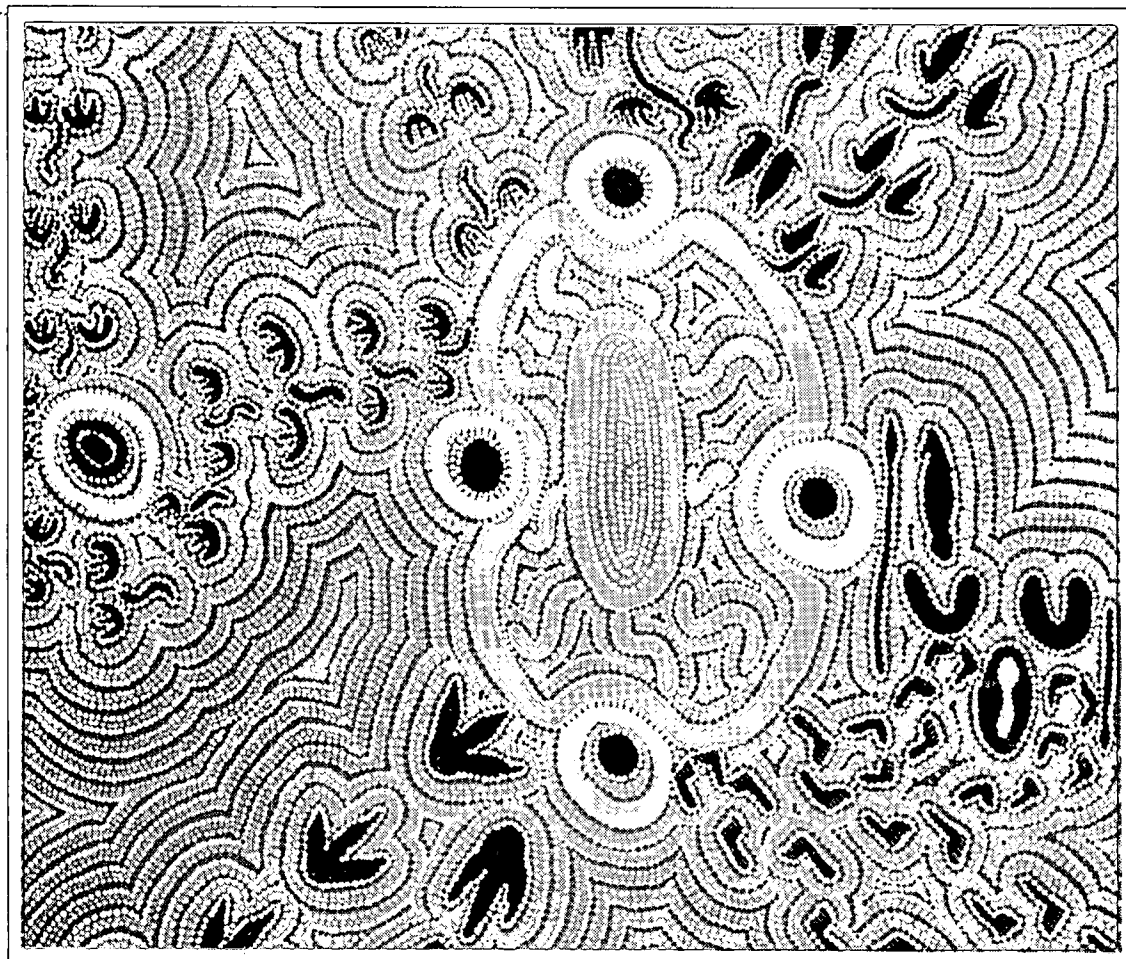


Elspeth Young
and
Kim Doohan

**Mobility for survival: A process
analysis of Aboriginal population
movement in Central Australia**



Australian National University North Australia Research Unit
Monograph
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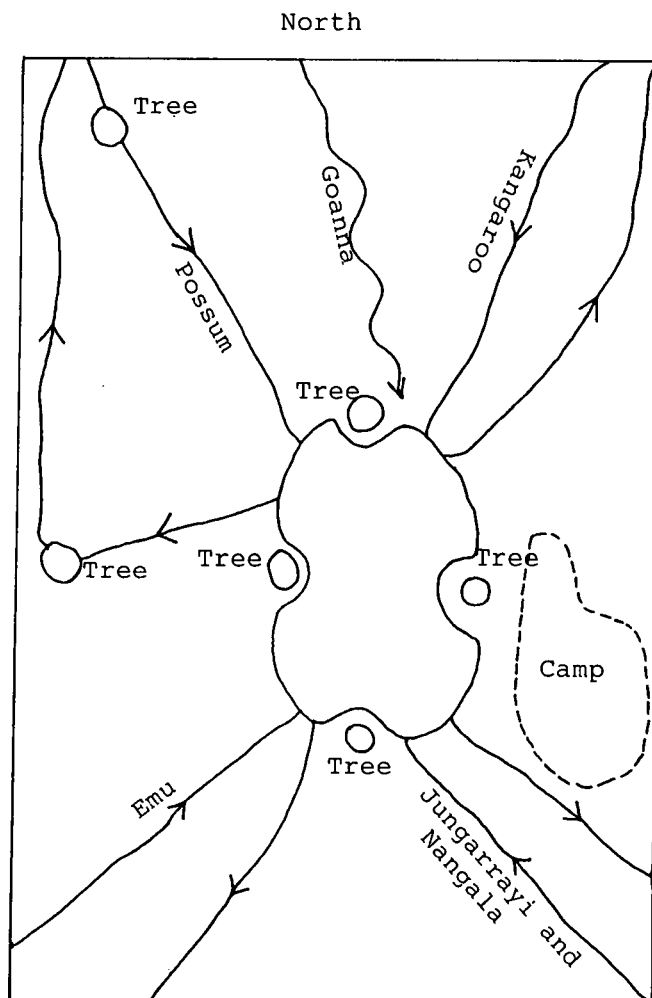
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This is a photograph of a painting by Jeannie Nungarrayi Egan (1989) from Yuendumu. It shows a dreaming place called *Yurnipirli*, a waterhole about 25 kms south of Yuendumu. This place is important to two Warlpiri groups - J/Nungarrayi and N/Napaljarri, to which Jeannie and her father's family belong; and J/Nampijinpa and J/Nangala.

The track on the picture, which is essentially an Aboriginal map of that country, are those of possum, goanna, kangaroo (all associated with Nungarrayi), and emu (associated with Nangala). The track of people are those of Jungarrayi and Nangala, who look after the country. This painting illustrates how Warlpiri people relate to the physical features of their country through 'dreamtime stories'. Their mobility is still strongly influenced by such beliefs.

Artist's comment:

Nyampuju kuruwarri yirrarnurna jangankurlu manu kuyu panu
kari kuja kalu yanirni ngapa kurra.

Yangka kardiyarlu manu yapa karirli yungulu milya pinyi
junga nyarni kuruwarri yap kurlangu ngurrararla, kuja karli-
pa purami manu kijirni.

Yamuju jukurpa Jungarrayi Nungarrayi kirlangu manu
Japaljarri Napaljarri kirlangu.

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PREFACE

This study arose from requests for assistance from Aboriginal groups based in Alice Springs, in particular the Pitjantjatjara Council and Arrernte people. These and other groups were concerned both with the problems which population movement posed for service provision and with the lack of understanding of Aboriginal mobility processes shown by administrators and others. These concerns were shared by the government. In late 1983 the Department of Aboriginal Affairs provided funds for a study of Aboriginal Population Mobility in Central Australia and contracted with Dr Elspeth Young, of the North Australia Research Unit, to formulate and carry out the project.

The main terms of reference of the study were as follows:

- (a) Determine the demographic characteristics of communities representing the principal types of Aboriginal settlement in the region.
- (b) Obtain data on past and present mobility between different types of settlement.
- (c) Obtain data on the interrelationships between population mobility and service provision.
- (d) Analyse these data for assessment of short term and possible long-term trends.

The project commenced in May 1984, under the direction of Dr Elspeth Young. Collection of information from both primary and secondary sources occurred over the following twelve months, and was completed in late May 1985. Primary data were collected on fieldwork trips made by Dr Young and Ms Doohan during June 1984 and between November 1984 and May 1985. Some information was subsequently updated, up to December 1986. In addition, primary data collected on various occasions by Dr Young between 1978 to 1983 have been used. Secondary material was compiled and documented by Debra Hinton and the figures were drawn by Paul Ballard.

Aboriginal input into the study occurred in two ways; through consultation with Aboriginal leaders of Central Australian organisations, primarily John Liddle and Yami Lester; and, in communities, with council leaders and others interested in the study. In addition, fieldwork was conducted with a high level of local input, both through direct interviews and through more general discussions of the issues involved. Detailed explanations of the reasons for mobility and the experiences of particular groups were generally given in Aboriginal languages and translated into

English. An important component was participant observation of mobility, a process which led to long journeys to many parts of the region. We are extremely grateful to all the Aboriginal communities who participated in the study, and to call the individuals who assisted us in so many ways.

CHAPTER 1

POPULATION MOBILITY - SETTING AND SITUATION

Aboriginal population movement has been a main subject for comment ever since Aborigines first encountered non-Aboriginal Australians. Early travellers, exploring routes along the coast and into the interior, mention their encounters with Aborigines, who are often described as appearing without warning out of the surrounding scrub and melting away as silently as they came. It was assumed that they moved in a random fashion in the quest for sustenance and for other materials needed to fashion those artefacts essential to their wandering lifestyle. Non-Aborigines generally believed that this lifestyle, dependent on procuring game and gathering bush tucker, precluded any concept of 'ownership' of land or the setting of boundaries between different population groups. Such behaviour was perceived to be a key factor differentiating Aborigines from other people, and justifying the belief that they were barely human and akin to wild animals. It presented a main obstacle to be overcome if they were to fit into the fledgling society of the new Australia. As Governor Macquarie, in proclaiming that Aborigines could be granted small areas of land for settlement within the colony of New South Wales, stated:-

The natives (are exhorted) to relinquish their wandering, idle and predatory habits of life and to become industrious and useful members of a community where they will find protection and encouragement (Governor Macquarie's proclamation, 4 May 1816).

Non-Aboriginal Australians have subsequently continued to identify Aboriginal mobility, or wandering, with characteristics such as laziness, non-productivity and unreliability. And, assuming that all Aborigines feel compelled to wander, they still use such arguments to avoid employing Aborigines in positions of responsibility. Assumptions such as these demonstrate a lack of understanding of many important issues. Human mobility, in any society, is in itself merely a phenomenon, an indication of how people react to a number of features affecting their daily lives. These features can be primarily economic - the need to be in a certain locality to obtain food and other material resources, either through subsistence or through participation in the wage force; or primarily social - the need to move in order to maintain contact with family and friends; or primarily cultural - the need to group and regroup in order to carry out religious practices central to spiritual life. Mobility can be understood only within such a context. And, hence, the understanding of Aboriginal mobility means an understanding of

many of the characteristics which differentiate their society from that of non-Aborigines. Such an understanding is particularly important in areas such as Central Australia, where most Aborigines remain only partially incorporated into the cash economy, and where they strongly retain their language, their social and cultural structure and their links to traditional land.

But recognition of these socio-cultural attributes is no longer sufficient for a realistic interpretation of contemporary Aboriginal mobility. People's contemporary movements are also profoundly affected by their contact with non-Aboriginal society. The history of land alienation, the recent introduction of Land Rights legislation, the excision of living areas for outstations and the provision of services such as schools, health clinics and retail stores all contribute to the present setting of Central Australian Aboriginal society. And in turn these elements of the setting are affected by people's mobility. As Chapman and Prothero (1985, 5-6) emphasise, the analysis of population mobility in such contexts should consider both these components, the changing patterns of settlement and economic activity, and also the enduring structure of the indigenous culture.

'Moving' Experiences

A study such as this poses many questions. Some concern the actors themselves, the people who move and the people who stay: - What are their demographic characteristics, such as age, gender or family structure? Where do they move to? Why do they move? Are they moving for ever or only on a temporary basis? Some concern the effects of that movement. Will different types of services be able to cope with increases and decreases of population and with changes in population structure? Although some of these questions, such as those concerning the age or gender of movers, are apparently well-defined, others, such as the motivation of movers or stayers, are not. The perception of movement itself becomes essential to an understanding of what is going on. Non-Aboriginal researchers are obviously hampered by not being able to think about mobility in the same way as Aborigines. Their closest approach to that perception is through participation in Aboriginal 'moving' experiences. Some examples of such journeys, recorded in our field notebooks, follow.

A Willowra funeral (See Fig.2.1 for locations)

One hot and humid day in early February a group of us went hunting for goanna in country along the road to Anningie, just inside the Willowra boundary. We intended to return before the heat of the day in the early afternoon, and were beginning to drift back to our vehicle when we heard a car

screech to a halt close by. Two men had rushed from Willowra to tell us of the death and suspected murder of a relative, the father-in-law of an important Willowra leader, on the Stuart Highway about 450 kms away. We hurried back to camp to find almost the whole community on the move. Every vehicle which could be started was being brought into service - the community Toyotas, a variety of private cars and even the large red cattle truck owned by the pastoral company. On request from the community leaders I agreed to add my Toyota to the line and to follow in the rear of the convoy so that I could help any of the 'sick little cars' which might stop. People allocated themselves quickly to vehicles and within about half an hour we had collected spare swags and small amounts of food and were off, supposedly for a couple of days. Willowra, which normally had a population of about 300 people, had quickly become a ghost cattle station inhabited only by a few old and infirm people and a large number of camp dogs.

The journey proved difficult. We were hampered by frequent heavy thunder showers and, even before reaching the Stuart Highway, I had to rescue several small cars from flooded creeks. Often we could not see where the road went but had to follow blindly behind each other, assuming that if one vehicle could get through there was a good chance that the others would also succeed. Things did not improve markedly when we reached the highway because the entire section, for about 250 kms to the north, was under construction and had been converted from a ribbon of bitumen to a quagmire of mud. We did not approach our destination, Ali-Curung (Warrabri) until about midnight and, to avoid entering at the wrong time, set up a damp and uncomfortable camp in dense mulga close to the main road. In the morning we formed convoy once more, according to agreed order, and eased our way the last slippery miles to Ali-Curung.

Mourning rites occupied the whole morning and were expected to conclude in the afternoon. The whole Willowra contingent and a large number of people from Ali-Curung, where the dead man had been living, were involved. However, people also found time to walk over and visit other friends who were not active participants, go to the shop and make trips to the health clinic. By late afternoon, the main rites had been completed. But, because of the uncertainties surrounding the death, discussions continued. Accusations and recriminations flowed backwards and forwards between the Willowra and Ali-Curung groups, and rumours of poison (sorcery) and beatings grew. As it became obvious that things would not be resolved that night, the Willowra people decided to retire to the same camp-site which they had used the night before and return in the morning. Next day arguments continued until the early afternoon. The Willowra men then decided that the women and children should go back and delegated some

vehicles, including my Toyota, to transport them. By this time it was too late to finish the journey in day-light so we decided to spend a third night in the mulga.

In the morning, with very little food or cash left, we were on our way. On the way down the highway the women started discussing a relative who, according to a message received over the two-way radio the day before, was sick in Alice Springs hospital. People were very concerned because she had been sick two or three times in the past two months, and some were worried that she might be sufficiently ill to be sent to hospital in Adelaide, an event which, according to the Warlpiri, suggests that recovery is unlikely. Within a short time it became apparent that most of my passengers felt that they had to go to Alice Springs to see her and check the information. As a result, instead of turning back westwards to Willowra we continued to Alice Springs and spent the rest of the day at the hospital visiting not only the patient about whom people were concerned but also other Warlpiri from Yuendumu, Alice Springs and elsewhere. Finally we left and after another night camped beside the road, reached Willowra. The remainder of the community, most of the men, did not come home for another three or four days.

This journey has several important characteristics. First, although there was a prime reason for travelling, other motives for mobility, such as visiting the sick or seeing relatives, were also important. Secondly, it took place with little forward planning, but was organised with great precision, particularly as far as the ritual aspects were concerned. Thirdly, it took considerably longer than anticipated, and caused pressure on scarce economic resources. Finally, because of the nature of the event, it involved people of both sexes, all ages and many families and resulted in the virtual abandonment, albeit on a temporary basis, of a settlement of three hundred people. Any outsiders, such as government officers, visiting Willowra during this period and ignorant of events would obviously have been bewildered by the situation.

Yuendumu, Yarripirlangu and a big meeting in town

In early September 1978 I was asked to visit Yarripirlangu outstation, about 100 km to the southwest of Yuendumu, close to the northern boundary of Newhaven Station. I travelled there on a Friday night after my companions, who worked for the school and the Yuendumu Housing Association, had finished work and picked up a group of about ten people, all close relatives or friends of the families who normally lived at Yarripirlangu. We travelled along station roads through Mt Doreen and eventually turned off on to an old survey track, then the only marked route to the outstation.

In the dusk opportunities for hunting were good and, to the delight of the outstation families, we eventually reached Yarripirlangu with a kangaroo and several rabbits shot on the road.

The outstation consisted of four shelters made of brushwood, canvas and corrugated iron. Water was not available in the vicinity but had to be fetched from a spring issuing from the base of the cliffs which marked the escarpment of the Newhaven Range immediately to the south. This involved a walk of about two kilometres. Only three families were in residence, three brothers and their wives all at least in their late 50s. All the men, through their grandfathers belonged to Jungarrayi and Japaljarri subsections and held traditional rights and responsibility for that country (Table 3.1). Because some of my companions were Jakamarra, married to Napaljarri daughters of Jungarrayi, and hence as sons-in-law forbidden to meet directly with all the old Yarripirlangu women, we camped separately, some distance from the shelters.

The Yarripirlangu people did not have access to a vehicle and next morning they asked me to take them hunting and also said that they would like to collect some of their belongings from their initial outstation camp. This involved driving around the Newhaven Range to the southern side where the old camp had been established close to a large permanent water-hole and also near some of the main sites for which the people were responsible. This camp had been abandoned because it was clearly inside the boundary of Newhaven Station, and the pastoralist would not give permission for Aborigines to camp on his land although he did not mind them hunting there. On the way we sighted a couple of emus which we did not succeed in shooting and stopped from time to time to investigate goanna holes, to dig up a few witchetty grubs, and to collect ripe solanum fruits. We eventually reached the old camp in the afternoon and did not return to Yarripirlangu until dusk without any large game but with some goannas and fruits. The old people clearly relished the opportunity to make trips of this type, both because it increased their access to bush foods but also because it allowed them to visit places of great significance to them. After our return to Yarripirlangu all, with the exception of the Jakamarra, grouped together and the old men sang songs about their country while the women taught me how to dance.

The next morning we set out for Yuendumu. We arrived in the early afternoon, after the successful pursuit of a perenti on the Mt Wedge road, to find the place in a ferment. In the preceding week the Council had received notice of a Central Land Council meeting in Alice Springs concerning the formation of a Yuendumu Lands Trust. It was to be attended

by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. They were uncertain whether this meeting concerned the former Yuendumu and Lake Mackay Aboriginal Reserves or whether the Minister was going to announce the decision on the Warlpiri Land Claim, hearings for which had been completed only a few months previously. The latter possibility caused great excitement and most of the adult men in Yuendumu wanted to attend the meeting. We arrived just after the last council truck left for town, so I was immediately asked by my companions, one of whom was the Council President, to take them into town. Stopping only to refuel, pick up swags and take the women, who did not normally attend council meetings, we set off, reaching Alice Springs in the late evening.

Next day, after collecting a truckload of people, we went out to Amoonguna and spent the whole day at the meeting. To the disappointment of many of the Yuendumu contingent, which at around 100 was by far the largest at the meeting, the Minister made no mention of the Warlpiri Land Claim although he did transfer the title deeds to both the Yuendumu and Lake Mackay reserves. By the end of the day attention waned, and most decided that they would not bother to attend the second day of the meeting. I decided to return to Yuendumu the following evening and arranged to meet everyone to take them back.

On the following day, when I reached the Yuendumu camping spot none of my original passengers were there. I collected a family who were anxious to return to Yuendumu after an extended period looking after a sick child at Alice Springs hospital, and others, some of whom I had never seen before and who were in varying states of insobriety. After a tedious journey back, lengthened by punctures and arguments with one occupant of the truck, who attempted to force me to go to Papunya we reached Yuendumu about midnight. My original two-day trip to Yarripirlangu had now taken four and a half days and had involved at least another 700 km of driving. My original companions drifted back to Yuendumu during the next week, after spending all their cash in Alice Springs, and in some cases after waiting for some days until return transport could be found. No-one was annoyed with me for earlier returning without them because it had been their decision to remain in town.

This example provides further illustration of the variety of activities which occur when Aboriginal groups move around, and the motives which affect that movement. It also illustrates that, although an element of unpredictability is present in the actual timing of a decision to go, the movements have very definite and serious purposes.

'Balgo Busines' comes to town

In 1977-78 people from Yuendumu and Lajamanu frequently visited Balgo mission, close to the Northern Territory/Western Australia border, to take part in new ceremonies which had been brought into the area from more westerly parts of the Kimberleys. Those who learnt the various songs, dances and customs which formed the ceremony then took that knowledge back to their own communities. However, being recent initiates themselves, they did not have the authority to spread the information any further. In late 1978 negotiations between leaders of this group at Yuendumu and the 'owners' of the ceremony at Balgo led to an agreement to 'sell' the business to Yuendumu. This process of transfer had a marked impact on mobility in Yuendumu.

One afternoon in early December a small plane arrived from Balgo with a group of Pintupi elders of that community. They were met by their Yuendumu counterparts and whisked away to a secret camp outside the town, well away from contact with the majority of the population. There they spent several days, accompanied during the night by most of the Pintupi and some Warlpiri from Yuendumu, individuals who had already been through the ceremonies in Balgo. The rest of the Yuendumu community speculated apprehensively on what was going on. On the last day of the school term, when teachers and many council employees had just received their holiday pay, the Balgo leaders suddenly appeared in the middle of Yuendumu and began to walk systematically from house to house, beckoning to all the adults they could see, and telling them to leave their families and follow them. All obeyed instantly. These Yuendumu 'prisoners' took only with them money, and these funds formed the payment to Balgo for the transfer of the ceremony. Within an hour or two every adult with whom the party came in contact had been conducted to a large bough shed, especially constructed at the west camp, and made to lie down on the ground in regular rows. Their children, excluded from the ceremony but not allowed to be with their parents, were also taken to the west camp where they were taken care of by groups of women who had already been initiated at Balgo. Yuendumu became an empty shell, inhabited only by packs of dogs.

Fear of the ceremonies, coupled with belief that they were evil and unChristian, caused many Yuendumu people to leave the town as best they could. Some, seeing the Balgo leaders appearing in the distance, jumped into vehicles and headed for Alice Springs, not always a sensible decision because they did not have enough petrol for the journey and were stranded on the way. Others hid in houses or in the bush and many of those were later coerced into joining the ceremony. One group of staunch Christians enlisted the support of the Baptist minister and moved themselves and their families to

a site beside a dam about ten kilometres east of the town where they camped for the duration of the business. Still others, who had already been away from Yuendumu visiting friends in other communities or Alice Springs, heard rumours of what was afoot and were too frightened to come back. Altogether the ceremony not only radically changed Yuendumu's settlement pattern, albeit on a temporary basis, but resulted in other Yuendumu residents being stranded elsewhere often without normal means of support. When I travelled to Alice Springs a few days later I found that the town was alive with exaggerated rumours about the 'Balgo takeover' of Yuendumu and some government officials even seemed to be wondering if they should intervene.

Women getting to the meeting (Fig. 4.1)

The Pitjantjatjara women had decided among themselves who were the appropriate people to attend the women's meeting to be held in May 1985 at Malan in Western Australia. The journey was going to be a long one but no-one was concerned - 'It's good to look around country and meet other Aboriginal women'. It was decided that we would depart the next day, once the women had received their pays, organised the swags and contacted the other women by radio. We planned to travel via Kintore to Papunya, Yuendumu and then on to Balgo and Malan.

There was some concern that there may have been 'business on the road'. Using the community radio 'chat channel', both men and women contacted communities along the way to make sure that all was clear for them to use the backroad to Kintore. This route was shorter than the other alternative and closely followed sections of the Two Sisters Dreaming tracks, for which the women were going to perform ceremonies at Malan.

Having completed all the necessary arrangements which included a flight to Alice Springs for two Amata women to meet up with the community bus from Fregon, the journey was to begin by 10 am. The first community we were to reach was Warakuna, where we were to meet women from the western communities who were to be picked up by vehicles that had come from Alice Springs. Everyone arrived safely. While we were waiting for the other vehicles, those women met up with kin and exchanged family news. Finally the convoy headed for Docker River. From there two cars were to travel via Kintore while the other was to pick up other women at Uluru next day. We travelled for a few hours and then made camp. But then our plans changed. According to one woman there was 'business on the way, and we might get caught half way'. Because of this problem all of us went on to Uluru.

First of all we had to refuel at Docker River. This was time consuming, as some of the women wished to visit relations, and we had to buy supplies. At Uluru women again visited relations, purchased some stores, new shoes and clothing for the journey. One woman dropped off her grand-daughter because the child's mother was staying at Uluru. At last all the vehicles and the truck were once more fully loaded and we set off again. Everyone we met was very excited about the journey. People told tales of when they had been in 'that Kimberley country', of the towns they had visited and the people they met. There was a relaxed and yet expectant air among those who were to be journeying into 'new country'. The women's truck took the main highway to Alice Springs as it was too large to travel the backroad through Areyonga to Yuendumu. Other vehicles (five Toyotas in convoy) travelled by this rough but shorter road. However spirits were high and after another night on the road and a couple of wrong turns we arrived in Papunya.

At Papunya the women were less certain of themselves. Although some had relations here it was not as familiar a setting as the Pitjantjatjara communities through which we had already travelled. At the store, women were reluctant to alight from the vehicle and waited until Papunya people came to talk to them. However, once relationships had been established, gifts had been exchanged and people had talked about the reasons for the journey, the women relaxed. Goods were exchanged and relatives offered food and other stores for the road. By this stage we had left the other vehicles behind but decided to travel on as time was limited and the road long. That afternoon we arrived in Yuendumu, in Warlpiri country and therefore even less familiar to Pitjantjatjara women than Papunya. Fortunately I had worked there previously and we contacted the Council chairman to tell him we were there and to leave messages for those following. We found that the women who had travelled in the community bus from eastern Pitjantjatjara communities had already passed through on their way to Balgo. We had showers, changed our clothes, and bought some second-hand clothes, some for use as exchange gifts at the completion of the ceremonies. Once more, some women found kin with whom they exchanged gifts and chatted. Eventually we set off on the Tanami road.

That night we camped at Rabbit Flat. Next day we decided to leave at daybreak because there was a semitrailer cattle truck camped down the road from us and, unless we were in front, we would be 'eating dust all the way to Balgo'. As we travelled along the women discussed this new country and the different features that dominated the environment, the grasses and the types of food one might hope to find. A very sleepy fat sand goanna had only just climbed out of its hole when our truck ran straight over the top of it. I braked

and two women very swiftly found a stick by the roadside and killed it by whacking it over the head - our first bush tucker of the journey. Three more goannas were caught during the day.

Having passed through Balgo and replenished supplies we reached Malan in the late afternoon, and all the visiting women were taken down to the women's ceremonial ground, several kilometres from the community. Once again people established their relationships and made introductions. Traditional owners of the land - the 'bosses' of women's Law - introduced the Pitjantjatjara women and others from different areas, to the country 'so that the country would know them and they would not get sick from the power of the place'.

This journey again illustrates some important characteristics of Aboriginal mobility: careful planning, combined with an inbuilt flexibility which allowed plans to change if necessary; the importance of meeting up with people on the road, and of establishing relationships, especially when travelling through unfamiliar country; the use of cash when travelling, not just to buy necessities such as food but also to buy clothing and other goods which can then be exchanged so that customary obligations are fulfilled; and the continual discussion and speculation about the resources of the areas traversed on the journey. The identification of significant sites, the exploitation of the resources and camping along the way all added to the reaffirmation and extension of vital links with the land.

Coffin Hill - To go or not to go?

There is a homeland centre at Coffin Hill. It is said to be one of the most beautiful places in the Pitjantjatjara lands with rich resources of game and vegetables and a reliable and very sweet water supply. The homeland has several houses, a radio, a vehicle and a first aid box. But, when we visited Fregon the usual residents of Coffin Hill had been camping near the settlement for some time. The reason for this was unclear. Later that day one of the senior men from the area, knowing that I was interested in mobility, suggested that he, his wife and other kin would like to travel back to Coffin Hill 'sometime'. I agreed to take them and, knowing that we would require a support vehicle for travelling to such a remote place, arranged that we would leave the day after tomorrow.

Next morning we collected a fuel drum and found another vehicle to accompany us. It was necessary to make the 120 km round trip to Ernabella for the fuel as there was none available in Fregon. By the end of the day food was purchased and the preparations were completed.

Next morning, when I went to pick up my passengers I was told that maybe it would be better to go tomorrow as today was pension day. However the following day another problem arose because one of the leading men, 'really boss for that place now', had developed a severely infected knee. It looked as though the trip to Coffin Hill might never occur. I suggested that I remove the drum of petrol from my Toyota and do some other business while they decided when they wished to go. Anytime suited me! Several days later I was again asked if we could go 'sometime', and we agreed to leave 'the day after tomorrow.' But once again, when I went to collect my passengers, they produced rather vague excuses for not travelling - too sick, no fuel, too far for me to drive. At the same time they insisted that they really wanted to visit their country. We never made the journey to Coffin Hill.

Some weeks later, on a return trip to Fregon, I began to understand why. One of the senior women, with whom I had travelled to Malan and who had also asked to go to Coffin Hill, told me in a private whisper that, although they all wished to make the journey, 'business' had started up and it was not safe for any of us to go along that road. Although earlier events suggested that people were not really interested in going to Coffin Hill, they were in fact eager to take advantage of the vehicle and the opportunity to express their commitment to their homeland. The problem was that the timing was wrong. Another problem was that the Coffin Hill area includes many important places and events of significance for Aboriginal 'law' and at certain times movement in and around this area is heavily restricted. This explained why, although people stressed that they wished to live there, they never seemed to 'sit down' there consistently.

These examples illustrate many characteristics of contemporary Aboriginal population movement. People still move in order to maintain the strength of their social networks, to carry out their responsibilities to the land and the ancestral beings from which they sprang and to use game, vegetables and other economic resources. Other characteristics may be noted; the fact that journeys are undertaken for specific, but often multiple reasons; that, although decisions to travel may apparently be made on an ad hoc basis, journeys have in fact been well planned and are organised within a structure appropriate to Aboriginal customary law; that timing of journeys to some degree must be flexible; and that, while people of both genders and all ages take part in many types of journeys, certain kinds of mobility are limited to people from specific groups.

Many non-Aborigines would interpret these journeys differently. Travelling groups such as these, encountered

on the highway or in town, might be perceived as random collections of people, journeying with little thought of the need for money or resources, and with little purpose other than the excitement of being on the move. Many, assuming such movements to be basically purposeless, would condemn them because of their effect on Aboriginal communities - the virtual abandonment of settlements, the removal of children from schools, the wastage of scarce cash resources, and the absenteeism from wage jobs. Clearly these effects are important, but the formulation of policies to deal with them must be made on the basis of a fuller understanding of the contemporary context of Aboriginal population movement. This is the framework of this study.

Australian population mobility - general characteristics

Current understanding of population movement within Australia is largely based on analysis of data from successive national censuses and sample migration surveys conducted periodically by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. While the former primarily indicate movement patterns and the socio-economic characteristics of movers and stayers, the latter provide some information on motivation for movement. In general, as Hugo (1986, Ch. 2) summarises, Australian population mobility has been dominated by the process of urbanisation, culminating today in our status as one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world. Urbanisation has, it is generally assumed, been primarily economically motivated, reflecting employment opportunities and a perception that material living standards are higher in towns and cities. More recent evidence of a slowing down of urban growth coupled with a counter movement to smaller towns and rural areas in the urban hinterland - the population turnaround - casts some doubt on these assumptions. However, although Hugo (1986, 141) recognises that environmental and lifestyle considerations are important reasons for the turnaround, he also stresses the continued significance of economic motivation. As he points out, 42 per cent of all inter-state movers in 1982-83 gave employment as their prime reason for moving. Altogether the pattern and process of Australian internal population movement appears to conform to that occurring in other developed countries.

The overall picture of Northern Territory population mobility differs from the national scene in some significant ways. General levels of mobility are above average with 6.3 per cent of the enumerated population in 1981 being classified as visitors (Hugo 1986, 117-8), compared to a national figure of 4.5 per cent. Recent analysis of 1986 national census figures (Taylor 1988) confirms this high mobility and shows that population turnover continues to be extremely high. Over 90 000 people either entered or left a

Statistical Local Area in the Northern Territory in the 1981-86 intercensal period, giving a total turnover rate of approximately 70 per cent. Interstate migration, primarily affecting towns such as Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Jabiru, accounted for almost two thirds of the turnover and over one quarter, occurring mainly in rural areas, arose from movement within the boundaries of the Territory. While these figures do not indicate the reasons for high mobility, Hugo (1986, 135-6) points out that in 1982-83 54 per cent of interstate migrants going to the Northern Territory specified employment as their reason for moving. This figure, well above the national average of 42 per cent, exceeded those of all other states/territories.

High mobility, predominantly economically motivated, results in a Northern Territory population with some distinctive characteristics. Many people perceive their sojourn in the region to be relatively temporary, lasting perhaps for only a few months or for the number of years stipulated in an employment contract. Seasonal movement, associated with periodic employment opportunities in pastoral, tourist and construction industries, is an important component although, as Taylor (1988) suggests, construction jobs seem now to be much more scarce following the recent downturn in federal funding to the Northern Territory. Coupled with the temporary nature of residence in the region are the close family ties which bind Territorians to other parts of Australia. The annual migration of Darwin and Alice Springs families on Christmas vacation to southern cities is a clear demonstration of this feature.

Aboriginal mobility - an appropriate perspective

The preceding summary, both for national and Northern Territory populations, primarily describes population mobility for the majority group, non-Aboriginal Australians. Patterns and processes of movement for Aborigines are somewhat different. Mobility itself, as Mitchell (1985, 32-38) has suggested, should be considered not as an isolated process but as an epiphenomenon which reflects both the setting within which people live and their situation, either individually or as a group, at particular points in time. He defines the setting as the external framework for mobility, the social and economic structure of the society to which people belong, their settlement distribution and the location of services and other components which they require. Situation refers to individual and group characteristics, such as age, gender, or sense of adventure, which influence people's decisions to move within that setting. Transformation of the setting will clearly affect individual situations, and will lead to changes in processes of mobility. Mitchell's emphasis on mobility as a phenomenon firmly embedded in the social and economic framework of a

particular group at a particular time is highly dynamic and therefore especially appropriate to the analysis of the Aboriginal context, in which socio-economic change is so rapid.

The setting and situation for Aboriginal population movement in Central Australia are quite different from those of the non-Aboriginal population. Important elements include Aboriginal socio-demographic characteristics and Aboriginal perspectives on mobility. First, in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, Aborigines belong to the region and identify very strongly with specific areas within it primarily on a spiritual basis. Most groups have maintained language, culture and a specific identity and through this a marked strength of links to their land. Secondly, for most people, family connections lie within Central Australia, and the kinship network is relatively local in a spatial sense. Thirdly, a high percentage of people are outside the wage force, and therefore employment may well be less significant as a reason for mobility. Although people are aware that local job opportunities for the unskilled are limited, many do not perceive wage-earning as a prime priority and therefore do not move beyond their country to seek employment elsewhere. Altogether this gives rise to types of mobility quite different from those of non-Aborigines. Their movements remain much more within the local region, and are strongly conditioned both by the link to the land and to the social networks. They are also related to use of social and essential services.

Understanding of the Aboriginal mobility 'situation' is more difficult. Although it is generally accepted that people of hunter-gatherer origins 'move around a lot' (Lee and DeVore 1968, 11), there is little understanding of how such people view mobility. During preliminary discussions about the kind of information sought for this study and the reasons why this was important, one Aboriginal leader commented with some puzzlement 'Why worry? Everyone must be somewhere!' This comment suggests that the actual location of a person, in spatial or temporal terms, is unimportant compared with the knowledge that that person continues to perform those roles necessary to his/her position within the social structure. It must also be remembered that, in a society as closely integrated as that of Central Australian Aborigines the term 'somewhere' is not as general as it appears. It is bounded by that individual's recognised social and geographic sphere of confidence and knowledge.

Differences such as these suggest that the theoretical framework generally adopted for the analysis of mobility in developed countries like Australia is not appropriate for this study. The framework applied to Third World mobility studies, particularly Melanesia, may have more to offer.

Studies from countries as diverse as the Solomon Islands (Chapman 1976), Vanuatu (Bedford 1971; Bonnemaison 1984) and Papua New Guinea (Strathern 1977; Ryan 1985; Ward 1971 and Young 1977) demonstrate the effects of strong attachment to place in formulating the spatial extent of movement in both pre-contact and contact times. From oral accounts and the traditional tales of periods prior to contact it appears that most people moved within a small region of common language affiliation and culture. Those who did not conform to these restrictions were generally recognised as powerful leaders, relatively immune from wanton attack. Movements from this period included marriage-related migration, usually of women; and movement occurred for a combination of economic and social reasons - welding together allied clans and groups, visiting friends and relatives, creating political contacts and making use of the varied natural resources available both for subsistence cultivation and hunting. After European settlement, organised or enforced wage labour was introduced and people made long distance 'controlled' movements, often from inland to coastal regions. But once this mobility pattern was established its characteristics were maintained through the chain-migration of friends and kin to the same destination. Essentially this reflected a continuing need for people to remain within a social environment which was familiar and safe. Similar patterns of chain movement have been described by Gale (1981) in her analysis of Aboriginal movement into Adelaide from outlying parts of South Australia.

In Melanesia chain migration has also played a significant part in the establishment of what has been called 'bi-locality' or 'multi-locality' of residence, the tendency for people to have more than one place which they considered as home. Ryan (1985) provides a particularly useful example of this in her analysis of the mobility of Papuans between their home villages in the Gulf Province of Papua New Guinea, and the city of Port Moresby. Contemporary Aboriginal mobility in Central Australia appears to show a similar kind of response. Before non-Aboriginal settlement, Aboriginal groups moved largely within a spatially restricted region, essentially their ancestral country (Fig. 1.1a). Their place of residence coincided with that region. Occasionally, for various social or economic reasons, they moved further afield to peripheral country. Since non-Aboriginal settlement Aboriginal families have been dispersed and have regrouped in different locations. While those locations nearest to their own specific country are the preferred choice for residence, they have had to accept other alternatives, sometimes far distant from their original ancestral areas (Fig. 1.1b). Their mobility has, in spatial terms, become much more extensive. At the same time bi-local or multi-local residence has developed. For example it is not uncommon for outstation residents to

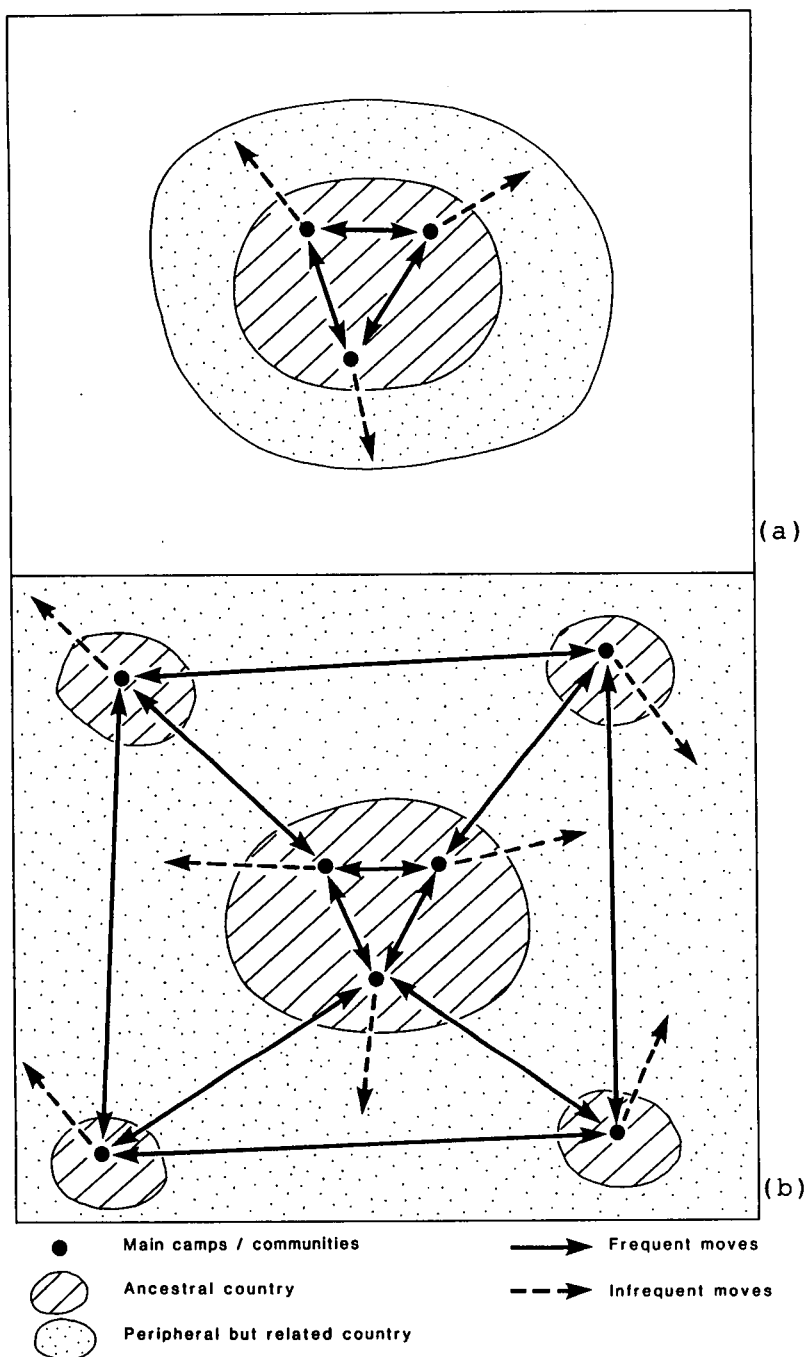


Figure 1.1 Model of changes in the spatial extent of Aboriginal population movement through time

retain a living place in nearby Aboriginal towns, as occurs in the Yuendumu region; similarly people from Aboriginal towns may also spend considerable periods of time living in larger towns such as Alice Springs (Young 1983).

Third World mobility studies also reveal that for many people their own country persists as the focal point. In Melanesian terms this has been most clearly expressed by Bonnemaïson (1984) for Vanuatu, who equates the feeling for this country with the sense of identity. As Bonnemaïson (1984, 147) quotes:

Land is to the ni-Vanuatu what a mother is to her child... Ni-Vanuatu can never divorce themselves from their land (Regenwanu, S.).

He expands on this point though an analogy between Vanuatuan mobility and the idea of the tree and the canoe. The tree and its roots link Vanuatians to their land and to their families; but the canoe is the movement which is necessary for people to maintain those personal contacts essential to the survival of culture and society. This analogy seems to be highly appropriate in the context of Aboriginal mobility in Central Australia. For each group of families the relationship to the country of their grandfathers and grandmothers, areas to which they feel spiritually attached, usually remains the most stable factor. It is the 'enduring' element (Myers 1986, 56), where their roots are. However other localities, such as places associated with conception and birth, may also be highly significant. Because of the dispersal of the Aboriginal population following non-Aboriginal settlement and land alienation many people have been born and have lived for all of their lives in locations far from ancestral country. Not only are they attached to these places but, as information collected in the course of land claim work has shown, they have often assumed spiritual responsibility for them. Altogether every individual associates himself or herself with several different countries and hence has a 'set' of roots. Movement between these countries for Aborigines, like the Ni-Vanuatu, ensures the continuity of identity and demonstrates to others who they are and where they belong.

Finally, Third World mobility studies emphasise the persistence of circulation, a process whereby people continually return to their places of origin after sojourns elsewhere. As Chapman and Prothero (1985) have shown, circulation is particularly significant where people have retained a strong attachment to traditional land and kin, and feel that the place of origin offers them an insurance for survival. Such feelings are so strong that people maintain circulation even when their 'home countries' offer very little in economic terms. The circulation process also

appears to be strong in Aboriginal society. As Gale (1981, 286) has said '..... there is every reason for the circulation theorists to find endless delight in Aboriginal migration patterns, both before and after European settlement. The paths followed frequently showed a distinct relationship between spatial movement and the distribution of kin networks.'

As this discussion implies many of the characteristics highlighted for population mobility in transitional societies in the Third world seem also to occur in Aboriginal Central Australia. Circulation, chain migration, multi-local residence and the importance of social motivations for movement are all present. While it might be rash to carry the analogy too far, the recognition of these processes appears to provide a theoretical framework more appropriate to an understanding of Aboriginal mobility than that applied to the Australian population as a whole.

Policy implications

This study is undertaken not only to examine the processes behind contemporary Aboriginal mobility but also, in practical terms, to consider the policy implications of population movement. The focus in policy terms is on the provision of essential and social services for Central Australian Aborigines. First, it is obvious that population movement, which involves change of residence in space and time, and differentiation between those who move and those who stay affects the types of services needed at different times at both source and destination points. Secondly the existence of processes such as chain migration, circulation and bi- or multi-local residence also affects service demand. Because of the high levels of mobility arising from these modes of behaviour the levels of demand fluctuate widely. Finally the types of services and methods of delivery appropriate for Aboriginal populations may well differ from those required for non-Aborigines. For example many Aboriginal families, because of their cultural background and customs, desire different types of shelter from most non-Aborigines and their mobility means that short-term occupancy of houses may be quite transitory. In the long term, because of the circular nature of their movements, their shelter needs in particular locations may be quite stable. Those providing shelter must be able to recognise that frequent absence from a place does not necessarily mean permanent abandonment. Similarly social service provision must take account of mobility, and also of how personal access to services is affected by linguistic differences and information.

For those responsible for service provision, Aboriginal mobility, no matter how clearly understood, poses an

important practical problem. Planning for essential services such as power or water supplies or for other needs such as housing, schools, health services or retail stores requires a realistic estimate of how many people and what type of people live in a particular place. However an outstation, for example, might have a recorded population fluctuating from five to fifty on successive visits by government officers charged with providing a permanent water supply. If the first 'head count' is accepted, the group may only be offered a hand-pump; if the second, they might be provided with a bore, windmill, tank and reticulation. But neither of these de facto counts necessarily provides an appropriate estimate. The truth may well lie somewhere in between. This can only be determined by estimating the de jure population, the people who for reasons such as kinship, traditional ownership of land or length of residence, are generally recognised as members of that community. An estimate of this type demands much more than a head count; it requires some knowledge of the social and cultural characteristics of the group concerned. The numerical estimates used in this study are generally of this type.

Study framework and data sources

This study examines contemporary Aboriginal mobility in Central Australia in terms of Mitchell's (1985) framework of setting and situation. The setting, including both past and present elements of customary Aboriginal society and of non-Aboriginal society, is the scene for population movement. The situation, characterised by an individual's socio-demographic features such as age, gender, family situation, or political status, affects that person's mobility behaviour within that setting.

Setting is described by examining information about the communities where people live now or have lived in the past and on various events and experiences which have brought about changes within these communities. Situation is examined through looking at individual or group movements, considering why they occur, who takes part and why some people are participants while others are generally bystanders. The two approaches together allow for the examination of mobility behaviour against the essential background of place and community, a framework which is necessary for any meaningful assessment of mobility and policy issues.

Numerical figures, statistics of how many people lived at a certain place at a certain time, or how many moved from one place to another to attend a ceremony, do not figure prominently in this analysis. We believe that there are good reasons for adopting such an approach. Such data, for

the rural Aboriginal population, will probably always be highly inaccurate. However population counts are useful in the description of the historical events responsible for the contemporary setting, and are used both for the whole Central Australian region and for individual communities. Regional data provide an overview of past population distributions and suggest some of the spatial characteristics of mobility patterns. Community data, collected in a series of case-studies designed to cover the main types of Aboriginal communities in Central Australia, highlight some of these patterns but, more important, provide information on the reasons behind movement. While both types of data contribute to an understanding of the setting, only the case-studies reveal some of the characteristics of the situation.

At the regional level information on population distribution and totals can be obtained from a number of different sources of doubtful reliability. In 1957 the Department of Native Affairs published a Register of Wards for the whole region. This provides a broad breakdown by age and sex of the Aboriginal population, on the basis of current residence. However people who then had very little contact with non-Aborigines were almost always excluded; and age data, based on estimates rather than birth records, were certainly highly suspect. In 1964 this register was updated, using the same basic classifications.

From 1971 onwards national censuses enumerated all Aborigines, and provide information on all their characteristics included in census questions. In 1976 and 1981, in addition to conventional demographic and socio-economic information, these questions were extended to cover mobility during inter-censal periods. All these statistics are, however, difficult to interpret for the Aboriginal population. First, there have been, and still are, enumeration problems with probable over-counting in some areas and under-counting in others. It is likely that the totals enumerated in individual censuses do not only reflect natural increase and net migration but are also affected by people changing their responses to the question on Aboriginal identification. In addition it is possible that some small groups were not contacted by enumerators. Secondly the characteristics covered in the census reflect criteria appropriate to non-Aboriginal society and may not apply to the Aboriginal situation. For example, occupational classifications are too rigid to account for the types of job being carried out by Central Australian Aborigines, particularly in a rural setting (Young 1985). Thirdly, the regional definition of spatial units used in the census [Collector's Districts and Local Government Areas (LGAs)] is often at odds with the way in which Aboriginal population groups are actually linked to each

other. In 1981, for example, populations in Aboriginal towns (called 'bounded rural settlements') were often enumerated separately from the outstations related to them, and for which they acted as resource centres. Fourthly, the confidentiality provisions prevent analysis of much of the smaller scale data, a particular problem when dealing with small Aboriginal groups. And finally, LGAs in Central Australia are so large that data on inter-censal mobility defined on an LGA basis tells us very little.

Another source of general data is the information collected under the Aboriginal Population Record (APR), and stored on micro-fiche by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. This is basically the same type of data presented by the Register of Wards but with some additional information on place of birth, family relationships, and employment. The APR has been built up over a long period using returns furnished by superintendents of settlements, employers on pastoral properties and others responsible for supervision and administration of Aboriginal communities. It was continually updated until around 1979 when the system was discontinued. However, since no historical records were kept it is of very limited use for the assessment of population movement and only shows where people were living at the final count. In this study it has been used only to provide an overview of population distribution in 1979.

A final source of regional data are the community profiles collected by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) at two yearly intervals since 1979. These profiles in themselves provide no information on mobility. However comparison of the distribution of population at different times indicates changing spatial patterns of settlement and these in turn are important indicators of underlying processes affecting people's movements. DAA Community Profile data have to be used with great care because they are compiled from returns made by people with varying levels of knowledge of the area. Individually they may be highly inaccurate but collectively they provide a useful overview.

The Central Australian setting and its effect on population movement can also be investigated using the returns furnished by employers, most of whom were pastoralists, describing the characteristics and conditions of their local Aboriginal workforce and their communities. These returns, made annually to the Department of Native Affairs under the Aboriginal Ordinance, recorded the names of workers and their families, and descriptions of their camp situations, facilities, clothing and bedding issued and other details about provision of health, education and other services. Some also included information on other Aboriginal families, often described as 'nomadic'. By the 1960s, when pastoralists were able to claim rations for all Aboriginal

families resident on their properties, records included many families not directly involved in employment. Although these returns were provided annually by all station owners and managers, many of the records have since disappeared and those which have survived are extremely variable in coverage. For some of the earlier stations in Central Australia records go back as far as the 1920s while for others hardly any now survive. Moreover many of the intervening years are missing. In addition the accuracy of returns must be questioned as some pastoralists undoubtedly kept better records than others. Because of these problems these data cannot be used to examine population change on a regional basis. For selected areas, they can provide some useful information on aspects such as population turnover and the movement of specific families between properties. In this study these records are used only to provide some historical data of this type for some of the properties which also formed detailed case-studies.

Detailed information on the contemporary setting and situation for Aboriginal population movement comes from fieldwork conducted in a number of selected case-study communities. These include examples of all the main types of settlement in Central Australia. These are:

- (a) Aboriginal 'towns' with associated, more recently formed, homeland centres; examples - Yuendumu, Ernabella.
- (b) Aboriginal community on, or associated with non-Aboriginal cattle stations; example - Harts Range.
- (c) Communities on Aboriginal-owned cattle stations; examples - Willowra, Mt Allan, Ti-Tree.
- (d) Open town with primarily Aboriginal population; example - Finke.

Additional information was collected on specific topics such as mobility and homeland centres (Fregon) and mobility and ceremonial practices (Kalka/Pipalyatjara). Initially it was hoped that the study could also include case-studies from Alice Springs which would have provided complementary information on mobility in the context of a large non-Aboriginal town. However such a study was well beyond the resources available in this project. Moreover, Alice Springs campers, by agreement with Tangentyere Council, their co-ordinating organisation, have participated in a number of population surveys in recent years including 1983, 1985 and 1987. These have placed them under considerable strain as a heavily researched body, and it was felt that further work with these groups would be too heavy a burden. Tangentyere's surveys provide little detailed information on

population movement but they do present some details such as place of birth or location of traditional country of town residents. Where possible, these are referred to in this study.

All the communities were approached at different times by the researchers to see if they would participate in the study. Most responded favourably, particularly when the discussion centred on the problems posed by mobility in the provision of services. Fieldwork took place over a long period of time; some, for example that at Finke and Harts Range (1985), was undertaken specifically for this project; other fieldwork occurred in conjunction with other projects, such as studies of socio-economic conditions, telecommunication needs, retail stores and adult education in 1978, 1979, 1982 and 1983 in Yuendumu and Willowra. Information was up-dated at Yuendumu in 1984 and 1986. Ti-Tree and Mt Allen communities were also visited in conjunction with the retail store and adult education studies, and other contact was maintained in the course of carrying out work on their respective land claims. Many Aboriginal people in all of these communities believed that non-Aboriginal administrators did not understand their mobility in Aboriginal terms. They often felt at a disadvantage because it was impossible to fulfil customary obligations within their own society and at the same time satisfy government rules determining eligibility for funding and service delivery. For example, the earlier DAA requirement that people remain permanently resident at an outstation site for six months before they qualify for assistance became impossible to fulfil if a member of the group died. Their subsequent abandonment of the site in no way demonstrated a lack of commitment to the idea of the outstation, but was often interpreted in this way by government officers.

Although people supported the project they clearly preferred as little interference as possible from the researchers. We tried, within our own limitations, to conduct interviews and data collection at times convenient to the community and avoided periods such as the hot season when many people had heavy ceremonial commitments. When our work coincided with such activities we participated as observers when invited to do so and gained important insights into Aboriginal mobility as a consequence.

Data collected in the sample communities included demographic summaries where possible. However the main emphasis was on mobility processes. Questions considered included the following:-

Why do people move?
Who takes part in movement?

Where do they go?

What effect does that movement have on source areas, destination areas, and other places in between?

In general terms data coverage was as follows:-

- (a) Detailed demographic data were collected in Ti Tree, Mt Allan, Willowra, Finke, Harts Range and some of the Yuendumu outstations. These data include age/sex structure, family structure and relationships, relationship to country, employment, and, in a general sense, the spatial extent of contemporary movement.
- (b) Information on different types of mobility, collected through participant observation in all case-study communities.
- (c) Data on service delivery and its relationship to mobility, also collected in all case-study communities. Examples of these include school enrolment and how it is affected by the dispersal of populations; occupancy of houses in both outstations and centralised communities; and how retail stores are affected by the depletion of stock following a large influx of visitors.

The framework of the discussion is as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 present the outline of the setting. They include a brief historical analysis of Aboriginal population distribution in Central Australia; discussion of the factors behind changes in that distribution; and more detailed descriptions of the communities used as case-studies. Chapters 4 to 9 concentrate more on the situation, how the Aboriginal response to particular needs is expressed through mobility. These chapters form two groups. The first group, Chapters 4, 5 and 6, discusses mobility arising from needs and priorities which could be described as primarily 'traditional' - holding ceremonies; maintaining the complex and extensive social network which is basic to the strength of Aboriginal society; and foraging, hunting and collecting subsistence foods and raw materials from the natural environment. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 are concerned more with non-traditional elements; mobility related to access to cash through welfare payments or jobs; mobility and access to health, education and other community services; and mobility arising from meetings, sport and recreation. While all these chapters raise issues of importance for service delivery and population mobility, the main discussion on these aspects is presented in the conclusion, Chapter 10.

CHAPTER 2

THE SETTING FOR ABORIGINAL MOBILITY

Contemporary Aboriginal population mobility in Central Australia is a product of elements derived both from the functioning and organisation of traditionally oriented society, and of the changes which have occurred in the course of the years following non-Aboriginal settlement. These two basic components are now so strongly interlinked that it is impossible and indeed unrealistic to separate them. Movement for ceremonial purposes, for example, clearly owes its existence to the demands of Aboriginal society; however, because of changes in the distribution of necessary participants, and the adoption of modern modes of travel such as 4WD vehicles, the style and extent of the journeys currently undertaken differ from those of the past. Similarly, visits to attend football matches in Alice Springs may seem to lie firmly within the realm of activities wholly non-Aboriginal by definition; but the very fact that they bring together people who, while closely related, no longer live in close proximity means that they have also become a forum for the social interaction essential to the maintenance of Aboriginal culture. Thus the setting must be viewed in a holistic way, as the framework against which to develop an understanding of present day behaviour. This chapter considers first the setting and its transformation through historical time; and secondly what effect this has had in terms of changing population distribution and mobility.

The Setting

Physical environment

Anthropologists, prehistorians and others have presented a number of theoretical arguments on the relationship of social organisation and territoriality of hunter-gatherers (for example, Lee and deVore, 1968; Stanner, 1965; Strehlow, 1970). Briefly, for Central Australian Aborigines, their occupation of their territory demonstrates a long-standing and detailed human adaptation to an arid or semi-arid physical environment dominated by unpredictable water supplies. These in turn affected food supplies, both game and vegetable, and thus exerted control over the numbers of people to be supported under a foraging and hunting regime, and the movement needed to obtain sufficient sustenance. Water sources used ranged from surface supplies such as pools which collected in hollows in impervious rock, or clay pans, to subsurface supplies such as soakages in creek beds or underground springs. In general surface water was ephemeral, although some rock-holes were sufficiently deep

and narrow for surface evaporation to proceed very slowly, and for water to be available for weeks and even months after the last rainfall. Regardless of whether these water sources were permanent or temporary, their presence was well known to Aborigines living in the vicinity and could even be recognised by Aboriginal strangers skilled at interpreting signs of water usage by human, animal or bird. The existence of reliable subsurface supplies was clearly an important prerequisite for bringing large numbers of people together, either on a short or a longer term basis, and variations in the distribution of these resources help to explain variations in general population density. Meggitt (1962, 32), for example, estimated that in the western desert country of the Warlpiri, where there were comparatively few large rivers and springs and soakages were less common, the population density may only have been in the order of one person to 35 sq mls; in contrast, in Arrernte country, where such water sources were more common, the density may have been about three times greater, or about one person to 12.5 sq mls. Strehlow (1965) also emphasised this contrast, and suggested that it is a major reason for certain basic differences in social organisation between Arrernte and Western Desert people.

The availability of permanent water depended not only on factors such as geology and soils, but also on precipitation. In Central Australia rainfall is notoriously unpredictable. Droughts occur not only on a minor scale from month to month, but on a major scale for considerable periods of time. Droughts lasting for years in some areas undoubtedly affected Aboriginal mobility, and caused people to move to points where water could still be found, thus restricting their habitats. During the 1920s, and again in the 1960s, much of the region was gripped by such droughts. Aboriginal groups congregated around the few remaining waterholes, and in so doing came into conflict with non-Aboriginal pastoralists attempting to retain these same sources for their own stock. Such conflict was a major factor leading to the Coniston massacre in 1928, and subsequent killings in the Lander and Hanson River areas. Conversely, following rain, surface water became readily available and game, like humans, were able to disperse freely to take advantage of it. Similarly seeds sprouted and vegetable foods became abundant. Some, like the varieties of solanum, are desert staples. It is scarcely surprising that, as Tonkinson (1974, 69-71) has pointed out, religious beliefs expressing attachment to the land are so strongly affected by the relationships of water supply, food and population distribution. Mobility was also affected. As Berndt (1976, 159) also suggests,

Pressures toward survival were far less marked in north-eastern Arnhem Land than in the Western

Desert; mobility, too, was more restricted in Arnhem Land.

Aboriginal society

Central Australian Aboriginal society in traditional terms reflected adaptation to a very limited resource environment. The overall sparseness of the population prior to the establishment of large settlements coupled with social and religious obligations to kin and sites in the land demonstrated the need for mobility within their particular localities or 'countries'. It was from these regions which their progenitors were believed to have come. Many of these ancestral beings, like honey ants, kangaroos, or bandicoots, represented species particularly abundant in those very places with which their human counterparts identify, and the ceremonies performed by these humans were largely aimed at maintaining and increasing these populations. Within each 'country' certain places, now commonly referred to as sacred sites, had a particular significance of a spiritual nature. At the same time these places might also be of economic importance. Many, for instance, were water sources. They were linked together by the journeys, often called 'Dreaming Tracks' undertaken by the ancestral spirits. Human beings expressed their beliefs in these stories of the origin of the Central Australian universe partly through re-enacting these journeys in the course of carrying out ceremonial responsibilities. In other words their movements expressed not only the need for procuring sustenance, but also their identification with the people of the Dreamtime - the jukurrpa (Warlpiri) or altyerre (Arrernte). In effect, as Toyne and Vachon (1985) have suggested, a map of the Dreaming provides a kind of ecological map for the efficient and secure exploitation of resources. Detailed studies conducted in the course of Aboriginal Land Claim documentation also emphasise this important linkage between spiritual and resource knowledge. As Myers (1982, 185) notes for the Pintupi, 'Knowledge of resources, of people and their whereabouts is the basis of their local organisation, telling them where they can go next and allowing them to assess the relation between population and resources...'. Obedience to Aboriginal 'Law' therefore both determined and restricted mobility. People were wary about visiting country for which they lacked spiritual knowledge, and, consequently, whose economic resources were unfamiliar to them.

As a result the Aboriginal population is believed to have formed small units whose members were linked to each other by ties of kinship and who were also linked spiritually to particular places which would provide their economic and social support. An integral component of life in this area where resources were sometimes unable to meet the needs of the people was the extension and activation of social,

religious and economic rights and obligations to those whose country neighboured one's own, thus ensuring assistance in times of need. Myers (1986, 96), however, emphasises that such linkages did not reflect solely the need to have access to alternative food sources during drought periods but also the positive desire to promote strong social relationships with one's neighbours. Others, such as Strehlow (1965; 1970, 92) have stressed the connection between resource availability and social organisation. Strehlow suggested that because resources were less predictable in the drier western parts of Central Australia these types of adaptation were more important and resulted in a more fluid type of social organisation, as appears to occur among the Warlpiri compared to the Arrernte. Arrernte, he said, were more fixed within bounded territories and had, at a much earlier stage, developed a sectional kinship system designed to structure relationships between these relatively stable groups. Like Meggitt (1962, 250-1) he saw Warlpiri as 'leaderless', and their adoption of the kinship sub-section system as occurring very recently, largely through contact with the Arrernte.

Although the need to have access to food and water in times of drought undoubtedly extended people's mobility for those largely economic purposes, movement for ceremonial purposes was also important. Conducting ceremonies, either to mark life cycle stages such as initiation or death, or to uphold the land, or to express in a broader sense identification with spiritual beings and objects, required the presence of people who, residentially, might be quite widely scattered. At times such events gave rise to fairly large gatherings. In the early 1930s, for example, over 200 Pitjantjatjara were recorded on the way to a ceremony in the north-west reserve of South Australia (Tindale and Hackett, 1933, 102). This contrasts with other much smaller group sizes. Sweeney (1947, 497) suggests that ten would be a large hunting party and Thomson (1962, 154, 269) says that 42 was the largest group of nomadic Warlpiri which he had seen.

The mobility processes of traditional Aboriginal society can today only be assumed from oral accounts such as those furnished by the Pintupi, many of whom did not maintain regular contact with non-Aborigines until the 1960s (Myers 1986, Ch. 3). These confirm that movement was essentially fluid in nature, but occurred within loose boundaries defined through cultural and environmental constraints placed on the individual and the group. Although each individual was seen as having a particular interest in certain places, either through birth, or conception, or inheritance through paternal and maternal grandfathers, or knowledge of the 'law', they could also range elsewhere when survival was threatened. But the places of particular interest, the 'countries' of the individuals, remained the

focal points, to which they would always be drawn and wish to return. Without that assurance the whole fragile fabric of their society was under threat. This threat became a reality with non-Aboriginal settlement. Land alienation and resultant physical changes associated with pastoralism - the erection of fences, the erosion of the soil, the destruction of bush tucker and wildlife habitats, the fouling of waterholes and the cessation of controlled burning - made a profound impact. Other changes came from the establishment of mission and government settlements and towns like Alice Springs; the implementation of colonialist assimilationist policies; and the creation of Aboriginal dependency.

Non-Aboriginal attributes

The contemporary setting of the rural Aboriginal population in Central Australia differs radically from that which existed prior to non-Aboriginal settlement in the region. In physical terms, population groups have become both more concentrated and much larger, particularly in central and eastern parts of the region and, in social terms, people's lives have been transformed by the introduction of an administrative and economic structure which has created the need for cash and which provides employment opportunities and many services not formerly available. The influences which affect human mobility within this setting can be loosely described as political/administrative, economic and social in origin.

Political and administrative factors include organised, and sometimes enforced, relocation and settlement of Aboriginal groups; other measures, both direct and indirect, designed to prevent or encourage movement and/or settlement in certain places; and, in more recent years, granting of land tenure, both as Aboriginal freehold or as pastoral or special purpose leases.

All Central Australian Aborigines have, to some extent, been affected by resettlement. Those from areas perceived as commercially valuable, and hence attractive for non-Aboriginal pastoral settlement, such as the Arrernte, have since the late 19th century been forced to move onto a decreasing number of settlements thus effectively increasing the ratio of people to land. They congregated in small groups on cattle stations where their presence was still tolerated, or otherwise were forced into large nucleated settlements, mostly administered by mission groups. Some of these large settlements, such as Hermannsburg (Fig. 2.1), were located fairly close to the traditional country of their residents but others were established so far away that people could not adequately maintain customary use of the land. Many Arrernte, originally from the vicinity of Alice Springs or from regions to the north and east,

initially camped around the town. This group, which even by the early 20th century was more numerous than the non-Aboriginal population, were both making use of what traditionally was an Aboriginal meeting place and also seeking out the only space left to them following the alienation of their land. As Heppell and Wigley (1981, Ch. 1) summarise, pressures to control the growth and location of the Alice Springs Aboriginal population subsequently led to the establishment of educational insitutions on the periphery of town, such as the Bungalow and the Catholic-run Little Flower Mission. In 1942 the inhabitants of the latter group were resettled at Arltunga, 90 kms east of Alice Springs because of the fears of attack following the bombing of Darwin. Subsequently, because of water supply problems, Arltunga was relocated at Santa Teresa (Fig. 2.1). Some of the Alice Springs Arrernte were

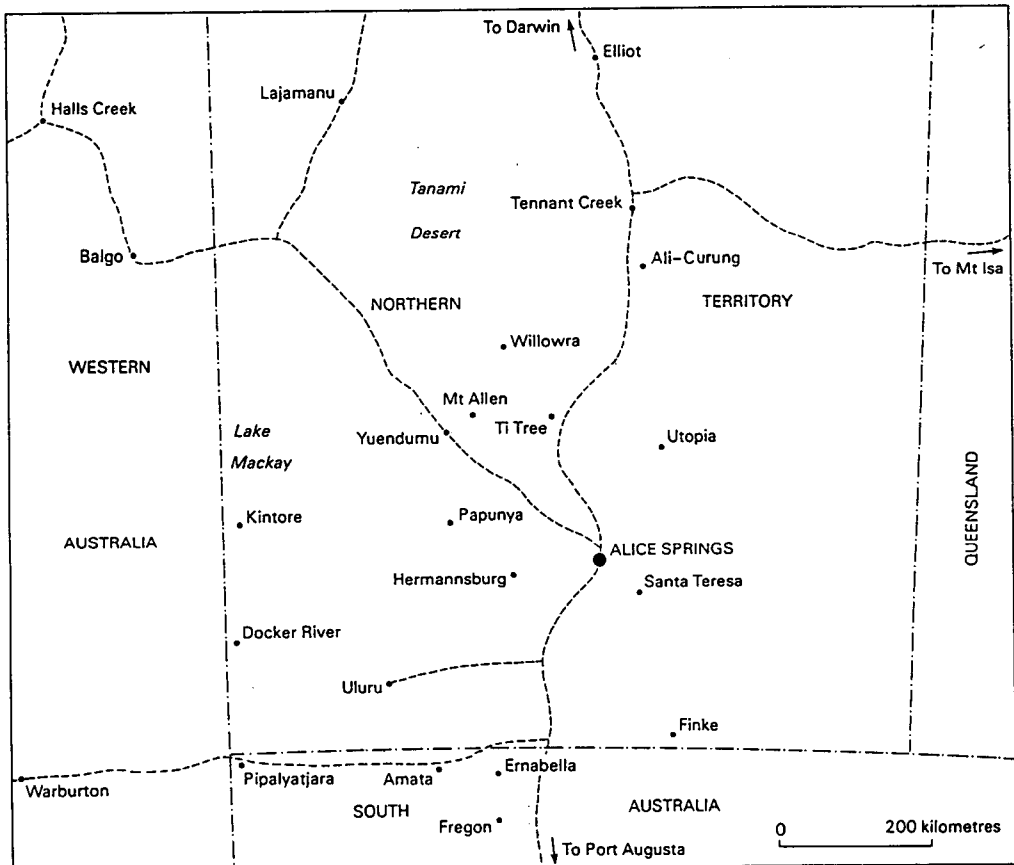


Fig. 2.1 Major Aboriginal communities in Central Australia

also relocated to Hermannsburg. Altogether these Arrernte must have suffered severe disruption to many basic elements of their social and cultural life. Aborigines from more remote and generally drier country, where there appeared to be few commercially useful resources, escaped such pressures and controls until much more recent times but were eventually forced into large settlements under government or mission administration. Warlpiri, whose territory covered thousands of square kilometres of dry country across the Tanami Desert to the north-west of Alice Springs, first grouped in large numbers at ration depots set up in the 1940s in the middle of the Tanami Desert, at a time when they were being enlisted as labourers to help in the construction of the bitumen highway from Alice Springs to Darwin. Immediately after the war they were moved to the newly established government settlement at Yuendumu, on the extreme eastern edge of their territory. Subsequently, because of water supply problems, a new government settlement was established in Kurindji country at Lajamanu, then called Hooker Creek, at least 800 kms distant on the other, northwestern side of the Tanami Desert and Warlpiri families were forcibly trucked there. On two occasions they trekked back to Yuendumu only to be taken straight back again. On the third occasion they stayed and, through later inter-marriage and participation in the local power structures, have effectively extended Warlpiri influence in this area. Other groups of Warlpiri, originally from desert country to the west of Tennant Creek, were forced to congregate at Phillip Creek, immediately to the north of the town but, again because of water shortages, moved in 1955 to Warrabri (now Ali-Curung). This government settlement, like Lajamanu, was not on Warlpiri land but on Alyawarre (Arrernte) country. Although the Warrabri Warlpiri did subsequently inter-marry with Alyawarre, their political power in the community was limited because they were not traditional land owners. Many have recently left Warrabri to reside closer to their own traditional territory. The experiences of the Arrernte and the Warlpiri are not unique and are generally similar to those affecting other large Central Australian groups such as the Pintupi or Pitjantjatjara.

Enforced relocation was perceived as both administratively and economically advantageous as well as politically expedient. It was a method of exerting colonial control over the activities of a minority group. Other methods employed were less direct. Services, such as schools and health clinics, ration depots and welfare cheques were all, through being concentrated at only a few locations, used to attract people to central points. Subsequently these service centres were instrumental in assimilating Aborigines to non-Aboriginal lifestyles. Conversely, in the case of Alice Springs, where non-Aboriginal residents viewed

Aboriginal in-migration as a threat to the community, failure to provide services was used as a positive deterrent to settlement.

The effects of these types of political control, still clearly operating until the early 1970s, remain apparent today. But during the last 15 years they have been countered by other factors - the change of official policy from assimilation to self-management and self-determination and, an integral part of this change, the granting of Aboriginal land rights. Through the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976, many Aboriginal groups have gained legally recognised freehold tenure to their traditional country. Although, in their eyes, non-Aboriginal alienation of that land had not removed their inherent rights to it, the confirmation of these rights in non-Aboriginal law provides them with much greater security. The effects of changes in land tenure are very obvious. Aboriginal groups now feel that they can move back to areas where residence was formerly discouraged, in most cases their original tribal lands; or they can continue living in the same place, but without the threat of eviction as squatters. In the former case, land tenure has led to the establishment of 'outstations' or 'homeland centres', small communities of extended family groups, usually with no more than 50 members. In the latter case land tenure, usually in the form of special purpose leases, has enabled people to legally establish themselves in or on the periphery of towns such as Alice Springs or Tennant Creek, and, more recently, on small areas excised from non-Aboriginal pastoral properties. Surveys conducted by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in 1985 suggest that at least 170 small groups, including both outstations and communities on non-Aboriginal owned cattle stations, exist in Central Australia alone. A further, more specific effect of changes in land tenure has occurred with the government-funded purchase of seven pastoral properties for Central Australian Aboriginal groups. Both those already living on these properties and their relatives elsewhere have benefitted from the security offered. Many families, who had previously left these stations either voluntarily or involuntarily have now returned to join their kin.

The change to a policy of self-management, which implies that people should have a say in determining where and how they wish to live, has in broad theoretical terms reversed the former linkage between service provision and population movement. In the past people were moved to the services, whereas now the services should follow the people. In practical terms this does not always happen. Nevertheless, many outstation groups have been provided with essentials such as permanent water supplies and communications, and, at a later stage, health services, shelter and occasionally power supplies and schooling. Altogether the effects on

Aboriginal population distribution have been dramatic. Settlements like Yuendumu and Warrabri have shrunk to about half their former size as people have moved to outstations and to Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. At the same time their service roles have been extended because they now act as resource centres for outstation groups scattered over a broad region instead of merely providing for the needs of the local resident population. In addition the Aboriginal-owned cattle stations, several of which now have over 300 residents, have become significant Aboriginal communities in Central Australian terms.

Political factors affecting population mobility interact strongly with economic factors. These economic elements can be considered in two ways; those which stem from non-Aboriginal concepts of the land and its resources; and those related to Aboriginal valuation of resources. The alienation of land for the development of pastoral properties, clearly a component of the former type, not only displaced Aborigines in a physical sense but also created a new feature, an industry which as the Berndts (1987, 4-12) describe, wanted to exploit, and in fact came to depend on, Aboriginal labour. Groups of workers were encouraged to settle near the homesteads and the rewards which they received both in cash and kind subsequently drew other non-working families into the community. In times of drought and food shortages these groups expanded dramatically. But their actual size and stability depended more on the policies followed by individual pastoralists than on decisions taken by the Aborigines. Some pastoralists recognised the significance of family ties and accepted large Aboriginal populations near their homesteads. They co-existed with them in an interdependent, if paternalistic, relationship. Others discouraged Aboriginal settlement, employed non-Aboriginal labourers, and depended increasingly on costly, capital-intensive practices such as helicopter mustering. The attitude could change with every change of ownership. Pastoralists who supported the Aboriginal presence were concerned to preserve this. At Willowra, for example, in the late 1960s, a prospective buyer (a representative of an overseas company) is reported as having commented 'When we take over this place the first thing we will do is chuck off all the blacks'. The owner refused to sell and eventually completed successful negotiations for the station to be bought by the government for the Aborigines. Not all reached such a satisfactory solution. Several properties on Anmatyerre country, between Yuendumu and Alice Springs, now have no permanent Aboriginal populations although, in the 1950s and 1960s they had many resident families with traditional ties to the land. These insecurities have made the legal excision of land for living areas for Aboriginal groups on cattle stations a major priority.

Other non-Aboriginal economic factors are wage employment and general access to cash as a resource. Historical records show that Aborigines did move from one cattle station to another, presumably partly for work-related reasons. Such movement still occurs, as for example from Mt Allan to the Coniston stockcamp during the mustering season. In the larger Aboriginal settlements employment opportunities have always been and remain limited. People do not seem to move to such places on the chance of getting a wage job. However residents in these settlements may well resist joining their families in outstations because this means giving up relatively lucrative positions with organisations such as the community council or housing association. Many Warlpiri in Yuendumu have taken such a stance. In contrast almost all the Yuendumu based Pintupi have now moved to outstations, partly because, as the most recent settlers in that community, they could not gain places in the wageforce. Wage employment, similarly, does not seem to be a prime reason for Aboriginal movement to Alice Springs (Young, 1981), partly because people already know not only whether there are jobs in the town but also whether they as individuals have any chance of getting them. Movement to Alice Springs is also affected by whether or not those concerned see the town as 'foreign' country, territory beyond the range of their known social networks.

Access to cash, either through wage earning or through other channels such as welfare payments, has become an essential element of life. It is an element which, in terms of mobility, plays an increasingly important part because of the need for motor vehicles. Without transport most of the changes of recent times would have been much less dramatic. Outstation dwellers without a vehicle feel very vulnerable because this inhibits their communication with the outside world. This may affect them if they encounter health problems. It also limits their access to productive subsistence resources, an important point considering the low levels of cash income in Aboriginal communities (Ellanna et al., 1988). A lack of transport also decreases opportunities for different groups to take part in ceremonies and other meetings involving long distance journeys. But, as far as most families are concerned, the cash available through existing sources can meet most essential needs although not luxuries. There is little evidence that people have actually moved to gain access to other sources of cash, such as the profits earned by the Aboriginal cattle stations. Despite the fact that some non-Aborigines have assumed that the inward movement of families to these properties stems solely from a desire to share in the cash profit (termed the 'Golden Casket' effect by at least one non-Aboriginal pastoralist), the main reason why people have returned to these places seems to be

customary and social - spiritual attachment to and responsibility for land, and the desire to live with other members of the family.

Social factors are inextricably interlinked with political and economic factors. They include the existence of extremely close and highly valued ties between members of extended families, ties which incorporate various levels of interdependence expressed through reciprocal exchange. People's family contacts can be perceived as a web which links together units which, otherwise, might be assumed to be relatively 'independent'. The existence of the web enables Aborigines to cope with many of the problems of the non-Aboriginal setting, including the barriers raised by long distance separation. Despite the fact that the Warlpiri now live in three large communities (Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Warrabri), cattle stations (Willowra, Mt Allan), numerous outstations, and towns (Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and even Darwin), the need to maintain social links is so great the people overcome the physical barriers whenever possible (Young, 1983). The Pitjantjatjara, often described as the most mobile group in Central Australia, clearly do the same in their journeys in the country bordering Western Australia, the Northern Territory and South Australia and extending as far afield as Ceduna, Port Augusta and Kalgoorlie.

All these factors which contribute to the contemporary and historical setting of Aboriginal life in rural parts of Central Australia combine to form a complex whole with many variations. These are, to some extent, revealed through regional patterns of settlement. Central Australian Aborigines today live in a wide range of communities: large settlements, formerly under government or mission administration, with populations exceeding 500 and up to 1000 (now often called Aboriginal towns); communities on Aboriginal-owned cattle stations, some of which also approach that size; groups living on non-Aboriginal-owned cattle stations, ranging in size from a few families to 100 or 200 people; and outstations, mostly on Aboriginal freehold land and generally with populations below 100 (Fig. 2.2) As Table 2.1 shows, the population is not evenly distributed.

Historical information on the establishment and growth of these communities, and of the mobility processes practised by their residents, is extremely limited. It does, however, provide some background to the contemporary case-studies which furnish the main body of data for this study; it also seeks to confirm some of the general points discussed in terms of the setting for population movement.

Table 2.1
Central Australian Aboriginal Population Distribution, 1981

	<u>Nos.</u>	<u>%</u>
Non-Aboriginal towns	3,476	26.3
Aboriginal towns	5,292	40.0
Aboriginal cattle stations	1,308	9.9
Non-Aboriginal cattle stations	2,000	15.1
Outstations	<u>1,150</u>	<u>8.7</u>
Total	13,226	100.0

Sources: Various, including ABS Population Census, 1981;
DAA Community Profiles, 1981.

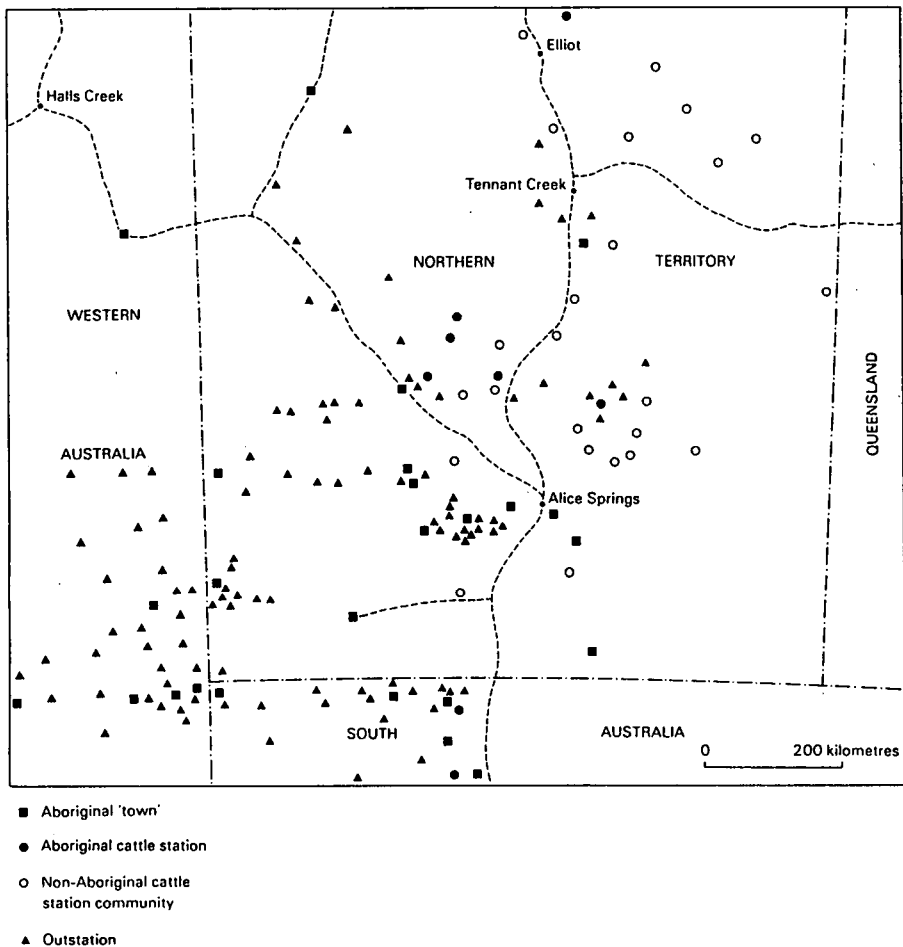


Figure 2.2 Types of Aboriginal settlement

The historical evidence for Aboriginal population mobility

Historical evidence for Aboriginal settlement and population movement in Central Australia comes from a variety of sources which vary in scale, coverage and accuracy. These include general population counts made at different times by government departments concerned with the registration of Wards; censuses conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics; and community profiles compiled by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. They also include more detailed records kept in particular communities, often in the form of employment registers and annual returns for welfare purposes. Other detailed sources, of significance only at micro-level, include life-histories collected by researchers with lengthy and close contact with particular communities (for example, Hercus and Sutton, 1986, Ch. 30; Myers, 1986, Chs. 2 and 3); and stories recorded in the transcripts of Aboriginal evidence taken in the course of Land Claim hearings.

Regional population distribution

Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show the distribution of the Aboriginal population as recorded in the Register of Wards in 1957 and in 1964. Both indicate that the main concentrations at that time lay on or near the Stuart Highway and in areas to the east. They include considerable numbers of people in Alice Springs. These two distributions represent groups living in two main situations - in the Aboriginal 'towns' (government and mission settlements such as Yuendumu, Papunya, Hermannsburg, Warrabri and Santa Teresa); and on non-Aboriginal pastoral properties. They exclude information on people not ordinarily resident in those types of community and therefore greatly underestimate both the total numbers of Aborigines in the region, and their presence in certain areas. Comparison of the two maps is of limited use in examining population mobility within the period concerned. First, the data themselves are recorded by a wide variety of people, some of whom would undoubtedly be more exact than others - settlement superintendents, missionaries and pastoralists- and are compiled from annual returns and continuous updates. Secondly, the data show only people in regular contact with non-Aborigines. In 1957, and even in 1964, people from western parts of the region had in many cases not yet made such contact. The Pintupi people in particular remained on the far periphery of the settled area, and were still largely nomadic within their tribal lands. Pintupi around Lakes Mackay and White, for example, made their first main contact with non-Aborigines in 1957 when Donald Thomson travelled westwards into that area from Yuendumu. It was not until 1963 or 1964 that many of them actually came to live in Papunya and Yuendumu. Some people in the earlier settled lands to the east, in Arrernte

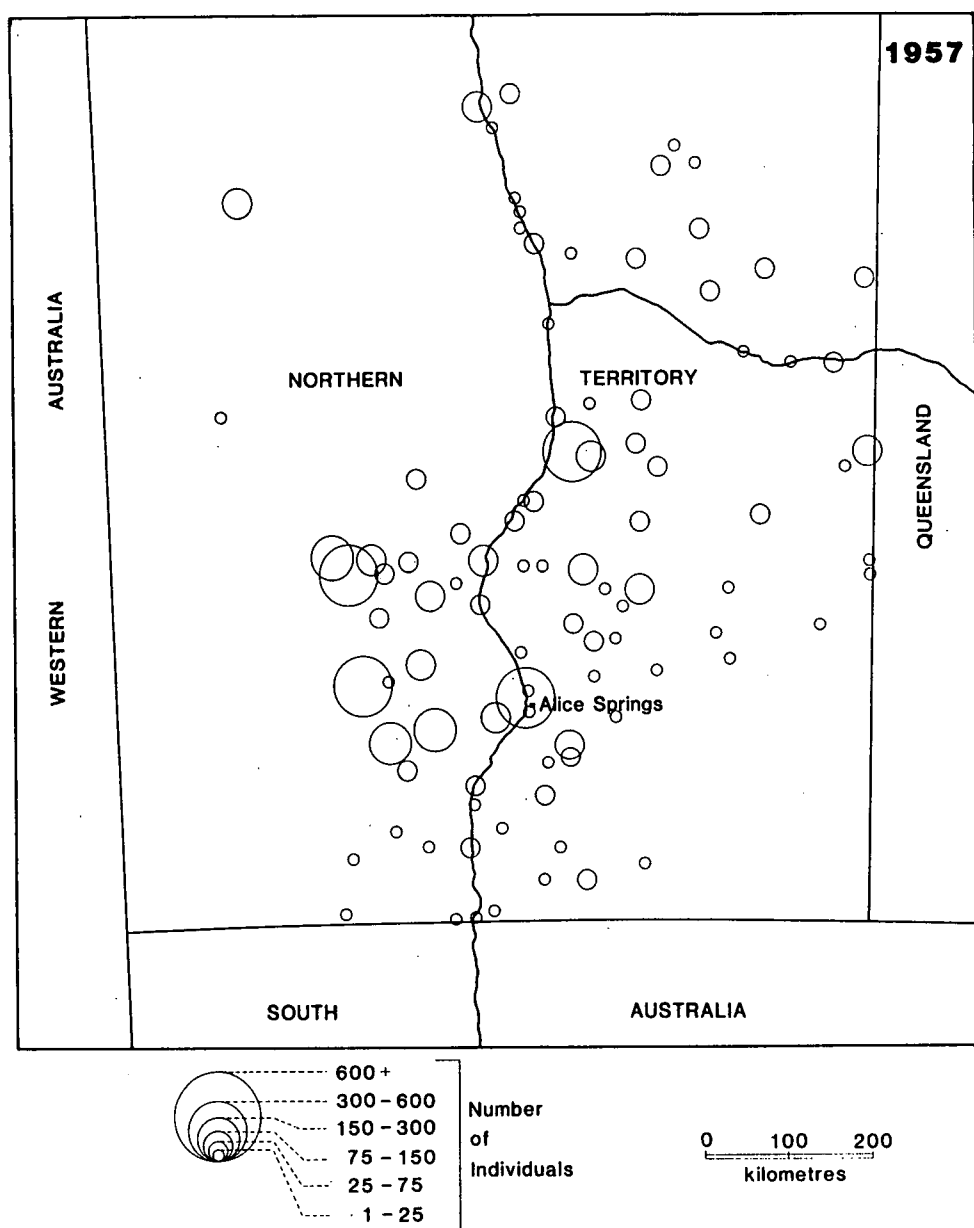


Figure 2.3 Aboriginal population distribution, 1957

country, also had only limited contact during that period. In the early 1960s on Ti-Tree station, 200 kms to the north of Alice Springs, those who were not actually part of the workforce or who were dependents of workers, were discouraged from camping near the homestead. The pastoralist refused to apply for rations for such people because he did

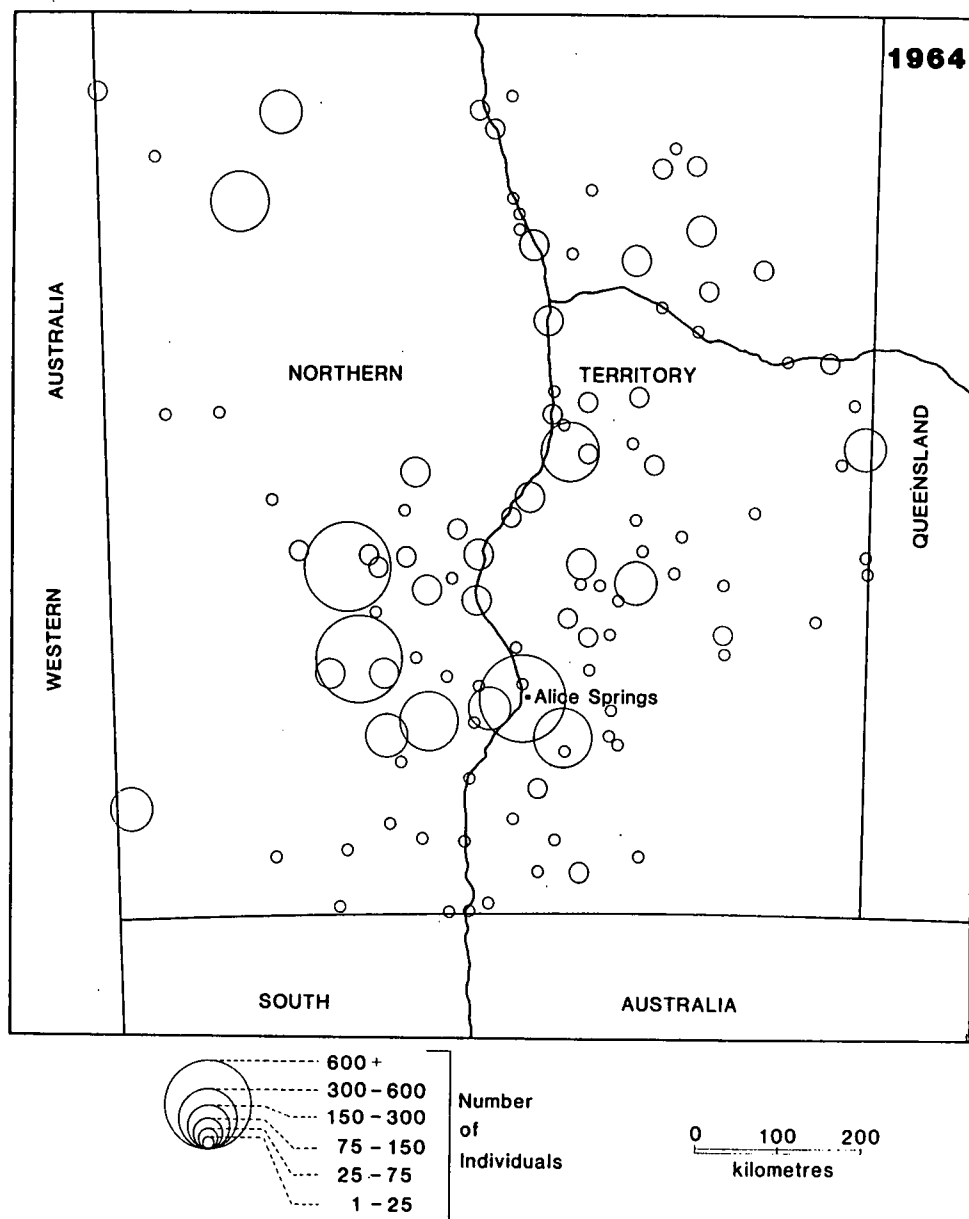


Figure 2.4 Aboriginal population distribution, 1964

not want them hanging around, and therefore a considerable number of families seem to have been living in the bush in the rugged western parts of the lease (Jupurrula, pers. com. 1983). Stories such as these could undoubtedly be relayed by many other groups on other stations, and resulted in instability in pastoral station groups.

Although these problems inhibit meaningful comparison of the two maps, there are some interesting changes which may indicate some movement between 1957 and 1964. These include the obvious growth of Santa Teresa, Lajamanu and Wave Hill; the establishment of some new communities, notably Docker River; and the expansion of town groups in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. Santa Teresa, established in the late 1950s because of the enforced relocation of Arltunga people after failure of the water supply, was in the early stages of its growth. It is probable that families who later moved there were still living on surrounding cattle stations. Because of proximity to Alice Springs it was and remains a place with a highly mobile population, where figures are always questionable. Lajamanu and Wave Hill, similarly, had only been recently established at the beginning of this period. Lajamanu although set up in 1949 did not expand rapidly until 1955 when a significant number of Warlpiri families moved there from Yuendumu. Docker River was set up in 1960 as a centralised community for western Pitjantjatjara groups, some of whom had been displaced from their homelands in the course of the atomic tests at Maralinga in the late 1950s.

Comparison of the total populations recorded in 1957 and 1964 also suggests that by the latter date far more people had been enumerated. The total number of Aborigines registered in the Central Australian region in 1957 was 5741 compared to 8935 in 1964. If this 1964 figure is further compared with the Central Australian Aboriginal population total for 1981 (around 13200), the average annual rate of increase during that period is 2.3 per cent. This figure is very close to estimated rates of contemporary natural increase for the Aboriginal population. It suggests that by 1964 the registration of Aborigines in the region was virtually complete, an assumption which accords with historical records which indicate that most groups were in regular contact by that time.

The 1957 data also roughly indicate the demographic structure of the Central Australian Aboriginal group. At that time 33.7 per cent of the population was aged between 0 and 14; 56.7 per cent was between 15 and 59; and only 9.4 per cent was aged over 60. The masculinity ratio was 99. Comparable figures from the 1981 census are 40.7 per cent below the age of 15, and a masculinity ratio of 98. This suggests that although the 1957 enumeration was deficient, women were not obviously being excluded as a group. However the proportion of children was low. This would certainly be partly due to higher infant and child mortality rates at that time, rather than a lower fertility rate. It could also be that some children, particularly those in the youngest age groups and those at the stage of formal initiation, were under-enumerated.

The other main source of data that indicates regional population distribution is information collected by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs as part of their series of Community Profiles. These are more useful than data from the national censuses because the census units used in the latter counts are often too large and are not point specific. Their boundaries rarely coincide with those seen as appropriate by the Aboriginal community. Thus, for example, the census commonly enumerates outstations in different units from the resource centres responsible for their service provision. Moreover, because of confidentiality restrictions, only the larger Aboriginal communities are separately enumerated, and it is impossible to examine either the location or size of smaller settlements. Community profile data, on the other hand, are compiled on the basis of known units of Aboriginal settlement. They are undoubtedly less accurate than census data, particularly as regards social and economic characteristics, but for the purposes of examining general distributions, are of greater value.

Population distributions from community profiles compiled in 1979, 1981 and 1983 are shown in Figs. 2.5-2.7. They are similar, but show some interesting contrasts with those already examined (Figs 2.3 and 2.4). In particular, the community profile maps show a much more extensive scatter of settlement to the west of the Stuart Highway, especially around Hermannsburg, Papunya, Yuendumu and Docker River. This partly reflects better enumeration of groups in this, the more isolated part of the region, but more importantly it shows the recent dispersion of population from the Aboriginal 'towns' to outstations. As the maps show, there are now many small Aboriginal settlements, some often in areas which were, according to the Register of Wards data, previously unoccupied. Some of these small places, for example Kintore and Nyirrpi to the west of Yuendumu, have grown so rapidly in recent years that they are now classified as Aboriginal towns rather than outstations.

All these sources of general data for the Central Australian region give very limited information on Aboriginal population mobility. This can be attributed both to the deficiencies in enumeration and to the fact that data collected at single points in time, such as the censuses are by definition of little value for this purpose. In 1976 and 1981, however, national censuses, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics have included questions on mobility. These questions document the residential status of each individual at the time of the census, defining that person as a resident or visitor; where that person was living one year earlier; and where that person was living five years earlier. Data are available only for major communities with a relatively large Aboriginal population

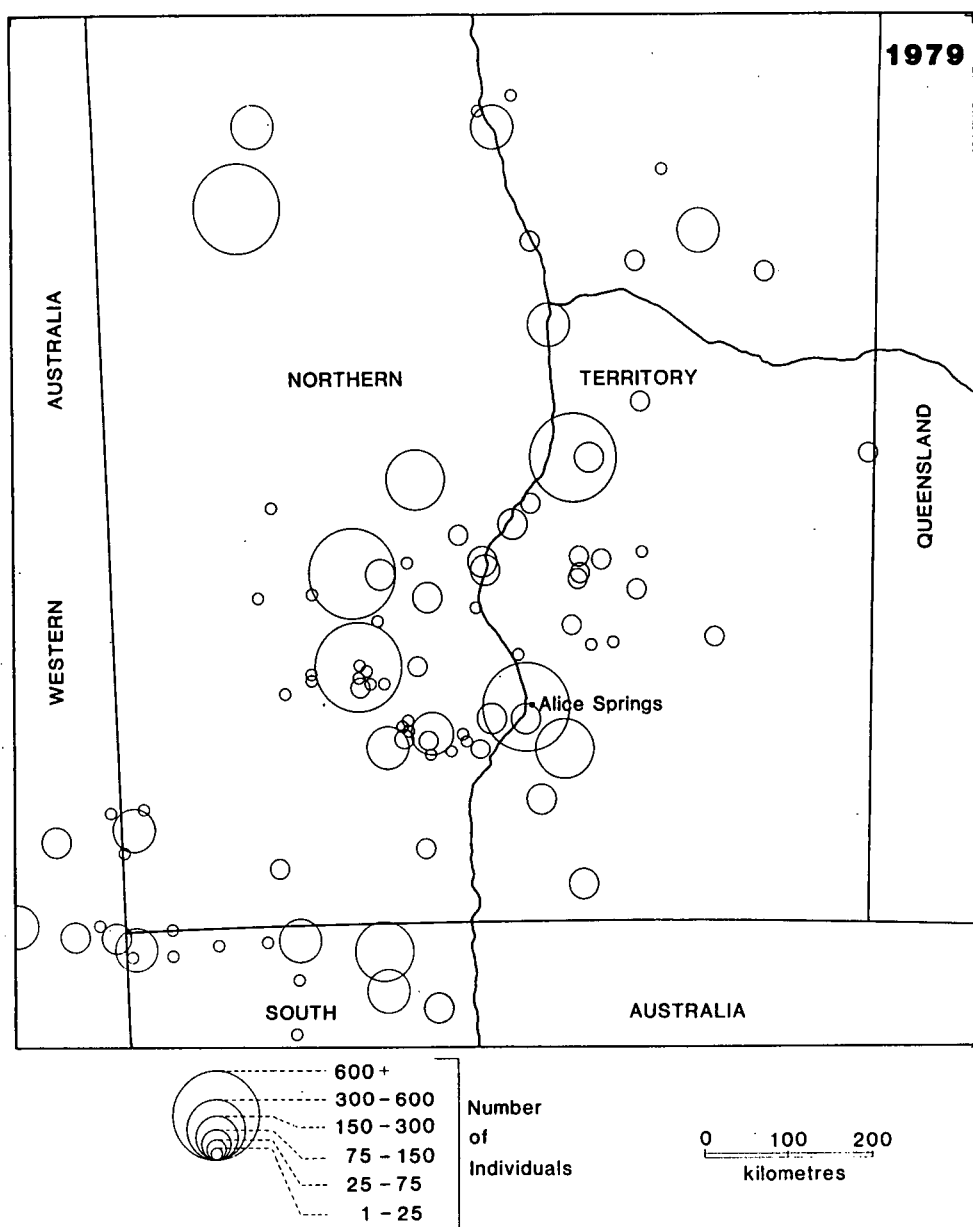


Figure 2.5 Aboriginal population distribution 1979

such as urban centres, Aboriginal towns, and some Aboriginal-owned cattle stations; and for remaining rural parts of Local Government Areas (LGA). Because these units are so large, these data are of limited use for examining mobility within the region. However some important points do emerge. Table 2.2 shows the results for the whole region

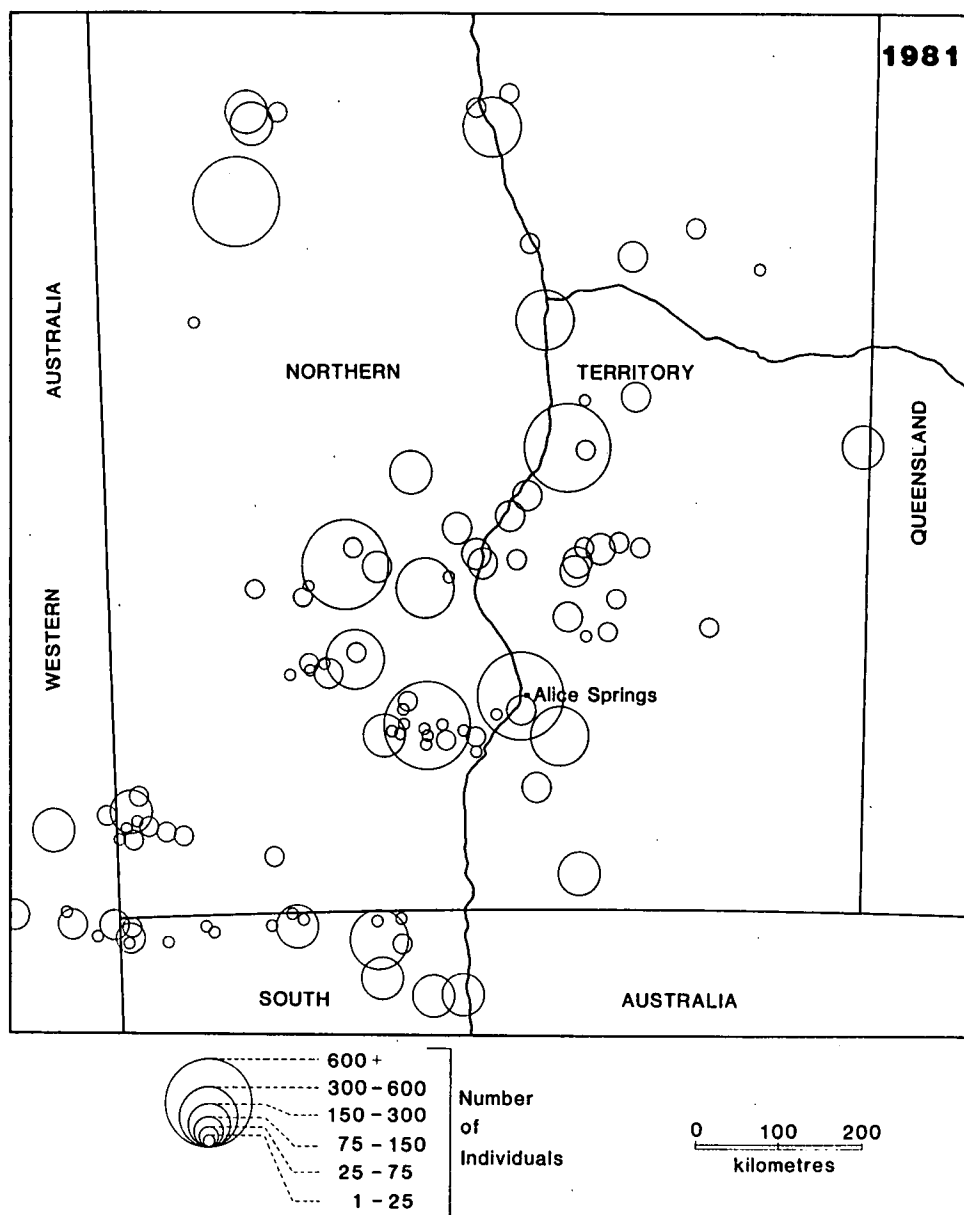


Figure 2.6 Aboriginal population distribution, 1981

for 1981. In every community or rural LGA a very high proportion of Aborigines classified themselves as residents. Proportions ranged from 100 per cent to 77.5 per cent and in most cases exceeded 90 per cent. Individual variations are not particularly significant although the urban communities of Alice Springs and Tennant Creek appeared to have larger numbers of visitors. This reflects the

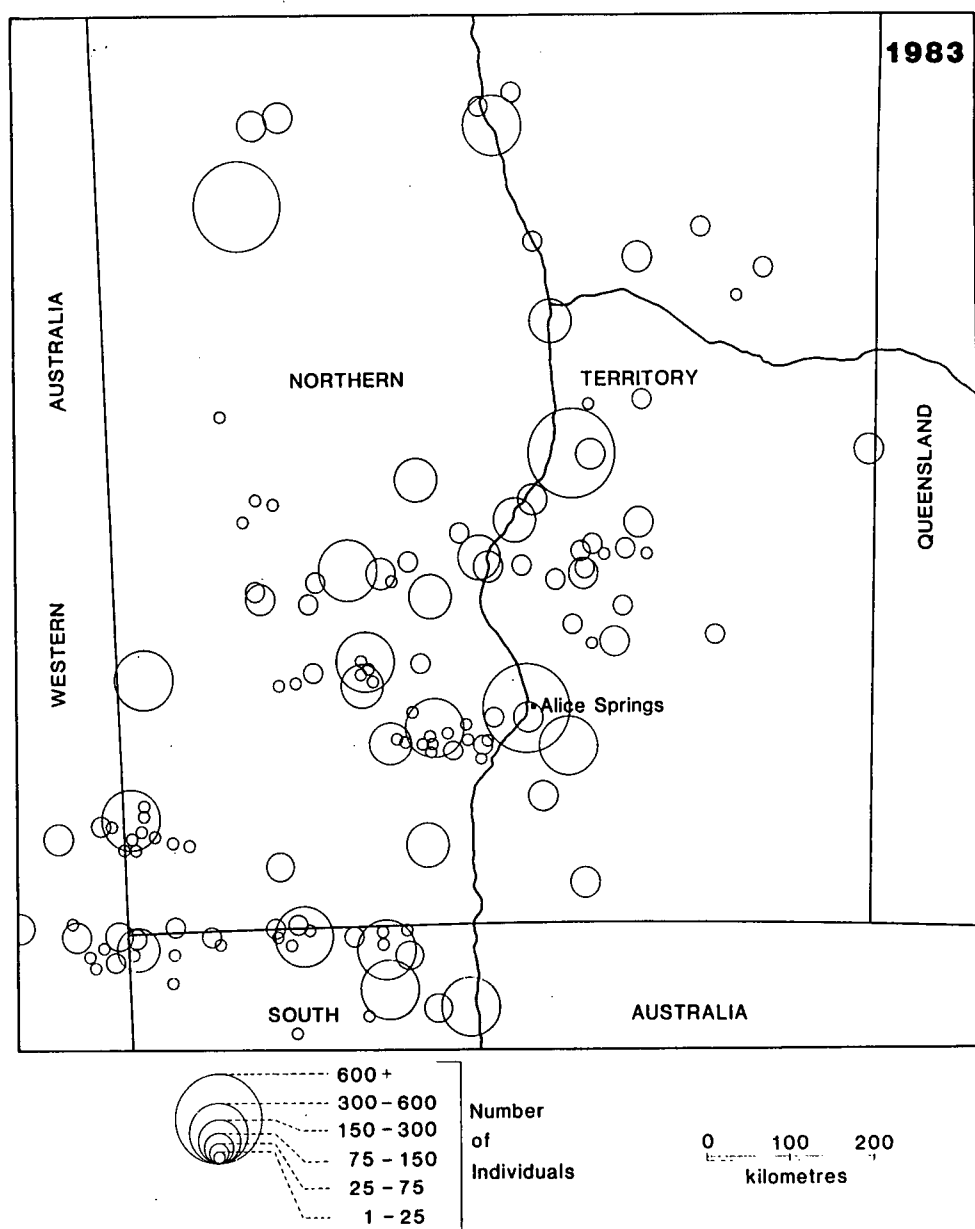


Figure 2.7 Aboriginal population distribution, 1983

importance of these towns as regional service and recreation centres. Areyonga, with a low proportion of residents, differs from other Aboriginal towns. However from other information it is known that that community was undergoing a rapid population change at that time, related to outstation development.

Table 2.2
Aboriginal Population Movement, 1981: % of Total

Location	Resident 1981	1980-81			1976-81		
		Non-mover	Mover in NT	Mover ex-NT	Non-mover	Mover in Nt	Mover ex-NT
Alice Springs	85.4	75.6	19.4	4.9	44.4	43.6	12.0
Amoon-guna	100.0	85.7	12.1	2.2	71.4	20.8	7.8
Areyonga	77.5	95.2	2.9	1.9	87.0	9.8	3.3
Docker River	90.7	98.9	1.1	-	97.5	2.5	-
Hermannsburg	93.8	95.6	4.2	0.2	91.9	8.1	-
Hooker Creek	99.5	95.0	4.3	0.7	92.2	6.8	1.0
Jay Creek	87.6	98.6	1.4	-	93.8	6.2	-
Papunya	97.6	98.3	1.3	0.4	97.8	1.5	0.7
Santa Teresa	98.7	96.2	3.3	0.5	89.6	8.4	1.9
Tennant Creek	91.8	81.6	12.8	5.7	51.3	38.7	9.9
Ti-Tree	100.0	91.5	8.5	-	82.1	17.9	-
Utopia	100.0	99.5	0.5	-	87.7	11.5	0.8
Warrabri	98.0	97.7	2.0	0.3	98.5	1.5	-
Willowra	96.0	92.9	7.1	-	85.0	15.0	-
Yuendumu	96.4	94.9	4.4	0.7	94.2	5.2	0.7
Petermann	93.6	87.2	9.4	3.4	79.9	14.4	5.7
Tennant Creek	96.9	92.1	5.8	2.1	84.3	11.9	3.8
Sandover	96.3	93.6	5.8	0.6	86.2	12.4	1.4
Tanami	96.1	90.7	8.8	0.5	82.4	16.9	0.7
Victoria	92.8	87.5	8.3	4.2	74.8	12.5	2.7

Between 1980 and 1981 less than ten per cent of Aboriginal residents in most communities and LGAs changed their places of residence (Table 2.2). However, as before, the population of urban communities had been more mobile than people living in the rural centres. Of those who had moved, most had only gone between places within the Northern Territory. Exceptions were Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, where there were slightly more inter-state movers, and rural regions such as Petermann and Victoria, where Aboriginal groups allied through language and kinship moved across the Northern Territory, South Australian and Western Australian boundaries. Mobility patterns for the five year intercensal period were similar, although the percentage of those who had moved was considerably higher, particularly in the towns. The emphasis remained on movement within the local

region rather than inter-state movement. Above all these characteristics emphasise the stability of the Central Australian Aboriginal population and contrast markedly with those of the non-Aboriginal population of the region. Of those non-Aborigines enumerated in 1981, only 28.9 per cent had not moved within the preceding five years, and 35.9 per cent had made inter-state moves.

Local population change

Large scale data sources such as the national censuses and the DAA Community Profiles suggest two important features of Aboriginal mobility. First, Aborigines in Central Australia appear to be fairly immobile over a long distance, but, secondly, they are mobile within the local region. These points can be further examined using more detailed data from the historical records submitted by pastoralists. However, for a variety of reasons, these records are of only limited use. Their accuracy is suspect, both because pastoralists submitted a variety of detail in their returns, and because the information requested was not always standard from one year to the next. They refer only to the population resident on a station at the actual date of the return, and therefore do not indicate any movement which may have occurred within that time period covered (officially a year). And, since many records have subsequently been lost or destroyed, they lack continuity. For these reasons these records have not been analysed here on a broad regional basis. The discussion refers solely to a group of Warlpiri/Anmatyerre cattle stations, some of which formed the detailed case-studies conducted during this project and others of which are adjacent to these communities. They include the contemporary properties of Aileron, Anningie, Ti-Tree, Mount Allen, Willowra, Coniston and Mount Denison (Fig.2.1).

Information contained in the pastoral employer records is very basic - the names of individuals, grouped according to their family structures, and their presence or absence at a particular time. Additional information occasionally recorded includes the place from which that person came, the estimated date of birth, and, in the case of normal residents not present, where the absentees were supposed to be. Indicators of population change which can be calculated for each property include the annual rate of population growth; the population attrition rate, or the proportion of the population lost over the time specified; and the population turnover rate, or the gross turnover in population during the time interval studied. Ideally, for comparative purposes, the same time periods should be used for all stations. However, because of the problem of data continuity this is rarely possible. Nevertheless some interesting trends emerge (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3
Population Growth, Turnover and Attrition Rates
at Selected Cattle Stations

	<u>Growth rate</u> <u>% per annum</u>	<u>Attrition Rate</u> <u>(*)</u>	<u>Turnover Rate</u> <u>(**)</u>
Aileron			
1963-68	-5.1	41	77
1968-73	-2.0	39	76
1963-73	-3.6	57	120
Anningie			
1963-67	-8.8	78	189
Ti-Tree			
1965-75	+4.8	51	101
1975-84	+17.3	24	87
1965-84	+10.0	49	100
Mount Allen			
1968-73	+7.4	35	77
1973-81	+5.6	61	87
1968-81	+6.3	58	78
Willowra			
1963-68	+8.7	33	78
1968-73	-1.2	36	71
1973-79	+9.1	26	71
1963-79	+5.6	39	91
Coniston			
1962-66	0.0	71	138
1966-70	-0.6	69	139
1962-70	-0.3	71	143
Mount Denison			
1954-62	-11.0	94	324
1962-68	+4.5	88	158
1954-68	-4.7	242	276

*Attrition = $\frac{\text{Population lost (deaths, outmigration)}}{\text{Total population at beginning of time period}} \times 100$
Rate

**Turnover = $\frac{\text{Population gained (births, immigration) + Population lost (deaths, outmigration)}}{\text{Total population at end of time period}} \times 100$
Rate

Sources: Pastoral station employers returns, various years.

Rates of population growth varied very widely, both from one time period to another, and between different cattle stations. These variations necessarily reflect the problems with the data set, in particular the wide fluctuations which occur because of the seasonal nature of cattle station employment, and the occurrence of ceremonial activities and other events which lead to large Aboriginal groups moving from one place to another. For example, station records completed in January/February, when the stockcamp normally does not function and Aboriginal ceremonies are often held, may well record large numbers of people normally living elsewhere, or, alternatively, fail to record many families who are usually in residence.

Over the time periods concerned three stations - Willowra, Mount Allen and Ti-Tree - showed marked increases in population, of the order of six to ten per cent per annum in the last 15 to 20 years. These rates are far above those which could be achieved by natural increase. All of these properties are now under Aboriginal ownership, and it appears that some of the highest rates of growth occurred after the purchase. Ti-Tree, for example, had an annual population growth rate of over 17 per cent between 1975 and 1984, but grew much less rapidly in the earlier 1965-75 period; Willowra also had a high rate of growth (9.1 per cent) in the period following purchase. Undoubtedly these high rates can be at least partly attributed to the inward migration of families who although they had been living elsewhere, were related to people already resident on these stations, and were recognised as holding traditional responsibility for land within them. But this is not the only reason why these properties attracted migrants. It also reflects pressures exerted by European pastoralists elsewhere, who, following the introduction of Pastoral Award Wages in the late 1960s, were deliberately reducing the sizes of their resident Aboriginal groups. Local factors also operated. In Ti-Tree, for example, a large component of the population increase can be explained by the enforced resettlement of families who had been resident on neighbouring Aileron, in a camp with inadequate permanent water supplies. One year before Ti-Tree's purchase as an Aboriginal property, this group was relocated on a small excision, ten kilometres to the south of Ti-Tree Well on the Stuart Highway.

In contrast the losses of population on the other, European-owned stations probably partly reflect the gradual movement away from places which offered limited amenity, and where an Aboriginal presence was not encouraged. Such movement has continued up until the present day and three of these properties - Aileron, Coniston and Mount Denison - now have no permanent Aboriginal populations. The case of Aileron has already been discussed. In the cases of Coniston and Mount

Denison, Aboriginal families were encouraged to leave by the pastoralists, although to some extent their decision was influenced by their interest in neighbouring Mount Allen, purchased in 1976. Many of these families now live at Mount Allen, although they continue to visit the other two properties to safeguard their sacred places and to hunt and gather in their ancestral lands. They also, in the case of Coniston, provide the seasonal labour force for the stockcamp. But their dream of re-establishing a permanent Coniston camp has not been realised.

Population attrition rates, which indicate the proportion of the population lost during different time periods, were high for many of the cattle stations (Table 2.3). As with the population growth rates, the variation in attrition rates can partly be explained by the limitations of the data. But some general trends also emerge. For many stations - Aileron, Ti-Tree, Mount Denison - the attrition rate in the earlier period seemed to be higher than in more recent times, although the differences are mostly quite small. While this may suggest higher mortality in past decades, this may also indicate that mobility was higher in the earlier stages of development of the pastoral industry. Differences in the magnitude of rates may also be related to differing attitudes on the part of individual pastoralists. Willowra, where the attrition rate is consistent and comparatively low, was a community where the Aborigines were benignly if paternalistically treated, and where people did not feel that they were being pushed off their tribal land. Moreover, because it lies far from the Stuart Highway, relatively inaccessible both to activities along the road and to the attractions of Alice Springs, people's attachment to the community noticeably remained stronger than in many other settlements. Another factor affecting population movement at Willowra is the strength of community organisation. Willowra families are all very closely inter-linked through marriage, and the leaders of the community exert strong control over the behaviour of younger members in particular; this affects their mobility, especially in relation to Alice Springs. Ti-Tree, in comparison, had a higher overall rate of attrition (49 per cent over 20 years, compared to 39 per cent over 16 years at Willowra). This may well stem from high mobility occurring because of easy access to the main road. It may also reflect a less sympathetic attitude from the station owner towards the settlement of old people and other dependents not employed in stockwork.

Population turnover rates for individual stations were also extremely high (Table 2.3). Aileron, over the 1963-73 decade, had a turnover rate of 120 per cent, which means that the numbers of people entering and leaving the population during that time exceeded the resident

population. Anningie, admittedly a small community, recorded a rate of almost 200 per cent over only five years, and the rates for Coniston, Ti-Tree and Mount Denison were also extremely high. Although these rates are partly affected by births and deaths their magnitude can again be largely attributed to mobility.

Calculation of population growth rates, attrition rates and rates of turnover merely indicate that Aboriginal mobility on a local scale was high. But the cattle station records can also be used to examine some of the spatial characteristics of population movement between properties. Because the stations considered here form a group, centred on the one region and inhabited by a culturally and linguistically homogenous Aboriginal population, mobility can be investigated by examining the names of those making up individual family groups, and seeing if they turn up in different sets of records. This exercise, while clearly fraught with difficulties, fills in some of the information lacking from the individual records themselves. For example, if a family called George, Annie, Dick and Jane are recorded in the Ti-Tree records in 1961, 1963, 1964 and 1970, and are also found in the Anningie records for 1962 and in the Willowra records for 1966 and 1968, one can deduce that they moved between these three stations.

Figure 2.8 shows, for each extended family group recorded at a specific station, which other stations they have been recorded at during the periods covered. In general these diagrams indicate that the proportion of non-movers recorded in each station is fairly small, and that most families have lived on at least one other property during the times considered. However the proportion of non-movers varies considerably between stations. Stations such as Anningie, Aileron and Coniston seem to have had very few residents who have never lived elsewhere, while in Willowra and Mt Allen almost one third of families have always resided in the same community. Although complete explanations for these variations are not possible some knowledge of the historical events which have affected these groups allow useful suggestions. The Anningie and Coniston populations were both reduced following the introduction of Award Wages in the late 1960s, and these properties are, moreover, located next to stations which have subsequently come under Aboriginal ownership - Willowra and Mt Allen respectively. People who hold traditional responsibility for land within the boundaries of Anningie and Coniston are linked through kinship with those on Willowra and Mt Allen, and that, combined with pressures encouraging them to move, has led to many establishing alternative residence in those places. Willowra and Mt Allen groups, in contrast, have not only been expanded by the addition of these families but also escaped the pressures to move out in the late 1960s. As

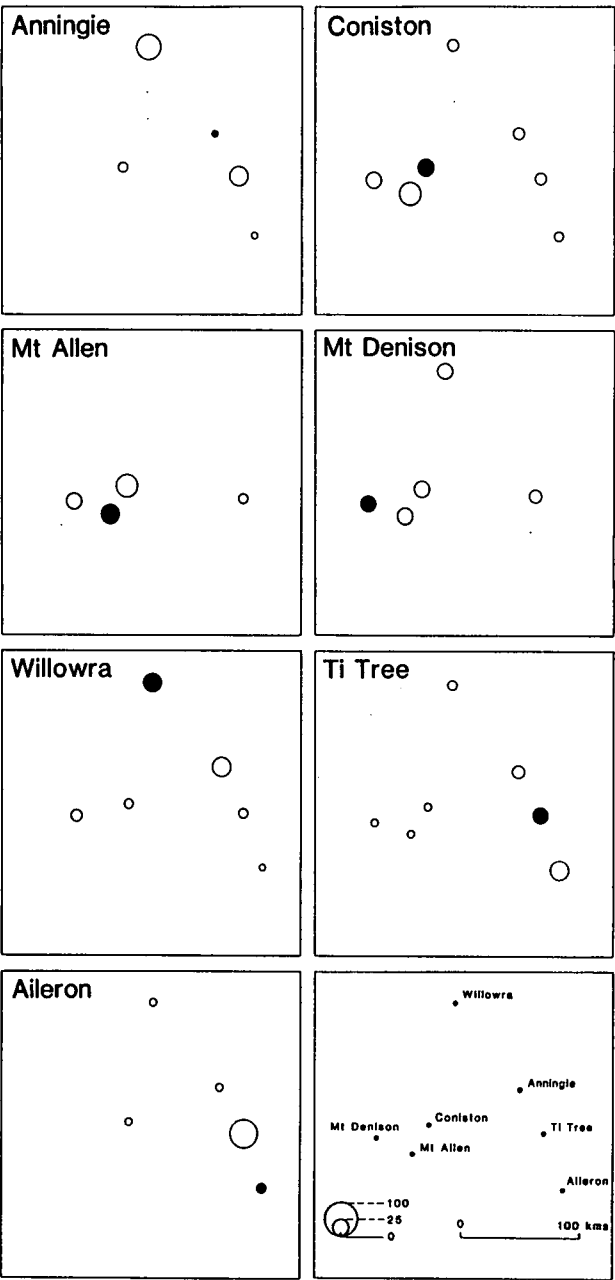


Figure 2.8 Mobility of families on Aboriginal cattle stations, 1960s and 1970s

mentioned above, this can be largely attributed to strong interdependent relationships between the pastoralists and the Aborigines built up over several decades. Aileron is a somewhat different case. Here the extremely low proportion of non-movers can be attributed largely to the enforced relocation of the group in the 1970s because of problems with the water supply.

The low proportion of non-migrants in each station obviously indicates a high degree of mobility overall. However the spatial extent of this mobility is limited. Most families who have lived in more than one location have in fact resided in only two, and these two are adjacent and closely linked in cultural and social terms. Thus two-thirds of the families who have lived at Anningie and also in one other location have been in Willowra, and most of the rest have been in Ti-Tree (Fig. 2.8). This reflects the very close ties of the Anningie group to these two groups, and, in spatial terms, its location as a transitional unit between the Lander River Warlpiri and the Anmatyerre of the Hanson area. In all other cases at least half of those families recorded in two locations have been in only one specific place, Coniston for Mt Allen and vice versa, Ti-Tree for Aileron and Anningie for Willowra.

These patterns, while described here for only a small number of cattle station groups and based on data sources which present considerable problems in interpretation, indicate some features which have important implications both in understanding contemporary mobility and Aboriginal relationships to land. As they suggest, Aboriginal groups whose country was alienated for pastoral development maintained their association with the area as long as it was possible. But that association was not necessarily with a single non-Aboriginal station because Aboriginal interests in land did not accord in spatial terms with the non-Aboriginal boundaries imposed when the cattle stations were formed. Thus families often had more than one, but usually only two stations which they considered to be places of residence. Such a pattern has only been disrupted under extreme pressure, as when some groups were forced to leave the region within which their land associations lay.

This type of pressure, occurring on properties where owners and managers took deliberate decisions to evict the local Aboriginal groups, has been much more apparent in some parts of Central Australia than others. In particular it has had a greater effect on the Arrernte than on the Warlpiri or Anmatyerre, and it has been largely responsible for the displacement of many of these groups into the town camps of Alice Springs. But despite the fact that these families were forced into town at least two decades ago and have brought up their children there, they have retained a strong

feeling for the country of their parents and grandparents. Recent efforts by Alice Springs families to obtain small excisions on some of the non-Aboriginal properties, and to establish 'country camps' there reflect this clearly. These camps, on stations such as Yambah, effectively become alternative residences for Alice Springs groups, people move between them in much the same way as they have been doing on neighbouring cattle stations such as Ti-Tree and Anningie. Mobility such as this does not, as is often suggested, demonstrate a lack of attachment to a place. In fact it expresses a multiple attachment, brought about both through social networks and through the need to oversee complex responsibilities for the land.

The high local mobility of Aboriginal cattle station residents has been coupled with a general tendency to remain within the region. This overall stability also affects current Aboriginal land tenure in Central Australia. People have, as suggested above, been able to retain their contact with the land and to continue to carry out their ceremonial responsibilities. Even when disruption has occurred and families have been forced to live outside their original areas and language groups, they have been able to establish themselves as recognised permanent resident in their new homes. Eventually this has given many displaced families a strong interest in their new country, and that interest has been recognised by traditional owners as one which gives them spiritual and ritual responsibilities. When such families conceive and bear children in that new country, the interest becomes very important. Several Land Claims presented for Aboriginal owned cattle stations have, on the instructions of the traditional owners, included the names of members of such incoming families as claimants (Young 1988). As this demonstrates, Aboriginal systems of land tenure are sufficiently flexible to incorporate these types of changes, and indeed have done so in the past when groups were decimated through disease or drought.

The means to mobility

Consideration of the setting for contemporary Aboriginal mobility in Central Australia should not be confined only to aspects such as the physical environment, the influence of historical events, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social and political organisations, and the impact of economic change. It must also consider how technological change affects population movement. During the decades since Central Australian Aborigines first made contact with non-Aboriginal intruders many types of technology have been introduced into the region, and have become more and more readily available to Aborigines. In the process Aborigines have adapted such technological devices to meet their specific needs and they now provide essential support for population movement. Two

main types of technology discussed here are means of transportation, which clearly allows people to move easily from place to place; and communications, which provide people with a much improved information base about other people and places, and which may thus in themselves make an impact on mobility.

Animals, such as camels, horses and donkeys, provided the first non-human means of transportation available to Central Australian Aborigines. People still living at Finke recall the use of camel trains to travel in the area close to the old railway line in the 1940s and 1950s. Willowra community still has a sizeable herd of partly feral donkeys, developed from those used for transport on the station thirty years ago. In both places people recall using such animals to go to ceremonial meetings considerable distances away. Such means of transport, however, have now gone out of use. Similarly trains, which people in settlements near the track of the old Ghan, such as Oodnadatta or Finke, used to use occasionally, are rarely utilised. Today motor vehicles and aeroplanes are by far the most important means used for travel beyond foot-walking distance, and for Central Australians the former are almost always the more significant. The same distinction could not be made in the case of Aborigines in Arnhem Land communities where, because of the problems of land transport during the wet season, much greater reliance on air transport has arisen. People in the Top End also use boats. The initial contact which Central Australian Aborigines had with motor vehicles dates from about the 1920s but in the earlier periods few actually used such transport. It was primarily a source of wonderment, available only to the rich, by implication non-Aborigines. Old people living at Willowra still recall the arrival of Michael Terry in 1928, on a journey from Halls Creek to Alice Springs via the Granites goldfields. His cumbersome trucks caused consternation among those families camped along the Lander River, not only because they had never seen such apparitions before but also because they came from the west, the 'wrong way', completely opposite from that by which all other non-Aborigines had at that time approached Walpiri country. The Pintupi, meeting Donald Thomson for the first time at Labbi Labbi near the Western Australian/Northern Territory border in 1957 must have felt much the same.

Nevertheless, despite these early intimidating experiences, Aborigines showed a remarkable ability to incorporate the use of vehicles to enhance their mobility in a manner appropriate to their needs. This has happened in a remarkably short time. In 1954, only a few years after many of the Warlpiri had first congregated in Yuendumu, over 150 people were loaded into trucks and driven more than 600 kms across the Tanami desert to form the new community of Hooker

Creek. This would, for most of them, have been their first journey by vehicle. But they were traversing the country of their forefathers, country which they remembered covering on foot. Within the next few weeks they twice walked back to Yuendumu, only resigning themselves to their new locality after their third truck journey. Vehicles at this time were essentially a tool of assimilation, to be used by non-Aborigines without consideration of Aboriginal needs and desires. But two decades later, a number of Yuendumu families had become vehicle owners, and were using this form of transport for their own purposes.

During the 1970s Aboriginal cash incomes in rural Central Australian settlements increased through improved access to employment, largely in the service sector, and through better delivery of social security pensions and benefits. This enabled people to buy vehicles, mostly second-hand cars. Although most were individually owned they were generally used within extended family groups, and whenever serviceable were 'on the road'. In fact, the description of such vehicles as twenty-four hour a day, seven days a week horses is not inaccurate. They were used primarily for visiting friends and relatives, taking part in ceremonies in other communities, going hunting, and going to town to shop, buy grog or attend meetings. Because almost all drivers and most owners were men, cars tended to be much more accessible to men than women. In the course of such journeys vehicles were often used much more roughly than the manufacturers would have originally intended, and that, combined with continuous driving by a large number of drivers, usually meant that they survived for only a short period. Kesteven (1978) suggests that the average life of such a vehicle in Yuendumu in mid 1978 was about six weeks.

Although ownership of cars obviously aided people's physical mobility, the usefulness of such vehicles was inevitably limited by their mechanical deficiencies. Second-hand saloon cars were not built to cover rough terrain and carry large numbers of people. What people really wanted were four-wheel drive vehicles, the ubiquitous Toyota. These were well beyond Aboriginal financial means, and could only be obtained through specific government grants or other outside funding sources. From the mid-1970s DAA began to make some funds available for outstation vehicle purchase, as a means for providing essential communications for groups of people determined to re-establish themselves in remote areas. These vehicles, as Nash (1986) comments, were owned by community groups, and were referred to using the name of the outstation associated with that group - for example, the Jila truck, or the Nyirrpi truck. While many of these vehicles were periodically used to travel as expected back and forth between outstations and central settlements, they were also much in demand for other purposes, such as

attending ceremonies or shopping in town. They often gained the well-deserved reputation for always being seen a long way from their supposed home locations. This not only demonstrated that they were being used for purposes which, while perceived as important by Aborigines, were deemed to be unconventional in non-Aboriginal terms. It also occurred because DAA had often allocated vehicles without sufficient thought about other essentials for outstation establishment - permanent water supplies, health facilities for old people, or schools. Yuendumu's first three outstation vehicles were all delivered before any of these basic services were available. As a result people spent most of their time in the central settlement.

By the late 1970s DAA had recognised that many of the outstation vehicles had not really served their purpose, and refused to allocate more funds for Toyotas. Financial support was thereafter provided by the Aboriginal Benefit Trust Account (ABTA), which, as Nash (1986) suggests, could appropriately then have been renamed the Aboriginal Benefit Toyota Account. This funding sources, stemming from royalty agreements affecting Aborigines in the Northern Territory, made, in the early 1980s, many grants for vehicle purchase with the only stipulation being that funded groups must be incorporated and must contribute ten per cent of the purchase cost. Outstation vehicles, vehicles for women's groups, for social clubs and for recreational activities, became much more common. In effect Aborigines have, through such control over vehicles, 'been able to resume a nomadism severely thwarted during the heyday of government settlements' (Nash 1986) and people have been able to range between a number of communities, in what might be called 'distributed residence' (Young 1983). They have also, in the process, been able to improve their access to subsistence resources thereby enhancing their degree of economic self-sufficiency. This appears, as recent studies of Aboriginal enterprise development suggest (Ellanna et al. 1988) to be a very good reason for continuing funding for vehicle purchase.

Planes, for desert people, have been much less significant except for specific use such as health evacuations, or journeys paid for by outside funds. However, during the last few years, they have become more commonly used for other forms of mobility, paid for by Aborigines on a group or individual basis. For example, when leaders of the Pintupi community at Balgo came to Yuendumu in 1978 to supervise a very large ceremonial gathering involving hundreds of people they arrived by air, thus emphasising their important role in orchestrating the whole activity. In recent years the use of planes by Aboriginal passengers has increased with the establishment of Aboriginal-owned charter companies in the Pitjantjatjara lands. Ngaanyatjara

Air, established in 1982, provides passenger, freight and health transport for a population group remote from Alice Springs, the location of Pitjantjatjara Council and later, the Ngaanyatjara Council, their service organisations. It was founded because the Ngaanyatjara people perceived that the work of that council, on which they depend for many of their vital contacts with the outside world, was greatly hampered by inefficient communications, and that ready access to aircraft would be a great advantage. Some non-Aboriginal council staff who held pilot's licences were able to assist but, because of other demands on their time, could not possibly meet all the Ngaanyatjara requests for aircraft use. The establishment of the company sought to overcome this problem and also to give the Ngaanyatjara people control over their own air service. While much of the traffic carried by Ngaanyatjara Air arises through service needs, or the needs of local establishments such as the retail stores, it increasingly includes private journeying. The cost of such use to the Ngaanyatjara people is usually subsidised by the costs to outsiders and community business organisations. In 1985 a second company, PY (standing for Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara) Air was formed. This company deals only in general passenger and freight traffic but controls a separate health air service, Nganampa Health. These companies together come under Yanap Air, the registered name of the airline system. Yanap Air is run by an Aboriginal council with representatives from the constituent group, and employs the necessary management and clerical staff.

The introduction of modern forms of communications - two-way radio, telephone and now television - has also affected population mobility. Although people have often commented about the existence of a remarkably efficient Aboriginal bush-telegraph system, accurate news of events and plans affecting other groups was difficult to obtain in the period prior to non-Aboriginal settlement. The introduction of two-way radio not only provided the basis for health care through the Royal Flying Doctor Service, but enabled people to send telegrams from one community to another to inform people of illnesses, deaths, ceremonies and other happenings which would lead to journeys. Although in earlier times Aboriginal use of radios was comparatively limited, people did become aware of their potential, and in places such as Willowra, where some young women were trained to operate the radio and telephone in 1979, they did begin to exploit it directly. Some Central Australian Aboriginal language groups applied for and were granted their own frequencies in the late 1970s and, with the allocation of outstation funds for two-way radios, the use of this type of technology to plan ceremonies and meetings and to pass on day to day news became commonplace. As Sidey (1986) describes, the installation of a wireless in the community at Kalka in the

Pitjantjatjara Lands (instead of only having a wireless in the health service office) led to an enormous increase in Aboriginal use and people talked to other remote groups most of the day and well into the night. In 1981, on the day when the radio was installed at Ngarna, a Yuendumu outstation, every member of the community from the age of five upwards took turns to listen to discussions and tried to make calls to people elsewhere. Heavy Aboriginal use of the radio frequencies has sometimes caused conflict with non-Aborigines. This has been particularly serious when inexperienced Aboriginal users have broken into restricted health report schedules.

Two-way radio undoubtedly assisted people to establish themselves successfully in isolated areas, and enabled them to maintain the mobility necessary for their social commitments. Telephone, however, provides an even more useful medium for such purposes. Until the 1980s most Central Australian Aboriginal communities have only had the use of radio-telephones, which have severe limitations because of climatic interference, relatively complicated user needs and over-loading of the channels. In a brief study conducted in late 1979 (Heppell and Young 1980) it was found that at Yuendumu and Willowra Aboriginal use of the radio-telephone was minor, and that most calls concerned the daily operation of organisations such as the Council, the store or the cattle company. But, despite the lack of Aboriginal experience in telephone use at that time, people were aware of the potential value of the system and made it clear that they saw the introduction of conventional telephones as a first priority. Since then this has occurred in places relatively accessible to Alice Springs and the microwave corridor along the line of Stuart Highway, and Aboriginal use of the telephone has become important in places such as Ali-Curung, Ti-Tree, Santa Teresa and Finke. Telephones have also been extended to more remote Aboriginal towns such as Yuendumu, which joined the network in 1987. This has not only increased the efficiency with which all types of services and commercial organisations can be run, but has also improved general Aboriginal access to information. As with two-way radio, it affects mobility because it enables people to make the contacts to find out whether journeys are necessary or not.

The introduction of television in Central Australian communities may also affect mobility, principally through transmitting information about the world outside and perhaps encouraging young people to leave home to satisfy their curiosity. It remains to be seen whether such a pattern emerges. Efforts to establish Aboriginal control over this form of media have already led to the granting of private television transmission licences in two remote Central Australian communities, Yuendumu and Ernabella. With the

granting of the local commercial TV licence to Imparja, the Aboriginal media association in Alice Springs, such control has the potential to be effective. This may allow Aboriginal groups to counteract the effects of external influences which they perceive as detrimental to their future interests. People have already recognised the power of this type of technology in transmitting information, and make extensive use of videos to send messages from one community to another. The Warlpiri Media Association at Yuendumu has been particularly active in this way (Michaels, 1985).

A setting in transformation

The contemporary setting for Aboriginal mobility is very different from that which existed in the period prior to non-Aboriginal settlement in the Centre. While the physical features of the landscape remain the same, and Aboriginal beliefs and perceptions of these features have been preserved, the actual locations of many Aboriginal groups have changed through a variety of social, political and economic processes. And the introduction of new forms of technology have also had a marked effect. But, within this new framework, Aborigines have maintained many of their own 'traditional' forms of mobility and have selected technological innovations which assist them in such a choice. Access to this technology has been facilitated through incorporations and other forms of financial management. People have also indulged in new forms of mobility. These forms of movement together, the traditional and the new, explain the current ebb and flow of population which today is such an obvious facet of Aboriginal life in Central Australia.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CASE-STUDY COMMUNITIES

As preliminary discussion has indicated, broad data on Aboriginal mobility are limited in their coverage, in the questions which they raise and pose answers to, and in their general applicability to the topic under study. They are time specific, and hence fail to reveal the continuities in movement, the effects of short term journeys in and out of communities and the existence of marked degrees of circularity. They do not consider motives for movement, and even if such information is provided these motives are defined in a strongly eurocentric way. Moreover they rarely reveal how mobility varies between people of different socio-demographic characteristics, between the old and the young, between men and women, and between those with strong interests in non-Aboriginal lifestyles and those whose interests lie in more traditional spheres. These aspects are all essential to an understanding of Aboriginal mobility processes. The detailed case-study communities referred to in this discussion were selected because of known differences in demographic structure, location and economic base. They include the following:-

Aboriginal 'towns' with outstations	- Yuendumu
Aboriginal owned cattle stations	- Willowra/Mt Barkly
	- Mt Allen
	- Ti-Tree
'Open' Aboriginal town	- Finke
Non-Aboriginal cattle station group	- Harts Range
Specific outstation issues	- Fregon
	- Ernabella

Warlpiri and Anmatyerre communities

Four Warlpiri and Anmatyerre communities, situated to the north and northwest of Alice Springs, were included in the study - Yuendumu, Willowra, Mount Allen and Ti-Tree (Fig. 3.1). They, together with neighbouring groups living either permanently or temporarily on non-Aboriginal-owned cattle stations at Anningie, Coniston and Napperby, comprise a high proportion of those two major language groups. While Anmatyerre and Warlpiri are distinct languages, of Arandic and non-Arandic strain respectively, many people are bilingual. Moreover the groups have similar social organisation, with both being divided into eight major subsections forming two moieties between which preferred marriages occur (Table 3.1).

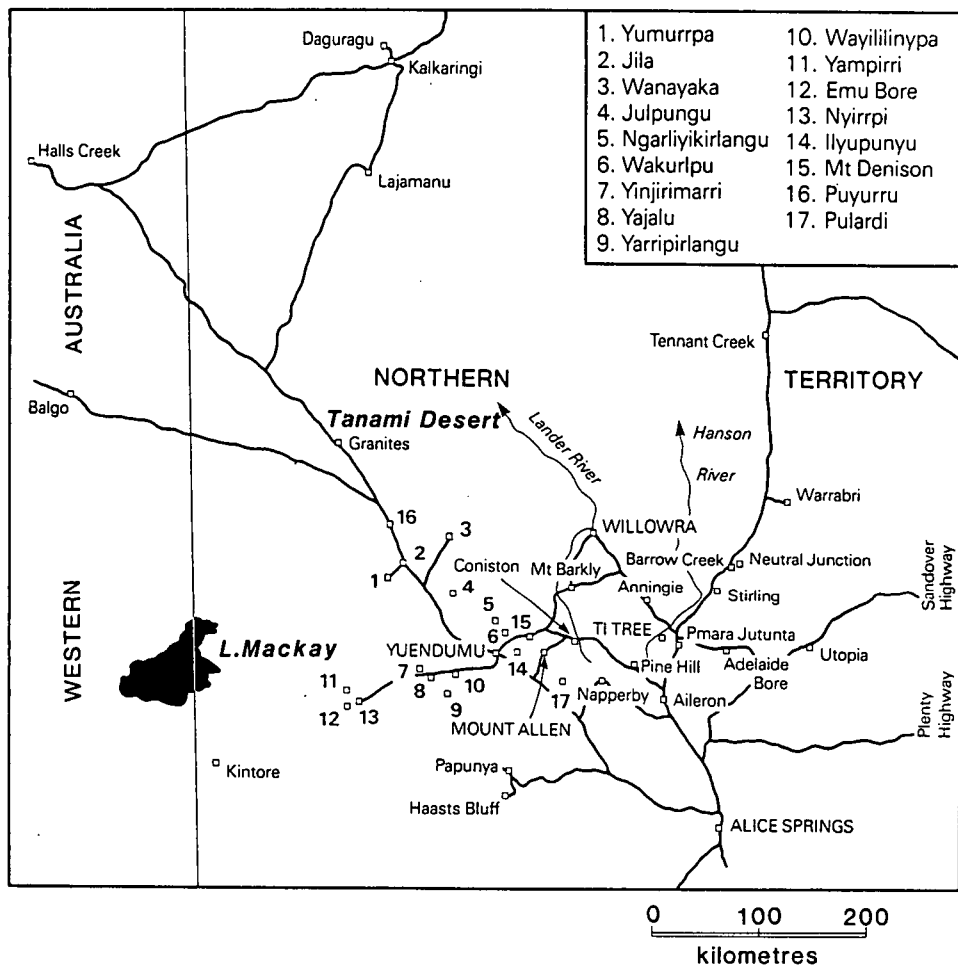


Figure 3.1 Warlpiri and Anmatyerre communities

Table 3.1
Warlpiri and Anmatyerre subsection terms and linkages

Warlpiri	Anmatyerre		Warlpiri	Anmatyerre
J/Nampijinpa	Mpetyane	=	J/Napangardi	Pengarte
J/Nakamarra	Kemarre	=	J/Napaljarri	Peltharre
Ju/Napurrula	Perrwerrie	=	J/Napanangke	Penangke
J/Nangala	Ngale	=	J/Nungarrayi	Kngwarraye

= This symbol links first choice marriage patterns

[This symbol links fathers with children

Note: With Warlpiri, the initial J indicates males and N indicates females.

Yuendumu

Yuendumu lies on the Tanami Road, about 300 kms to the northwest of Alice Springs, on the eastern periphery of the Tanami Desert. It was formerly a government settlement associated with the Baptist Mission, and was established in a reserve of 2500 kms in the 1940s to provide essential services for Warlpiri groups from throughout the Tanami Desert. Some of those groups, along with the Pintupi who moved to Yuendumu in the early 1960s, came originally from country several hundred kilometres to the west and north. The town itself lies in the region where eastern Warlpiri and western Anmatyerre country overlaps, and hence many Warlpiri and Pintupi families in Yuendumu were not only living a long way from the places with which they identified, but also inhabiting land belonging to a different linguistic group. Although since pre-contact times they have intermarried with the Anmatyerre (Meggitt 1962, 40), this long distance displacement from their country has undoubtedly had an effect on their identification with Yuendumu as home. Many families have long expressed a desire to leave the settlement and return to locations nearer their own country, and as a result, during the last seven years Yuendumu has experienced a marked dispersion of population.

Today, therefore, Yuendumu consists of a central settlement of about 600 people, and about 15 outstations, as distant as 150 kms to the west. The total population of all groups is probably around 1100, with outstation groups ranging from only one or two families to large communities of well over 100 people. Yuendumu's outstations are all situated on Aboriginal freehold land, some of which was formerly part of the Yuendumu and Lake Mackay reserves, and some of which formed part of the Warlpiri Land Claim, heard in 1977-78 and finally granted in 1981. The granting of this claim was an important element in outstation growth. However it was not the only element. As Kesteven (1978) has documented, outstations in the Tanami desert were discussed with DAA officials as early as 1973, and the first settlement in the vicinity of the present Nyirrpri community was established in that year. Until 1979 outstation groups received only minimal support, and were expected to survive on natural water sources and no other infrastructure until, according to DAA, people had remained for long enough to demonstrate their determination to stay. In late 1978 only Nyirrpri had a functional bore and storage tank; at Chilla Well (Jila) these facilities existed but were out of order, while at the other three outstations, Yarripirlangu, Jurlpungu and Ngarna, residents obtained their water from soakages, clay pans, springs and, when these dried up, small tanks and drums transported from Yuendumu. Communications, in the form of radio or outstation-based vehicle, were virtually non-

existent, as were health services or schools. However, during the last five years these and more recently established outstations have acquired basic water supplies, communications and shelter and have therefore become places where people feel safe to be. These factors, along with land tenure, go a long way towards explaining the marked dispersal of population which has affected Yuendumu in the last five years.

Accurate figures comparing the population structure of Yuendumu and its outstations are not available, and little confidence can be placed on totals. However figures from earlier studies and from recent DAA Community Profiles suggest some interesting features (Table 3.2, Fig.3.2). The outstation population related to Yuendumu has undoubtedly increased, and at the same time the population of the town has declined. While both Yuendumu and its outstations had comparatively young populations, with the proportion of children aged 0-14 years exceeding 35 per cent in all groups except outstations in 1978, the outstations generally had a smaller number of children than would be expected. Conversely they had a higher percentage of older people. But the situation has changed between 1978 and 1985. In 1978, when the outstations were in their early establishment phase and had few services and a very limited infrastructure, hardly any young children lived there. By 1985, as they had stabilised and schooling had become available at Nyirrpri, a much higher percentage of outstation dwellers were children.

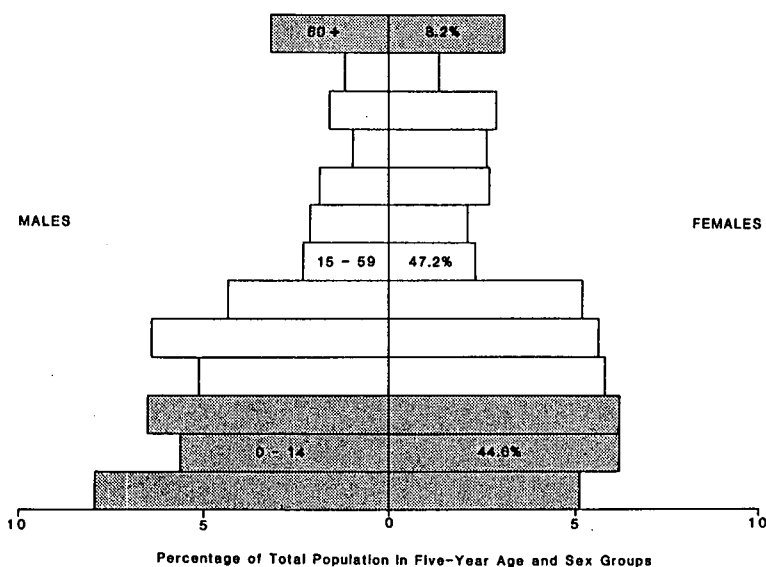


Figure 3.2 Age-sex structure, Yuendumu, 1978

It is interesting to note that while the total outstation dependency ratio scarcely changed between 1978 and 1985, the composition of that ratio shifted markedly. In 1978, 42 per cent of dependents were old people; in 1985 only 22 per cent were aged over 60. Such demographic changes, a result of mobility, clearly affect service provision.

Table 3.2
Yuendumu, Population 1978 and 1985

		1978(a)		1985(b)	
		<u>Yuendumu</u>	<u>Out-stations</u>	<u>Yuendumu</u>	<u>Out-stations</u>
Age-group 0-14	No.	416	18	353	165
	%	37.7	27.3	44.6	36.1
15-59	No.	624	35	374	245
	%	56.5	53.0	47.2	53.6
60+	No.	60	13	65	47
	%	5.4	19.7	8.2	10.3
Total No.		<u>1,104</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>792</u>	<u>457</u>
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Masculinity Ratio		96	94	97	81
Dependency Ratio		78	89	112	87

Sources: (a) Young, Fieldwork, 1978
(b) DAA Community Profiles, 1985

Masculinity Ratio = Males/Females x 100

Dependency Ratio = $\frac{\text{Children 0-14} + \text{Adults 60}}{\text{Adults aged 15-59}} \times 100$

Although Yuendumu is no longer a single centralised settlement, services are still strongly concentrated in one location. For example, the clinic and the school serve the town and most of the outstations. Attempts to train outstation healthworkers have been only partially successful because those involved have, for other reasons, not always been able to stay in the outstation, or have preferred to remain in Yuendumu. Thus, one healthworker had to spend most of her time in Yuendumu because of the serious illness of her husband; consequently she worked more frequently at the central clinic than at her outstation. Contact between healthworkers and outstation people therefore usually takes place either when people come into Yuendumu to visit the clinic, or when the clinic healthworkers make periodic bush

visits. In the case of the school repeated requests for a teacher to be based at Nyirrpi, which by 1984 had a resident population of about 150, bore no fruit until 1985 when the Education Department finally agreed to one of the most experienced non-Aboriginal teachers in Yuendumu teaching on a weekly basis at the outstation. In 1986 a second non-Aboriginal teacher was appointed to Nyirrpi, and 1987 has seen the opening of a school at Waylilinyapa. Altogether lack of educational services in the outstations has curbed the growth of their population, and most families with school-age children have preferred to remain in Yuendumu.

Other services such as social security and banking, the retail store and the services provided through the auspices of the Community Council are also centralised in Yuendumu. With the exception of Nyirrpi, which now has its own small store, all outstation people have to come to Yuendumu to shop, collect social security cheques and use the bank, and hence outstation vehicles are much in demand. Yuendumu Community Council, largely funded through the Northern Territory Government, and responsible for providing services such as power, sewerage, reticulated water, garbage collection and general administration, perceive the town and not the outstations as their prime responsibility. This has caused some dissatisfaction among outstation residents. However, since 1984, outstations have been administered by the Outstation Resource Centre and council, separately funded by DAA. Although the establishment of this organisation with responsibility for co-ordinating outstation services has improved the situation, the split in responsibilities for town and outstations does present problems. These are accentuated by the high degree of mobility between the two sectors, with bilocal residence relatively common. If Yuendumu eventually decides to become a Local Government Authority under Section 44 of the Northern Territory Act, this division may be even harder to resolve because the area defined for the new organisation may exclude the outstations (Ellanna et al. 1988).

Yuendumu today therefore contains a solid, permanent infrastructure built for a population of at least 1000, at least ten per cent of whom were expected to be non-Aboriginal. However it effectively serves only 600 people, with a decreasing number of non-Aboriginal families. Not only has the number of residents in Yuendumu declined but the priorities which these residents place on services has changed; non-Aborigines want access to more sophisticated types of product in their retail store, facilities for their own, primarily English-speaking children at the school, and reliable power supplies to their homes; Aborigines, who now form a higher proportion of the population, are much less concerned about such refinements, especially if they are living in improvised dwellings.

Although the population of Yuendumu has undergone a major redistribution, the social networks which link families within their own community and to other communities remain intact. Within Yuendumu, and between Yuendumu and the associated outstations, people maintain strong family ties which prove to be a prime determinant of mobility. In Yuendumu, members of the same extended family still often live in close proximity to each other, thus creating linked 'camps' between which individuals move, and may even change their sleeping places. As more and more Aboriginal families have come to occupy conventional housing throughout the settlement, rather than living on the periphery of what was in effect a 'white' town (Middleton and Francis 1976; Young 1981) these characteristics have perhaps become less marked, and groups who previously would not have resided close to each other now do so. Nevertheless they still preserve customary taboos controlling contact between people in certain relationships to each other. This relocation of families into residential patterns less controlled by customary practices also partly reflects employment. Teachers and health workers, for example, are given houses which belong to their respective employers.

All outstation groups are closely linked to families still currently living in Yuendumu. Only the Pintupi have largely deserted the town and even then they retain links to town families because some of them have married Warlpiri and have remained behind. Together all these social networks form the fabric for much of the local population movement - visiting from Yuendumu to outstations at weekends and from outstations to Yuendumu at all times. In all locations the relatives provide appropriate camping places for the visitors, essentially ensuring that they feel secure.

Yuendumu people also have relatives in many other communities - Lajamanu, Papunya, Willowra, Mt Allen, Ti-Tree, Ali-Curung and Alice Springs, as well as some more distant centres such as Darwin or Port Augusta. As has been documented elsewhere (Young 1983) the location of these linked communities owes much to the historical development of the setting - the resettlement of Warlpiri people after contact and during the process of land alienation. The spatial extent of the region involved is undoubtedly, for many individual families, much greater than it would have been in pre-contact times. For example, members of some families who settled in Yuendumu in the early period (around 1946-50) were forcibly removed to Lajamanu, over 600 kms away to the northwest. It seems that there was no attempt to ascertain whether those who were moved had any close ties to land in the Lajamanu area, and hence some people who went there came, on both fathers' and mothers' sides, from groups in completely different regions. For them, resettlement in

Lajamanu meant not only separation from the rest of their families but separation from their land, and they have faced problems in carrying out customary responsibility for it. However, as time has progressed, they have developed an identification with their new dwelling places, and in the case of successive generations, have come to be recognised as traditional owners of that country. At the same time, they still retain their inherited connections to the country of their ancestors and thus, for customary as well as broader social reasons, continually move to and from between these locations. These factors all exert a strong influence on contemporary mobility.

Willowra

The Willowra people, like most residents of Yuendumu, are primarily Warlpiri speaking. However, the structure and characteristics of the Willowra community are in other ways very different from those of Yuendumu. First the community is relatively much more isolated. Although the road distance from Alice Springs is only slightly greater (370 kms compared to 300 kms), the uneven surface of the road and the fact that it has to cross several large creeks which are liable to flooding, makes access much less reliable. Moreover Willowra is not, like Yuendumu, on a major through road, but at the end of a side road (Fig. 3.1).

Secondly, Willowra is a pastoral station community, rather than a settlement originating from government or mission policies promoting population consolidation for assimilationist and administrative purposes. Most members of the Willowra Aboriginal community are Lander River Warlpiri who have always lived in the area. Unlike many Yuendumu residents they are not originally from distant places or from other language groups. They have therefore been able to maintain their knowledge of their traditional lands through constant visiting and conduct of ceremonies. In addition, since they belong to a much smaller local region they are closely linked through kinship ties and form a strongly integrated social unit.

Thirdly, before government finance for its purchase was allocated in 1973 through the Central Fund for Aboriginal Enterprises, Willowra was held by a non-Aboriginal pastoralist who had a benevolent and understanding attitude towards the resident Aboriginal community. He not only valued their contribution as the mainstay of the labour force on the property, but also recognised that they lived in extended family situations, which inevitably meant that many 'non-workers' formed part of the homestead group. In addition he recognised the strength of their attachment to the land and felt that they should be allowed to continue to

live there without harassment. As a result the Willowra people, following very traumatic experiences in the aftermath of the Coniston affair of 1928 (Hartwig 1960) were able to remain within their own country, and at the same time develop an understanding relationship with a non-Aboriginal family who appeared to be in sympathy with them. These experiences contrast with those of other Aboriginal groups who describe how they were continually hounded by non-Aboriginal pastoralists who not only refused to apply for welfare for them, but also did not want them to be living in the vicinity of the station. They seem to have given the Willowra people a greater confidence in their ability to manage their own affairs with a minimum of non-Aboriginal assistance.

In 1979 Willowra's population, between 270 and 300, had a comparatively youthful structure, with over 43 per cent aged below 15 years (Table 3.3, Fig.3.3). The dependency ratio at that time was 99, and most dependents were young. More recent figures, such as those from the 1985 DAA Community Profile, indicate that the population has increased substantially and, together with Mt Barkly, probably now totals over 400. Age breakdown from these counts are highly

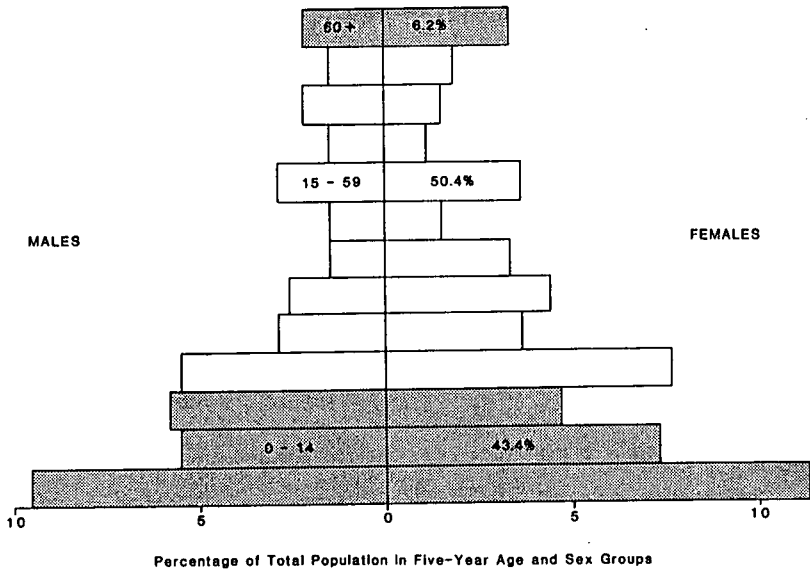


Figure 3.3 Age-sex structure, Willowra, 1979

suspect but there is no reason to expect that the 1979 demographic structure has undergone a significant change. The level of population increase suggests an annual growth rate of about 3.5 per cent, certainly exceeding the average rate of natural increase for Central Australian Aborigines. It therefore seems that in-migration, which has occurred ever since the property came under Aboriginal ownership, is still taking place. About 95 per cent of Willowra's present population are Aboriginal, and are primarily Warlpiri although a few families are inter-married with Anmatyerre and speak both languages.

Table 3.3
Willowra, Aboriginal Population, 1979

	<u>Nos.</u>	<u>%</u>
Age group		
0-14	119	43.4
15-59	138	50.4
60+	17	6.2
Total	<u>274</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Masculinity Ratio = 80

Dependency Ratio = 99

Source: Young, Fieldwork, 1979

In 1983 Willowra was the subject of a successful land claim by the traditional owners, and is now held under Aboriginal freehold title. It covers an area of 4885 km sq, but along with adjacent Mt Barkly station which was purchased by the Willowra Pastoral Company in 1981, the area now held by the group is over 7400 km sq. This land consists of the northward sloping plains on the periphery of the Tanami Desert. It is generally flat and featureless, except for isolated granite and quartzite outcrops which form prominent hills such as Mt Barkly and Mt Leichardt. Surface water, apart from along the Lander River which drains the entire country in a northward direction, is almost non-existent.

The Willowra community is still strongly centralised although groups have, from time to time, expressed an interest in establishing outstations both in other parts of the former lease and outside its boundaries in the Tanami Desert. Until the purchase of Mt Barkly all visits to these outlying areas were of short duration although, during breaks such as the school holidays, they could last for a week or two at a time. The main reasons why people did not move out on a more permanent basis were apparently problems of access, caused by the fact that many of the preferred outstation localities had neither vehicular track access,

nor permanent water supplies; and the close social integration of the Willowra community which prevented the growth of strong pressures favouring dispersal of population. Mt Barkly's purchase coincided with a death affecting several families with strong traditional association to that region, and resettlement quickly followed. Those who went included people whose paternal and maternal grandfathers were traditional owners for Mt Barkly sites. Subsequently other families have joined them, and there are now between 70 and 100 people living close to the old Mt Barkly homestead.

Willowra and Mt Barkly people are not only closely tied to each other through kinship, but also have relatives in other places including Yuendumu, Anningie, Ti-Tree, Mt Allen, Stirling, Ali-Curung, and Alice Springs. They frequently visit these centres and many hold customary responsibility for regions close to these communities. Travelling is common, although because of Willowra's relative isolation people seem to be less familiar with non-Aboriginal towns like Alice Springs than are their fellow Warlpiri in Yuendumu. Women and older people in particular do not always feel happy about going to stay in town. This feeling has affected the participation of young Willowra people in secondary education. Only a handful of teenagers have so far gone to Yirara College in Alice Springs, and most have been so unhappy that they have left to return home at the first opportunity. Even older adults who would benefit from formal training, such as those who work in the clinic or as teaching assistants in the school, have had difficulty in leaving Willowra to undertake their courses. These problems partly reflect the strength of traditional forms of social control in Willowra. Older people are loathe to give the younger ones permission to go to town. And women, many of whom still marry according to customary practice and have husbands significantly older than themselves, are particularly affected.

Willowra's services are less sophisticated than those found in Yuendumu but nonetheless provide for all basic needs. The main primary school and clinic are situated near the Willowra homestead, and Mt Barkly now has a resident Aboriginal healthworker and a school. In the early 1980s, before their school was opened, Mt Barkly children stayed with Willowra-based relatives so that they could attend school. Willowra also has the main retail store, and is the centre to which people must go to cash social security cheques. However an Alice Springs-based businessman, who has been co-ordinating social security delivery for Willowra for some years extended his service directly to Mt Barkly, and this was continued by his successor. One Mt Barkly Aboriginal family also started a small store, and hence this satellite community is rapidly becoming more self-sufficient

in services. Outstation funding through DAA has now provided Mt Barkly residents with housing and other essential services.

Although Willowra and Mt Barkly now have most of the necessary essential services they lack wage employment opportunities. The pastoral operations at Willowra have rarely provided jobs for more than ten men at any one time and, during the last year or two, this number has dwindled because of the need to destock the station following testing for brucellosis and tuberculosis. Mt Barkly was purchased unstocked and thus has not added to the cattle operations of the combined property. Services provide the only other wage jobs - in the school, the clinic, the store and periodically, on the construction of houses and other buildings under contract. In contrast to the stock-camp jobs, a high proportion of these service positions are held by younger women, and it is interesting to note that most jobs requiring some formal education at post-primary level have women incumbents. Lack of local employment has not as yet led to a significant outward migration of job-seeking young people. Remaining with their families and on their own traditional land still seems to be more important to them than seeking for opportunities in the unpredictable and often threatening world outside. This situation may, however, change in the future.

Mt Allen

Mt Allen, like Willowra/Mt Barkly, is an Aboriginal-owned cattle station, now held as Aboriginal freehold land. The property, 2359 km sq in area, lies astride the Tanami Road, immediately to the east of Yuendumu and about 300kms from Alice Springs (Fig. 3.1). It forms part of the extreme western area of the territory of Anmatyerre speaking people, approximately 120 of whom now live there. Being a cattle station, Mt Allen bears some resemblance to the Willowra community - heavy involvement in the cattle industry, and a long-standing relationship with one non-Aboriginal family. But there are some differences, notably those arising from the historical development of the property.

Mt Allen pastoral lease was taken out considerably later than the leases on other properties in the region, such as Coniston, Napperby, and Pine Hill which all date from the first part of this century. Because of the establishment of cattle operations elsewhere in the region, it seems that many families who identified primarily with land on Mt Allen moved to these other localities, probably to gain access to tobacco, rations, clothes and other prized products. If they camped near these homesteads on a relatively permanent basis some also became part of the local workforce, either in the stock-camp or, for women, as domestic servants in the house.

During that period they would frequently visit Mt Allen to hunt but probably did not spend long periods of time there. In 1928, like people now resident at both Yuendumu and Willowra, Mt Allen families were affected by the reprisals of the Coniston massacre, and following those incidents some spent several years hiding in rugged parts of the region. After the Second World War many families from Mt Allen country also congregated at the newly established government settlement at Yuendumu.

When the Mt Allen lease was taken out in 1946 it was stated that there was no local population. The owner acquired his workforce mainly from the Yuendumu community, by asking for volunteers to resettle and help to build up the pastoral operation at Mt Allen. Although there were no specific instructions about which families should move, it appears that the Aboriginal community themselves perceived that those with traditional land responsibilities were the most appropriate. Hence many who moved to Mt Allen were people with customary land rights inherited through paternal or maternal grandparents. Their spouses however, were often from completely different regions. Many other Mt Allen families, then resident in Mt Denison, Coniston, Napperby and Mt Wedge stations, remained where they were. As a consequence the kinship network of the resident Mt Allen community probably had a wider spatial spread than that of Willowra and, it is likely that the group lacked some social coherence. The Mt Allen population during the 1950s and 60s, according to the pastoralist, Mr D.L. Smith, averaged about 50 or 60 but sometimes rose to at least 200. As was to be expected, Mt Allen people retained particularly strong links with Yuendumu, where many of their close kin were still living. They also had relatives in other pastoral stations to the east, on Anmatyerre land. At Napperby, for example, several large families with traditional responsibility for territory lying partly in Mt Allen and partly within the western Napperby boundary remained in residence from the 1920s onwards. Mt Allen people also had kin in Alice Springs, in some cases people of part-European descent who had forcibly been taken away from their parents at an early stage. The station remained under the ownership of D.L. Smith, and later his son D.D. Smith until 1976 when the property was purchased on behalf of the local Aboriginal group with money provided through the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission. The purchase price was \$300000, on a walk-on, walk-off basis.

Although no population count is available for the purchase year, figures from 1973, when 73 people were in the Mt Allen community and 1981, when 113 people were living there, indicate that considerable population growth has occurred in recent years. Discussions with residents in 1981-82, when information for the Mt Allen Land Claim was being

documented, indicate that a number of families who had spent many years living and working elsewhere returned following the transfer of the lease to the Aborigines. They did so because, with Mt Allen coming under Aboriginal control, the need for those with primary customary responsibility for the land to be present became pressing. Thus, traditional owners of honey ant sites in western Mt Allen (Yulumu) returned from Mt Denison, as did some Jungarrayi/Japaljarri leaders concerned with Ngarlu and other places on the southern side of the area. More recently some Napperby based families have returned to resume responsibility for the dingo and emu dreaming sites in eastern Mt Allen. Further moves associated with the purchase of the property have brought families from Coniston, people whose prime land interests lie within the Coniston boundary but, because of the policy of the current Coniston owner, have been subjected to strong pressure to leave. Altogether, the growth of Aboriginal population which has occurred at Mt Allen since 1976 can be attributed almost entirely to the recognised need for the customary responsibilities of land ownership to be continued. It has not, as has sometimes been implied, been primarily a movement of materialistically-inclined Aborigines, thinking that by coming to live at Mt Allen they will become rich.

Like Willowra and Yuendumu, Mt Allen has a youthful population, with 1981 data showing that 37.2 per cent were below the age of 15 (Table 3.4, Fig.3.4). The number of

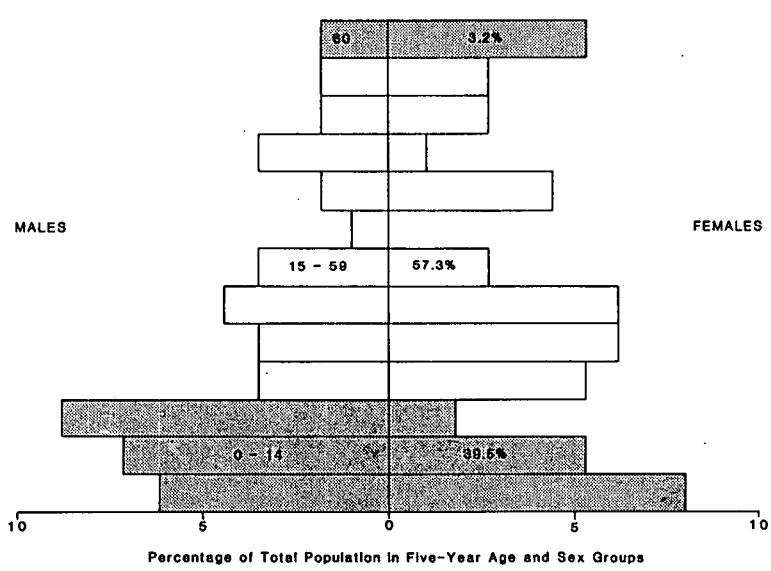


Figure 3.4 Age-sex structure, Mt Allen, 1981

Table 3.4
Mt Allen, Aboriginal Population, 1981 and 1985

	1981(a)		1985(b)			
	<u>Mt Allen</u>		<u>Mt Allen</u>		<u>Outstations</u>	
	No.	%	Nos.	%	No.	%
Age group 0-14	42	37.2	73	39.5	5	20.8
15-59	63	59.2	106	57.3	18	75.0
60+	8	3.6	6	3.2	1	4.2
Total	113	100.0	185	100.0	24	100.0
Masculinity Ratio		95		95		136
Dependency Ratio		79		75		33

Sources: (a) Young, Fieldwork, 1981
 (b) DAA Community Profiles

older people at that time was comparatively small, giving a lower dependency ratio 79. 1985 figures indicate little subsequent change, with 37.3 per cent below 15 years and a dependency ratio of 75.

Until recently the Aboriginal community at Mt Allen has been very strongly centralised, with everyone living in camps adjacent to the station homestead. At the time of purchase most people were still living in humpies made of sheets of iron and pieces of timber, although a few people lived in aluminium shelters built by Mr Smith. These dwellings had no basic amenities, and were both hot in summer and cold in winter and so were only spasmodically used as living quarters; they were more useful as storage sheds. Following the purchase of the station the community indicated a desire for better accommodation but by 1980 only two new houses had been built. Several others were under construction but, because of a series of delays caused by poor organisation by building contractors none were yet completed. Only the new dwellings had either power or reticulated water, and most families had to walk considerable distances to collect water for drinking and cooking. The main camp had been provided with a communal ablution block but other camps lacked even that facility. However, by 1986 the situation had greatly improved. Most Mt Allen families had permanent houses with verandahs, power, toilets and showers. Other services included the school, housed in a series of caravans in an area adjacent to the camp, and the store, located near the station homestead. The latter was owned by the Aboriginal community but under non-Aboriginal management. For access to this important service, which was also the cheque-cashing agency, most people had to walk a considerable distance, a problem which was sometimes too much for older people. Health services were supposed to be

provided by a resident Aboriginal health worker, operating under supervision from the Yuendumu health centre, but because of problems in finding the right person for this job this was not satisfactory, and people had to rely instead on care provided by Yuendumu-based health workers making periodic visits.

During discussions related to the land claim people expressed interest in moving away from the homestead to live elsewhere on the lease. This was not a new idea. From time to time, for example when initiation ceremonies needed to be carried out close to particular sites, and when intra-group disagreements made life in the larger community unpleasant, families had often camped temporarily elsewhere. But no more permanent outstations had come into being. Visits during the land claim to important places led to more specific definition of where people would like to establish outstations, and by late 1982 some groups had already approached DAA for outstation funding. In 1983 two groups moved out, one to Yulyipinyu, close to the western boundary of Mt Allen and the former Yuendumu reserve, and adjacent to Japanangka/Japangardi honey-ant dreaming country; and the other at Pulardi, a dingo dreaming site near the eastern boundary. At first people camped at both places with very few amenities, but by 1984 they had acquired permanent water supplies, some shelters, and vehicles purchased through the ABTA. By 1985 the total population of the two outstations had reached between 20 and 30. In contrast to the population at Mt Allen itself these outstations together had a fairly small proportion of children (20.8 per cent, Table 3.4) and a large number of adults aged between 15 and 59. The dependency ratio was therefore low (33). The masculinity ratio, however, was abnormally high (136), indicating a predominance of adult men. These demographic characteristics bear some similarity to those of Yuendumu outstations in the establishment phase of 1978 (Table 3.1) where there was also a small percentage of children. By 1986 Pulardi's population had stabilised and there were sufficient school age children to warrant the opening of a school.

These moves to outstations have been strongly supported by other Mt Allen people, who see them as an essential element in looking after the land in true Aboriginal fashion. However they have been regarded with some dismay by others, mostly non-Aborigines. They see the dispersal of the population as detrimental to the continued commercial success of the pastoral operation. Since, compared to other Central Australian Aboriginal properties, Mt Allen has shown conspicuous financial profits, this is seen as a major concern. However, since the emphasis on commercial activities at Mt Allen stems partly from continuing strong non-Aboriginal control in management, the changes signified by the outstation movement could be interpreted as part of

the expected transition to true Aboriginal self-determination. The final granting of the land claim, in October 1988, is likely to increase the interests of Mt Allen people in the maintenance of a socially coherent community founded on customary Aboriginal law.

Ti-Tree

Ti-Tree station, like Mt Allen, was bought by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission in 1976. It covers an area of 3545 sq km. traversed by the Stuart Highway, about 200 km north of Alice Springs, and lies within Anmatyerre country. Since it is close to the bitumen all-weather road, it is very accessible both to Alice Springs and to other centres to the north (Fig. 3.1). However following prolonged periods of heavy rain, side roads within Ti-Tree become impassable and communities can be cut off for a few days at a time.

The Ti-Tree community, at the time of the investigations for the presentation of Land Claim evidence in 1984/85, numbered about 300 people living in three separate settlements - Ti-Tree Station, Pmara Jutunta (New Place) and Adelaide Bore (Woola Downs). Aborigines, who made up all except one family in the community, were mostly Anmatyerre speakers, although the western two communities included some Warlpiri people and at Adelaide Bore some Alyawerre had settled after intermarrying with Anmatyerre. While Ti-Tree Station and Pmara Jutunta both had populations of well over 100, that at Adelaide bore numbered less than 50.

In 1984 the Aboriginal population in the Ti-Tree communities had a demographic structure very similar to that of other Aboriginal populations in Central Australia - a high proportion of children and high dependency ratio (Table 3.5, Fig. 3.5). Almost 40 per cent of the population was below the age of 15 and the dependency ratio was 87. The number of males and females was almost equal (masculinity ratio 95). Demographic characteristics varied between the three camps. Adelaide Bore Camp had a much lower percentage of children (only 28 per cent) and consequently lower dependency ratio (48), while Pmara Jutunta had a low masculinity ratio (70), explained by the presence of a relatively large group of widowed and separated women. The total figures are similar to those in Yuendumu and Mt Allen in 1978 and 1981 respectively (Tables 3.2 and 3.4).

The three communities also contrast markedly in other characteristics, principally because of historical differences. Ti-Tree station group consists of those families who have lived and worked on the property throughout the 50 years of non-Aboriginal ownership, and others who have moved there in more recent times. Not all

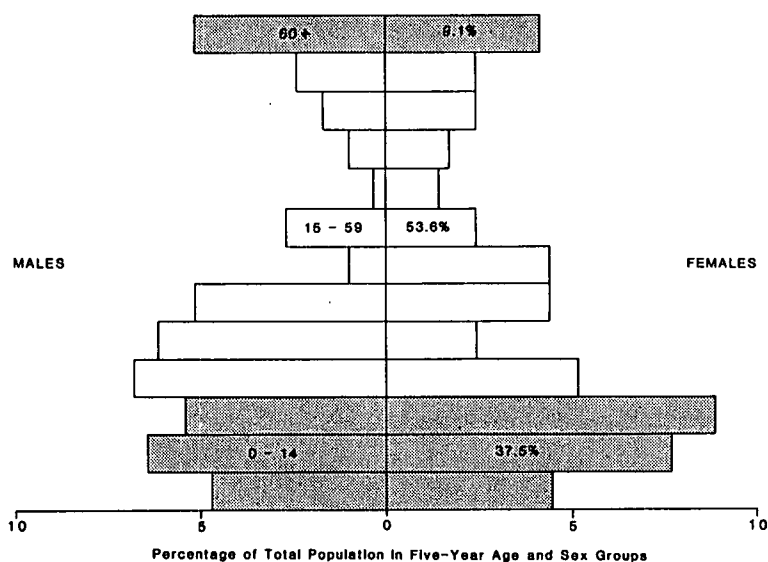


Figure 3.5 Age-sex structure, Ti-Tree, 1984

Table 3.5
Ti-Tree Aboriginal Population, 1984

	<u>Ti-Tree Station</u>		<u>Pmara Jutunta</u>		<u>Adelaide Bore</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
0-14	57	41.0	42	38.6	12	27.9	111	37.5
15-59	69	49.6	60	50.9	29	67.5	158	53.6
60+	13	9.4	12	10.5	2	4.6	27	9.1
Total	139	100.0	114	100.0	43	100.0	296	100.0
Masculinity Ratio	114		70		115		95	
Dependency Ratio	101		96		48		84	

Source: Young, Fieldwork, 1984

are people from the immediate region. Historical records show that some early workers at Ti-Tree came from areas closer to Alice Springs such as Yambah. Since their children, and later grandchildren, were subsequently born on the station their links with the Ti-Tree region have become even stronger. In some cases others in the community have accepted these incomers as having sufficient customary knowledge to be classified as traditional owners for Ti-Tree sacred sites. The majority of the station group, however,

are people who by descent hold traditional responsibility for land within the lease boundary. While many have lived and worked there all their lives, others apparently spent considerable periods of time camping in remote parts of the property. Stories related by current residents suggest that the Heffernans, who owned the property from its establishment until 1976, would only allow those who were working to camp near the homestead. Records indicate that the Heffernans refused to apply for ration allocations for any other families, and were quite unsympathetic to the movement of relatives to join those who were employed. Still other residents are drawn from Ti-Tree people who had, for a variety of reasons, lived elsewhere during the time of the Heffernans' ownership. Some had worked on neighbouring properties such as Aileron and Pine Hill, and have later returned to Ti-Tree either because they lost their jobs or they had become too old for stockwork. Many of the Aileron people also left because of inadequate water supplies in the vicinity of their camp. The purchase of Ti-Tree for the Aboriginal community also undoubtedly drew people back, because they then saw the land as truly 'theirs' once more.

Pmara Jutunta, or 'New Place', lies close to the Stuart Highway, about 6 kms south of Ti-Tree township, on an area of 2.6 km sq (one square mile) excised from the Ti-Tree lease before its purchase by the government. This community, now with a population of about 120, was established in 1975 to resettle families then living on Aileron station, where, in addition to water supply problems, they lacked shelter and essential services. Many of these families had lived and worked on Aileron for many years, and their children had been born there. Their relocation to Ti-Tree was negotiated with the assistance of the Lutheran Finke River Mission, and one of the aims of the new community was to maintain an alcohol free camping environment. This, plus the fact that the excision preceded the purchase of the whole property for the Aborigines, has, in the eyes of most outsiders, set the Pmara Jutunta people apart from other Ti-Tree residents. Many from elsewhere assume that they are not traditional owners of Ti-Tree country. Information assembled for the presentation of the Ti-Tree Land Claim in 1985 (Green et al., 1984) shows that this impression is largely false. Many Pmara Jutunta families hold through their paternal and maternal grandparents, responsibility for important bush-plum dreaming sites which extend in an east-west line through Ti-Tree homestead and Ti-Tree Well. Their return to Ti-Tree has been welcomed by their kin and friends already living there. Other people at Pmara Jutunta, however, are not traditional land owners of Ti-Tree but are from adjacent Anmatyerre country. Nevertheless some, who have detailed knowledge of Ti-Tree customary lore, have come to play important roles in local ceremonial life.

Adelaide Bore, the third Ti-Tree community, lies about 65 kms to the east of Ti-Tree Well, on the minor unsealed road which links the Stuart and Sandover Highways. Although only recently established in its present form, the families who form this small community (about 50 individuals in all) have long been associated with this area which, before 1949 formed the separate pastoral lease of Woola Downs. Their customary land responsibilities all lie with this region and are concerned either with more easterly bush plum dreaming sites or with honey ant dreaming sites on the northern side of the lease. While some people previously worked for the owners of Woola Downs, the ruined homestead of which is only a few kilometres from the Adelaide Bore camp, others worked on nearby properties such as Mt Skinner, Woodgreen and Alcoota. Some individuals, like the Aileron people, have returned to live on Ti-Tree partly because of the transfer of the property to Aboriginal ownership. When they first returned many of the Adelaide Bore people continued to live at Ti-Tree homestead, but were always determined to move to Woola Downs. The present outstation site at Adelaide Bore was the obvious choice because of its permanent water supplies and good access.

Ti-Tree pastoral station also encloses two other communities within its boundaries, both on land which has been excised, and both with largely non-Aboriginal populations. One, a sub-lease of 2.5 sq km, is held by a grapefarmer and his family and this has now been converted to freehold land. The other consists of land alienated for the township of Ti-Tree, here referred to as Ti-Tree Well, a service centre located on the Stuart Highway. Most of the residents of Ti-Tree Well are non-Aborigines working in the roadhouse, or as teachers at the school, or nurses at the clinic. The police station is also a major reason for the existence of the settlement. Although some of these service organisations have Aboriginal employees, they are, unlike their non-Aboriginal counterparts, generally not provided with accommodation at Ti-Tree Well. With the exception of the police tracker, who has a house in Ti-Tree Well, all Aboriginal teachers and healthworkers either have to camp in nearby areas of the bush or commute daily from Pmara Jutunta or Ti-Tree homestead.

Despite the fact that Ti-Tree Well has very few Aboriginal residents, the presence of the community makes a profound impact on the lives of Ti-Tree people. Not only is it the main service centre, but it contains a road-house which provides the main focus for recreation. Although, at the request of the Ti-Tree and Willowra communities, the road-house no longer has a take-away licence, many people visit Ti-Tree to drink alcohol, and violent incidents in the community are usually attributed to this. This situation contrasts with that at both Willowra and Mt Allen, neither

of which is close to a road-house and where it is much easier for community leaders to control alcohol consumption. An additional problem faced by Ti-Tree communities is their position close to the Stuart Highway. Motor accidents, some resulting in fatalities, have been relatively common occurrences and the use of the main road by young people travelling to Alice Springs or elsewhere is a source of concern for community leaders. Altogether, the diversity of Ti-Tree's population combined with easy access and social pressures has placed strain on the social cohesion of the group.

Ti-Tree's accessibility, combined with the diverse experiences of its people in terms of their residential and work histories, means that the community as a whole has many links with other population groups. Many families have kin in Alice Springs, often part-Aborigines and their descendents, earlier forcibly taken away from their Aboriginal relatives as wards of state in the 1940s and later. Other family links differ between the three Ti-Tree communities. Ti-Tree homestead includes groups linked to areas to the west - Willowra, Anningie and Mt Barkly - but comparatively few linked on the eastern side to places like Utopia or Alcoota; Adelaide Bore links most strongly to these eastern areas. Pmara Jutunta tends to be more mixed, partly because of the common recent origin of the group as workers on Aileron, another main-road community with diverse population origins; but also because as, the 'dry' Ti-Tree community, it has attracted people who specifically do not want to camp near drinkers.

Ti-Tree is still a pastoral lease, subject to the usual rules and regulations of such properties in the Northern Territory. The claim lodged by the traditional owners of the land was heard in front of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner in February 1985, but although the report was released in 1987 freehold title has yet to be granted. The delay stems primarily from arguments over control of the main stock route which traverses Ti-Tree from north to south. Because of severe disease problems discovered in the process of testing for the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign (BTEC), the station has until recently been almost denuded of stock. In 1984 and early 1985 only a small number of jobs were available for young men wanting to work in the stock-camp, and restocking had to await extensive work on fencing and bore maintenance. Some of these needs had existed ever since the time the station was bought by the government since, at the time of purchase, the property was very badly run-down. The only other jobs available in the Ti-Tree communities themselves, as opposed to Ti-Tree Well, were some unskilled positions as cleaners and check-out operators at the homestead's community store, and specific jobs such as station mechanic. In early 1984 only 21 Ti-Tree people had wage jobs. This low level of

employment is a major cause for concern, especially with the rapidly expanding young adult population, most of whom have higher levels of formal education than their parents.

Ti-Tree communities have most of the standard services and infrastructure found in Central Desert Aboriginal communities - conventional housing, reticulated water, power supplies and a nearby school, health clinic and retail store. But these are not equally available to all groups. Adelaide Bore, for example, as yet has no houses or power supplies, and water supplies consist of occasional stand-pipes served by a system reticulated from the water tank; and all communities are forced to send their pre-school and primary children to the centralised school at Ti-Tree Well, a significant distance particularly for Adelaide Bore families. Similarly, until recently, everyone had to visit the Ti-Tree Well clinic when sick; this situation has improved somewhat with the opening of periodic clinics at Pmara Jutunta and Ti-Tree Homestead. In general the principle of centralised service provision, which was deliberately followed at Ti-Tree, has been detrimental to the growth of a well-integrated community, where people have a good understanding of the functions of non-Aboriginal services, and what they can contribute. It is noticeable that, in contrast to Willowra or even Yuendumu, Ti-Tree parents are quite reluctant to visit the school on a casual basis, and obviously see this particular institution as very much part of the white man's world.

Arrernte and Pitjantjatjara groups

Case-study groups in which the main languages spoken are Arrernte, Loritja and Pitjantjatjara dialects include Finke, Harts Range and outstations associated with Fregon and Ernabella.

Finke

Finke, situated about 350 kms to the south east of Alice Springs and easily accessible by sealed and all-weather gravel road, is a town with a current population of about 150, largely of Aboriginal origin. It lies on the old Ghan railway line, and, as one of the major service centres when the line was in operation, originally developed as a non-Aboriginal rather than Aboriginal centre (Fig.3.6). Its origin, therefore, is quite different from that of Aboriginal towns such as Yuendumu or Fregon. Today it remains an 'open' town, officially gazetted under Northern Territory legislation. Unlike most of the Aboriginal towns it was not formerly part of an Aboriginal reserve, and the land which surrounds it is not held under Aboriginal freehold title but consists of a stock reserve, stock routes and pastoral leases. Aboriginal claims for the reserve and

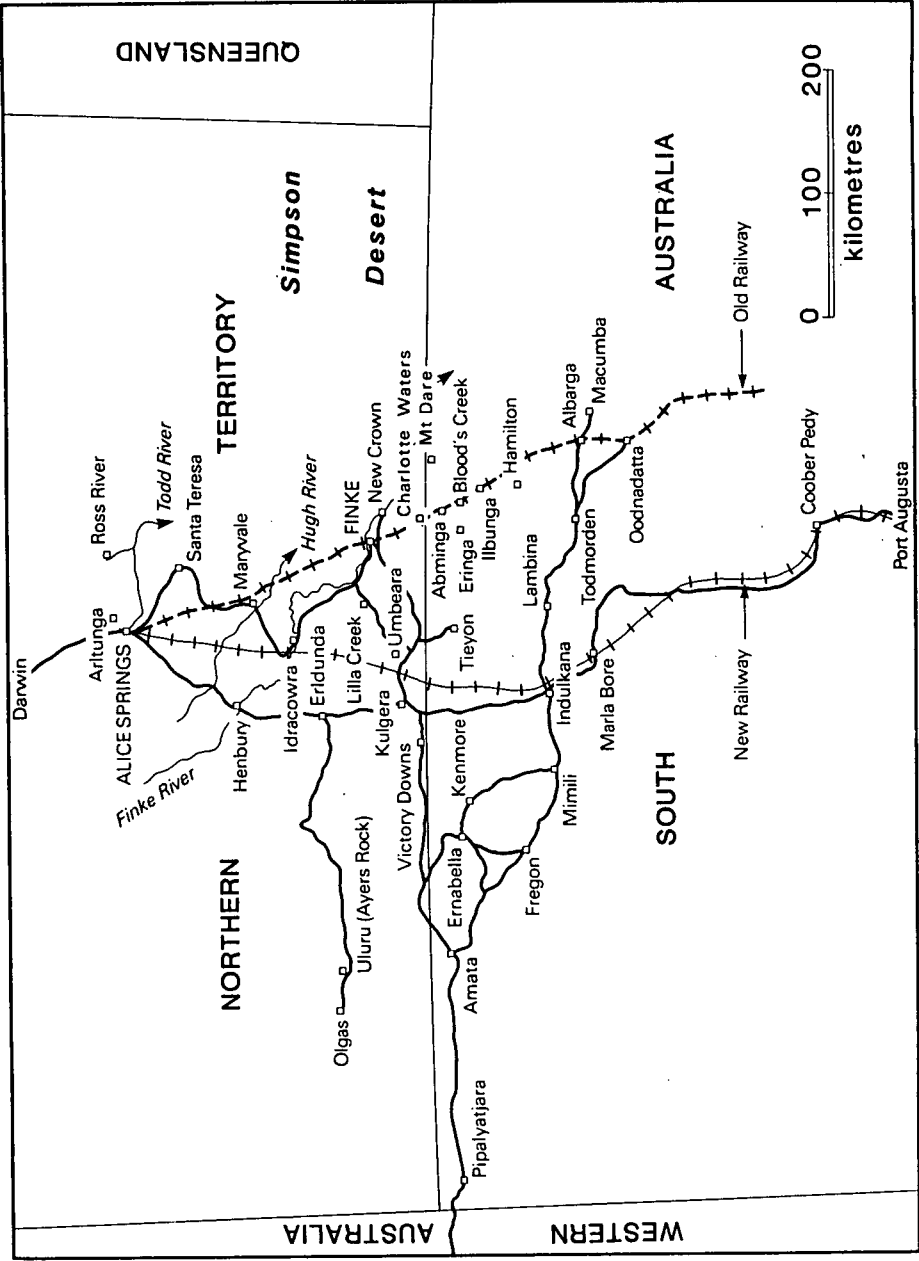


Figure 3.6 Finke and associated communities

stock routes to be declared as freehold land are currently under negotiation.

Following the establishment of Finke as a non-Aboriginal service centre, Aborigines began to live in the periphery of the town to gain access to its services, food supplies and other facilities. Many belonged to families traditionally associated with the surrounding region, an area considered to have been inhabited by the Lower Southern Arrernte (Spencer, 1927; Berndt, R.M and C.H., 1945). Lower Southern Arrernte had, during the expansion of the pastoral industry and the coming of the railway, experienced significant dislocation which led to the death of family members in conflict, and reduced access to natural foods and living resources. Many moved not only to nearby centres such as Finke but also to more distant settlements such as Oodnadatta, Alice Springs and associated mission stations like Santa Teresa. Even today many Finke families have kin in these centres. Other factors affecting the mobility history of the Lower Southern Arrernte include a severe drought in the 1930s, which led to enforced migration in search of food and water. People still able to recall that traumatic time, refer to the land around Finke as having been 'left empty' (Bain, pers com., 1985).

The numeric decline and relocation of the Lower Southern Arrernte also, according to present day residents, led to the movement of Loritja, Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara people into the area from the west. However, as the Berndts (1945) recorded, these groups appear to have been in close contact with the Arrernte before the beginning of non-Aboriginal settlement, and thus this movement cannot be wholly attributed to these historical events. Older Pitjantjatjara men resident today in other communities such as Ernabella, Fregon and Indulkana talk about formerly working as stockmen on stations around Finke, and some also state that ritual and kin obligations led Pitjantjatjara people to settle in the Finke region. These appear to have arisen partly through the decline of the Lower Southern Arrernte, and recognition of the need to keep the 'Law' which their Arrernte kin had taught to those Loritja and Pitjantjatjara men and women. One man described how Finke was 'grown up by people of other countries but now all the young ones born in the country will look after it'. Vachon (1982, 470) comments on a similar situation where Pitjantjatjara had moved into an area once occupied by Yankanyatjara and were 'caring for' the land that they now occupy on behalf of their wives and wives' brothers who have died or who left their country to live in Oodnadatta and Coober Pedy. Similar assumption of ritual responsibility has occurred in other parts of Central Australia where marked displacement and decimation of Aboriginal groups has occurred.

An additional factor which has shaped the current population structure in Finke is the influence of the Ernabella Presbyterian mission, associated with the eastern movement of Pitjantjatjara people, and with the fact that mission supply vehicles would regularly visit Finke to collect their supplies from the train. Margaret Bain (1979, vi,vii), an Ernabella mission worker who spent many years in Finke, considers that the influence and energy of incoming Aboriginal people from Ernabella were highly significant in assisting Finke people to achieve their obviously high level of self esteem and sense of direction. Unlike their compatriots doomed to squatting on non-Aboriginal pastoral properties, people in contact with the Presbyterian mission had opportunities to develop their own skills and express their own ideas.

Finke's non-Aboriginal history is inextricably linked to the history of the rail link between Port Augusta and Alice Springs, opened in 1929 and, as far as the line through Finke was concerned, closed when the newly aligned track came into operation in 1980. During the railway era Finke was a busy and boisterous town, an attraction for fettlers and other railway workers and stockmen seeking entertainment at weekends, and a place which had a considerable reputation for drinking and associated violence. It has since become a quiet, sleepy community and its past experiences are merely memories. Aborigines living in the vicinity of Finke were able to gain some employment during the railway era - the men on the line itself and the women generally in domestic jobs. But most had no wage jobs, and, particularly in the late 1960s and 1970s, were there partly because the introduction of award wages for pastoral workers had led to their eviction from stations no longer needing their labour, places which in most cases were their traditional country. Settlement in Finke brought many social problems - alcohol abuse, tension between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents, and a general lack of control and direction of their own lives. Despite these difficulties the Finke Aboriginal community did try to gather the available resources and energy to establish their own credibility in the community and agencies such as the Aputula housing association were set up before the disappearance of the railway. Prior to the establishment of the housing association in 1975, Aboriginal residents of Finke had no houses, but lived in humpies in the sandhills beyond the town blocks. The first houses for Finke Aborigines were reputedly financed with profits made from selling wild camels and tektites found in the vicinity. Since 1980 Finke has essentially been an Aboriginal town, most of the former railway houses have been occupied by Aboriginal families, and the community has rapidly taken active control of its own affairs. Now known as the Aputula community, it runs the council, store and clinic, organises its own municipal

services and community housing projects, and strictly regulates the sale of alcohol through the former pub, the licence for which is now held by one of the Aboriginal leaders.

The Aboriginal population of Finke in a census conducted in 1985 was 163, approximately 66 per cent of whom were over the age of 15. As in the other case-study communities, Finke had a high dependency ratio (75), with most dependents being children. The masculinity ratio (95) shows a fairly equal balance between men and women, and suggests population stability. The town also had twelve non-Aboriginal residents, two school-teachers (husband and wife) and their family, a community advisor, a mechanic and an adult educator and their respective families. Of the 73 Aboriginal residents interviewed in the survey, 31.5 per cent referred to themselves as of Arrernte origin, 26 per cent were of Loritja origin and 33 per cent Pitjantjatjara or Yankunytjatjara. This clearly indicates the extent to which the population is now of mixed linguistic origin.

Finke is a self-contained town, providing a variety of services for its own population. Because of its isolation from main communication lines it does not receive many visitors from elsewhere, although some tourists do periodically pass through and this is likely to increase with the opening of Dalhousie Springs as a South Australian Park. Its employment structure is based entirely on the service sector, largely dependent on government funding through federal departments such as DAA, DEIR (DEET) and ADC, and Northern Territory departments such as Community Development, Education, Police, and Health. Major employers in early 1985 included the Aputula Council, which accounted for over 36 per cent of the Aboriginal workforce. These jobs included book-keeping and clerical work in the office, people working in the garage, power house operation, a cleaner and general municipal labouring. Other main employers included the shop, entirely under Aboriginal management, the clinic, also now run by Aboriginal health-workers, the school, the police station and the housing association. However the total Aboriginal employment was only 33, only about one third of the adult Aboriginal population. While this figure is certainly low by non-Aboriginal standards, it is higher than that in some other Aboriginal communities in Central Australia. In 1983 communities such as Willowra and Utopia had wage positions for only 4.7 per cent and 11.1 per cent respectively of their adult communities (Young 1985, 170). Finke's slightly better position can be attributed partly to the determination of Aboriginal leaders to take over all possible positions.

Harts Range (Atitgere)

The Atitgere community adjacent to Harts Range Police Station lies about 200 kms from Alice Springs on the Plenty Highway, one of the main road linkages between Central Australia and Queensland (Fig.3.7). It is a

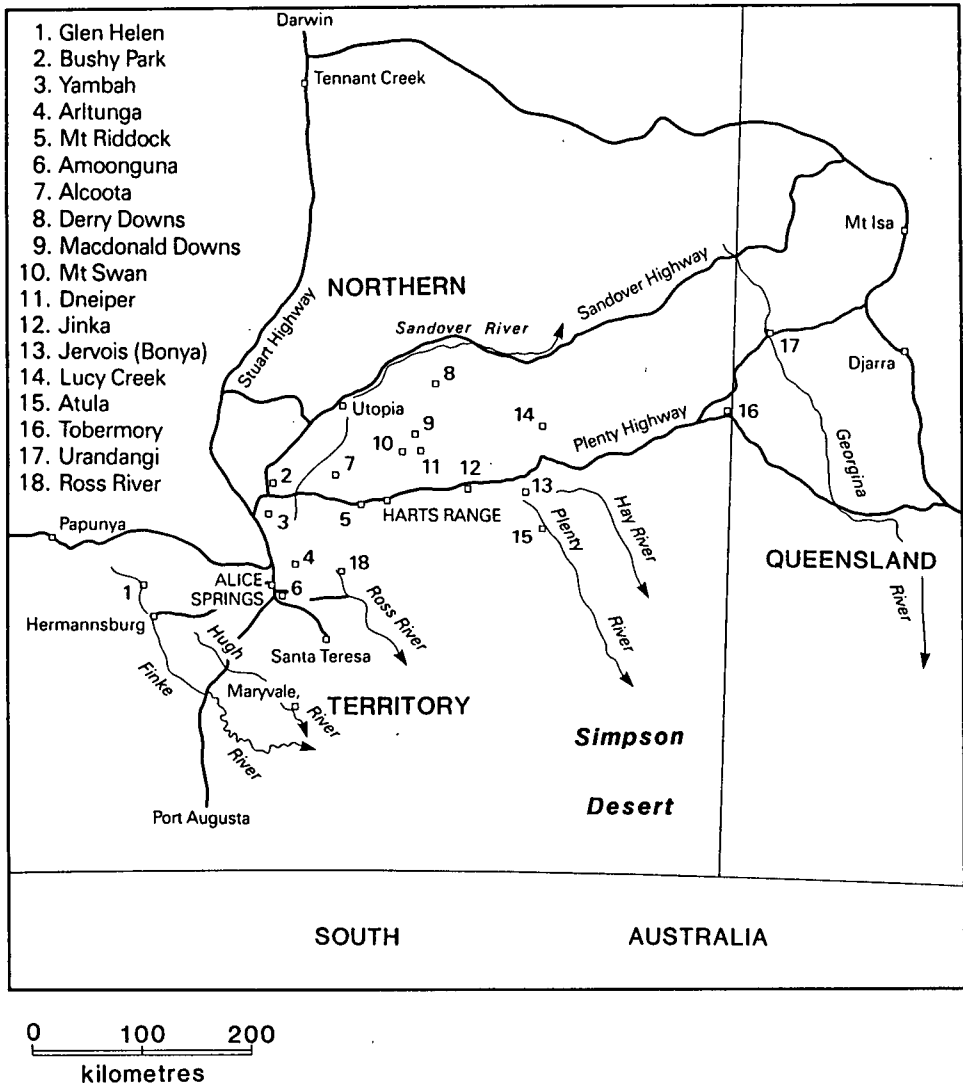


Figure 3.7 Harts Range and associated communities

community of Eastern Arrernte people, most of whom have lived in and around the area for all of their lives. Many

have in the past been associated with surrounding pastoral stations, and from time to time have provided labour on Mt Riddock, Bonya, Mt Swan, Alcoota and Utopia. For most, the traditional land for which they hold customary responsibility lies within the boundaries of these pastoral leases. Like other eastern Arrernte, they were dispossessed with the introduction of the pastoral industry, and, while in some cases they have been allowed to continue living on the land of their ancestors, many have been evicted as their labour was not required. The Atitgere community owes its origins largely to such evictions, with the land adjacent to the already established police station being the only area available to them, and the police station being the only point which could provide them with limited services. In 1985 the Atitgere group were negotiating for an excision of a small area of Mt Riddock as a special purpose lease, an excision which would allow them to exercise much greater control over the running of their community, and give them a much stronger basis from which to negotiate for a share in resources.

The Atitgere group does not include all Aboriginal families from the surrounding region. Some have moved further afield, to Alice Springs and Santa Teresa and, on the Queensland side, to Dajara and Mt Isa. Many Atitgere people have close kin in these communities and regular visiting occurs. In the case of Alice Springs several families have sons, daughters and parents living in town and, in addition to travelling to see them, they also visit the centre for entertainment, shopping, health services, meetings, drinking grog and occasionally finding employment. In town they tend to focus on two of the town camps, Charles Creek and Hidden Valley, where most of the residents are eastern Arrernte.

Harts Range Police Station has played a key role in the formation of the present community, and in the provision of services for it. The station owes its origin to the early mining days, when deposits of mica, garnets and rubies attracted fossickers and miners to the region. The police station, as far as the Aborigines were concerned, provided a reliable water supply and a degree of stability. Some people were employed as goat herders, cleaners and child minders and others worked with the miners. A non-Aboriginal woman, who had initially come to Harts Range to collect precious and semi-precious stones, opened a store adjacent to the police station 18 years ago, and that shop became not only the source of food supplies for the Aborigines but also their cheque cashing/social security agency. The shop provides vital service as, with lack of employment, welfare payments provide almost all the cash income of the group.

Dependence on the police station has remained important. The policeman shows weekly video films and, since the only radio telephone is located at the station, provides important communication links. The only other means of communication is a two-way radio provided by the Central Land Council for the local executive member, an Atitgere resident. Mail is delivered to a post box in Alice Springs and collected once a week by a member of the community who acts as de facto community advisor. The community has no school, and families with school-age kids are forced to arrange for their children to board in Alice Springs or Santa Teresa with relatives. However it does have a health caravan, run by two Aboriginal health workers who provide day-to-day care and a sister from the Northern Territory health department in Alice Springs visits once a week.

The Atitgere people would like to be able to establish themselves independently of the police station and, as far as many people are concerned, the privately operated store. This hinges on obtaining alternative water supplies, and setting up their own shop. In 1985 the community still had no local water supply, and was carting water from the police station to household tanks. Although the Department of Community Development were supposed to install a bore within the community living area, water resources teams still stressed that their instructions were to drill beside the police station. As a result the police station had three bores while the Aboriginal community had none. Arguments over the store have occurred for many years. Aboriginal organisations and some government agencies in Alice Springs have been pushing strongly for compulsory purchase of the existing store, and the establishment of Aboriginal control. But, while Atitgere people recognise the value of such an approach, they have felt ambivalent about it. Several families have known Pat, the non-Aboriginal store owner, for twenty or thirty years and say of her - 'we were lucky she found us you know, no-one else fed us and she's the one that is still feeding us now and giving us our cheque money'. Discussions with ADC in 1985 over the proposed take-over of the store finally bore fruit and in 1986 the Atitgere had their own shop under ADC supervised management.

The Atitgere population in mid 1985 numbered about 70, 34 per cent of whom were below the age of twenty. As this indicates, the community had fewer young people than generally occurs in Central Australian Aboriginal populations, a fact which may be attributed to the lack of educational facilities. Residents lived in six camps, each housing an extended family group. Until the early part of 1985 they still lived in tents, humpies, car bodies and other assorted shelters. Following an application for housing funds the community received enough money to build

four brick houses but decided that, in a desert community with no power and no reticulated water, such structures were currently inappropriate. Instead, with the assistance of Tangentyere Council, they applied for funds to provide basic suitable shelter for every family group, and now have a total of thirty two tin sheds, single room constructions which can be easily adapted to meet individual family needs, and can also if necessary be dismantled and re-erected at another location. This is particularly important in the Atitgere community because some families do not intend to remain there permanently, but plan to move eventually to their own traditional country in other areas.

Ernabella and Fregon homeland centres

Ernabella and Fregon, two communities in Pitjantjatjara/Yankunyjatjara country in the north-west of South Australia, lie over 400 kms from Alice Springs within the area of the Musgrave Ranges (Fig.3.8). Both communities owe their existence to Presbyterian (now Uniting Church) mission activity in the region, an activity which stemmed primarily from a concern for Aboriginal welfare following the incursion of non-Aboriginal pastoralists and the coming of the railway line in the 1930s. Ernabella was established in 1937, and more than 20 years later, in 1961, Fregon was formed as an Ernabella outstation based on a cattle enterprise. Most families who then moved to Fregon had traditional ties close to the new settlement. Both remained centralised settlements until the 1970s, when the outstation, or homelands movement began to make an impact in the region. By 1984 Ernabella had a total of ten outstations, with a combined population of between 79 and 146, accounting for between 18 and 34 per cent of the community. Fregon had 16 proposed outstations, of which between 8 and 10 held relatively permanent populations. The total population, then estimated at about 50, accounted for about 18 per cent of that of Fregon. In both cases outstations used the centralised settlements as resource agencies, for health and education services, as social security agencies, and for the purchase of food, clothing and other needs.

The early linkages between Ernabella and Fregon remain important, and also affect outstation families. Many Fregon people make the hour's journey to Ernabella almost every day to visit kin, shop, attend church and carry out other business. They also, from time to time, have had to go there to purchase fuel because the Fregon outlet has closed down - sometimes due to petrol sniffing, or because too many people have been booking up fuel and there is no ready cash available. Outstation groups also remain closely linked, and in some cases could be described as commuting units. Some people move into Ernabella or Fregon every day to visit,

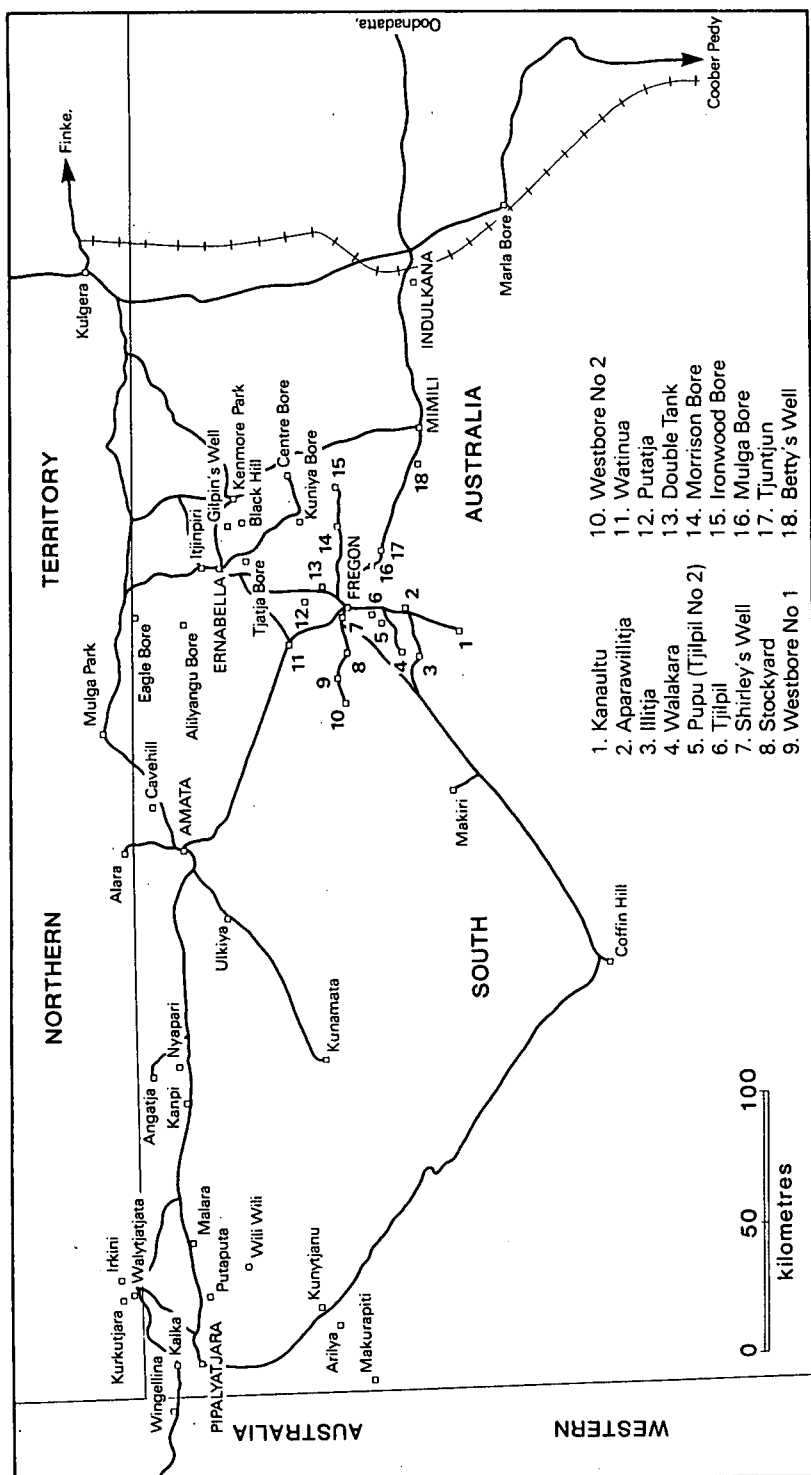


Figure 3.8 Ernabella, Fregon and homeland centres

shop or collect mail, and return to their outstation to sleep. Some Ernabella outstation people have wage jobs and travel to the centre every day to work. These characteristics, while not entirely absent in homeland centre groups elsewhere, seem to be particularly important in this region.

CHAPTER 4

'BUSINESS' MOVEMENT

Ceremonial activity, rights and obligations remain as powerful forces in Aboriginal society. Such activity relates to and affects several different although interconnected aspects of Aboriginal culture. Two broad categories of ceremonial activity can be identified: ceremonies related to the land, expressed through rituals associated with sacred sites and replenishment of natural resources; and ceremonies concerned more directly with the social realm, and often marking stages in the life cycle of an individual - initiation, death and the maintenance of social relations. Almost all such ceremonies involve mobility, the bringing together of the appropriate participants, visits to the appropriate places and finding the right resources to carry out the rituals.

Ceremonies related to the land and its economic and ritual significance have always resulted not only in the gathering together of large groups of participants at specific places and specific times, but also in visits by individuals and small groups to the country for which they were responsible. Activities such as the ritual re-enactment of the experiences of ancestral beings in the Dreamtime still constitute an important component of community life. These demand regular visits to one's country, and the performance of ritual obligations to reinforce and maintain the sacred significance of sites. Berndt (1942, 143-44) noted that, during the time he spent at Ooldea, the most notable fluctuations in Aboriginal population resulted from travelling for ceremonial purposes. Others, such as Kaberry (1939, 194), have stressed that these journeys are perceived to be of such importance that people will endure considerable 'hardship and short rations' in order to take part. The fact that the ancestral beings of the Western Desert and Central Australia were renowned for their extensive, active and enduring journeys throughout the country (Myers 1982, 189-190) ensures that these types of ceremonial activity lead to large scale and long distance mobility.

Ceremonial journeys themselves are frequently observed and are the subject of comment by non-Aborigines. But understanding of vital aspects lying behind these journeys is very limited - who makes the decision to go, who takes part, what route is selected for travelling and what happens along the way, when the ceremony occurs, and what constitutes a worthwhile journey in Aboriginal terms. These elements tend to vary according to the type of ceremony to be performed.

When discussing ceremonial journeys with Aboriginal people it becomes obvious that an enormous amount of preparation and organisation is required. The decision to carry out the ceremony itself sometimes arises from fairly specific events, such as the need to hold land maintenance ceremonies to reinforce work being carried out for the presentation of a Land Claim; or mourning ceremonies connected with a death. Such ceremonies must take place within a certain time frame. But at other times ceremonies reflect longer term needs, highly significant in general value but not necessarily so time specific. Such ceremonies may include the initiation of boys into manhood. Decisions in all cases are made not by single individuals but by the appropriate group of relatives, or ceremonial leaders, and involve lengthy discussion before finally being reached.

The decision to hold the ceremony also includes choosing who has to participate. Different types of ceremonies involve different types of people. Some, such as women's 'yawalyu' (land maintenance) ceremonies, involve only members of one gender. Others, such as ceremonies for the circumcision and initiation of young men, may involve both genders, but it may not be necessary for a wide range of people to attend. And in other cases, such as mourning ceremonies concerned with the death of important people, every man, woman and child will go if it is physically possible to do so. In each case there will be particular individuals whose attendance is obligatory, without whom the holding of the ceremony would be impossible, and allocation of space on vehicles used to make the journeys will always take this into account. Other people, who should attend because of family connections, or who are merely interested, will be able to go if there is transport, but access to vehicles can present problems in allowing all willing participants to go.

The choice of routes for ceremonial journeys is also very important. Cultural constraints have to be adhered to, particularly in rituals, such as initiation ceremonies, connected with learning about spiritual aspects of the country. Different community groups carry out lengthy negotiations over the tracks which can be used for such journeys. The travelling group cannot move randomly, but must follow a route regulated by the dreaming tracks of the ancestral beings, as well as by the presence of existing roads and the patterns of usage which affect them. For example, the road between Kings Canyon and the highway to Uluru (Ayers Rock) was once used extensively for such journeys but, with the increase in tourist use of this road, there is some concern that it will not be 'safe' to use in the future. If that is the case Aborigines will decide on an alternative route, perhaps less direct but more secret. Whatever the situation, any road used for ceremonial journeys is restricted for all other Aboriginal users until

the 'business' has passed through. Communities know in advance when ceremonial groups are on the road, and will go to great lengths to avoid contact with the 'Law' mob. This often means not travelling at all during that time, or finding different routes. The latter approach is often impossible because of the limited number of roads in and out of communities. In the case of some ceremonies roads can remain closed for days, and the impact on community life can be quite marked. As far as non-Aborigines are concerned, restrictions are less severe. Aborigines are aware that many non-Aborigines are ignorant of these practices, and condone their continued use of roads at ceremonial times, particularly if these are major highways. They also accept that administrative personnel may have important reasons for journeys, and may therefore have to ignore these codes. But, when non-Aborigines are long-standing members of the community they will often be told about ceremonies and roads, and will be expected to conform to Aboriginal restrictions.

The choice of when to hold ceremonies is, as suggested above, restricted by the reasons for the ceremony. In the case of mourning ceremonies decisions about timing usually have to be taken very quickly, with little opportunity for planning. For example, the Willowra funeral described in Chapter 1 occurred because of a sudden death, and within two or three hours of the community receiving the news every serviceable vehicle was on the road to Ali-Curung. Land maintenance ceremonies held in conjunction with Land Claims, although also fairly time specific, provide more latitude for flexibility. While those organising these ceremonies may send word to important leaders that they want to start next week delays while waiting for participants to arrive are common. With both of these types of ceremony the timing of the completion of activities is much less certain. Mourning rituals for important community leaders can continue for weeks or even months, and during that period access to the community concerned and the day to day mobility of main participants can be severely limited. 'Yawalyu' ceremonies can also be prolonged or brief, according to the situation. If the ceremony is being performed in an exhibition situation, as could be the case during the actual hearing of a Land Claim in front of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, then staging would usually be quick, and completion times could be predicted accurately. But if the ceremony concerned the promotion of the general human/land relationships of the group, and teaching young people and others about the appropriate practices, it could be prolonged and its completion would be quite unpredictable.

Nowadays the timing of initiation ceremonies takes into account the responsibilities of members of the community but

still contains elements of uncertainty. Since most of the young people involved in such ceremonies are still attending school, and some of the adults are in wage jobs, this activity is often timed to occur within the Christmas holiday break, the hot time of year. In Central Australia this period also coincides with the season when activity in the pastoral industry is most limited, and is the time when, formerly, Aboriginal employees on cattle stations were expected to go 'walkabout', visit their relatives and find their own sustenance. But, while most of these types of ceremonies are held in that period, the actual choice of a part of the period is not predictable and initiation ceremonies can also be held at other times of year.

Planning for ceremonial journeys includes not only decisions about timing, routes and participants but other more mundane matters such as the accumulation and allocation of resources such as food, water and fuel. Although people know that they can expect support from friends and kin whom they meet along the way, and value such assistance as an important expression of social cohesiveness, they also know that they may be stranded on the way, and that their requirements may be too great for them to rely solely on the help of those whom they meet. They often purchase food before leaving, and, if they have insufficient ready cash, will borrow as necessary for the journey. Communities hosting ceremonies may also try to provide resources for the travellers, and in Central Australia, where access to cattle is often easy, it is common for people to arrange for meat from 'killers' to be available free of charge. Similarly, host communities may carry out firewood collection to ensure that such activities do not cut into the time available for carrying out the ceremonies. Other necessary resources may include materials such as ochre for painting, ceremonial weapons and other objects, or clothing. Accumulating these resources may in itself involve journeys, to the places where ochres can be found, or to locations where people have already observed the right kinds of wood for making spears. Such journeys may also need the permission of specific individuals concerned with the care of the sources of such materials. Altogether, planning for ceremonies may take a considerable time.

Today many of the plans for holding ceremonies can be relayed using modern means of communications rather than by passing information through word of mouth. The use of radio is extensive among Aboriginal people and communities in Central Australia and it is through regular contact over the airwaves that news of the travelling 'Law', especially which roads are being used, becomes common knowledge. Sometimes such information is then passed on to non-Aborigines working with Aboriginal organisations so that they can anticipate certain patterns of behaviour. People have come to rely on

the radio for transmission of such news. On one occasion at least, during a stay at the Mutitjulu community at Uluru, women refused to leave the camp because the radio was out of order during 'business' time. We waited for three days before news that the road was clear came from an authority whom the women considered as one who would 'know properly'.

Ceremonial journeys - some specific examples

The complexity of organisation, decision-making and experience involved in travelling for ceremonies is best understood by considering specific examples.

(A) Women's meeting in the Kimberleys, 1985

In 1983 there was a women's meeting at Turkey Creek, in the East Kimberleys, a meeting which was seen to be of great significance in bringing together women of ritual importance from a wide region. This meeting involved not only Kimberley women but also many from northern and eastern communities of the Northern Territory, including places as far apart as Daguragu, Port Keats, and Borroloola. Women from the Pitjantjatjara lands, although invited to this meeting, were unable to attend because they did not have enough time to make the necessary arrangements. All who were there declared that it was such a success that the experience should be repeated in 1985, when women of the Malan and Balgo Kimberley communities would be the hosts.

In 1985 the Pitjantjatjara women were able to go. The Pitjantjatjara Women's Council assisted by arranging for transport and drivers, sending a map to all communities so that the proposed route of travel would be known, and asking women of each community to select those who should go. Approximately 60 Pitjantjatjara women travelled to Malan, using five Toyotas, one small community bus and a large truck. The journey took three days and two nights, often along rough roads (Fig.4.1). The Toyotas, able to cope more easily with difficult roads, went by relatively direct routes in convoy, but the truck and bus travelled via Alice Springs and picked up other passengers along the way. These included two women from Amata who had caught the plane to Alice Springs because that would enable more people to travel in the Kalka Toyotas without overloading or making a detour to collect them. These extra costs were met with funds 'chucked in' by the Kalka women. Fuel for all vehicles was provided by the Pitjantjatjara Women's Council, and for the return journey, by the Kimberley organisers of the ceremonial meeting.

The Malan meeting attracted at least 300 women, representing well over thirty different communities and Aboriginal organisations in the Kimberleys, Northern Territory, and

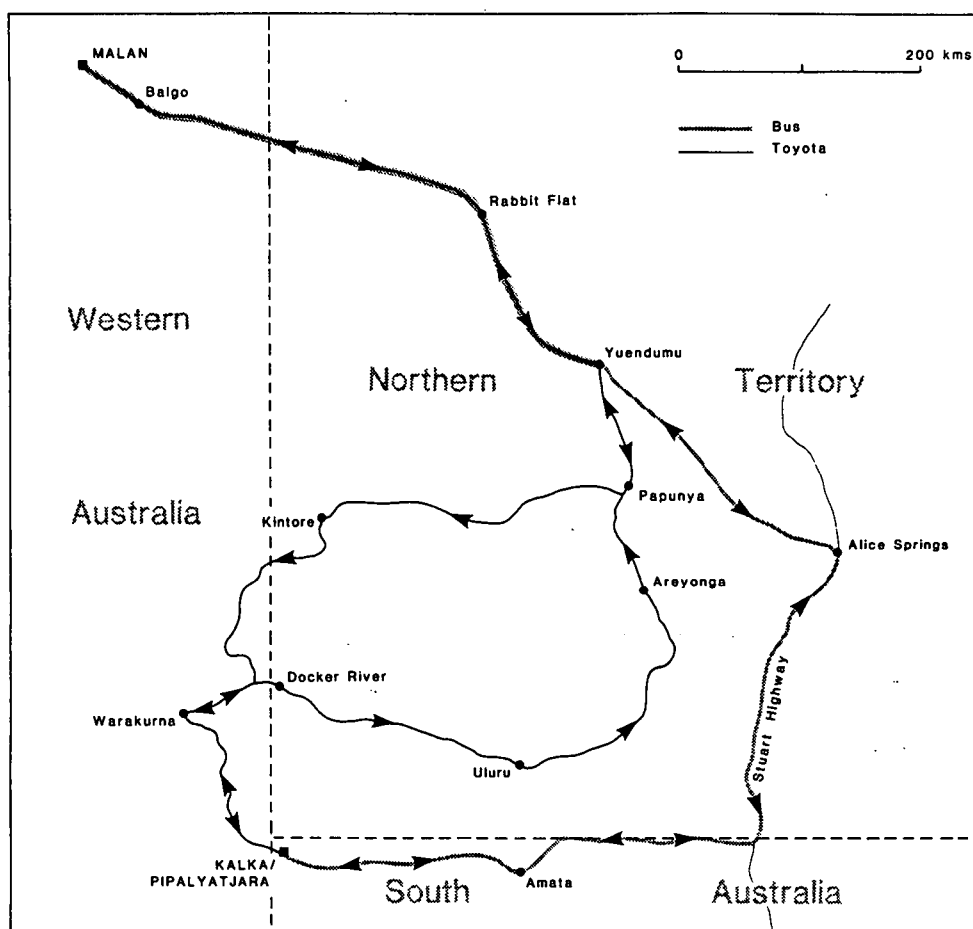


Figure 4.1 The journey from Pitjantjatjara country to Malan

Pitjantjatjara lands in South Australia and Western Australia. Figure 4.2 shows the distribution of these groups, and indicates that, as one would expect, Kimberley communities were the best represented. Everyone who attended had been extremely keen to come because they felt that the meeting was of great importance. Some, when asked why they were willing to travel such a long distance said 'It's a women's meeting, proper women's business, we have to go, people have to speak (for country)'. But the resources available for the journey had clearly varied between groups. In general the Central Australian and Northern Territory women were much better equipped with vehicles and with non-Aboriginal assistance. Eight non-Aboriginal women accompanied the Pitjantjatjara group, and played an

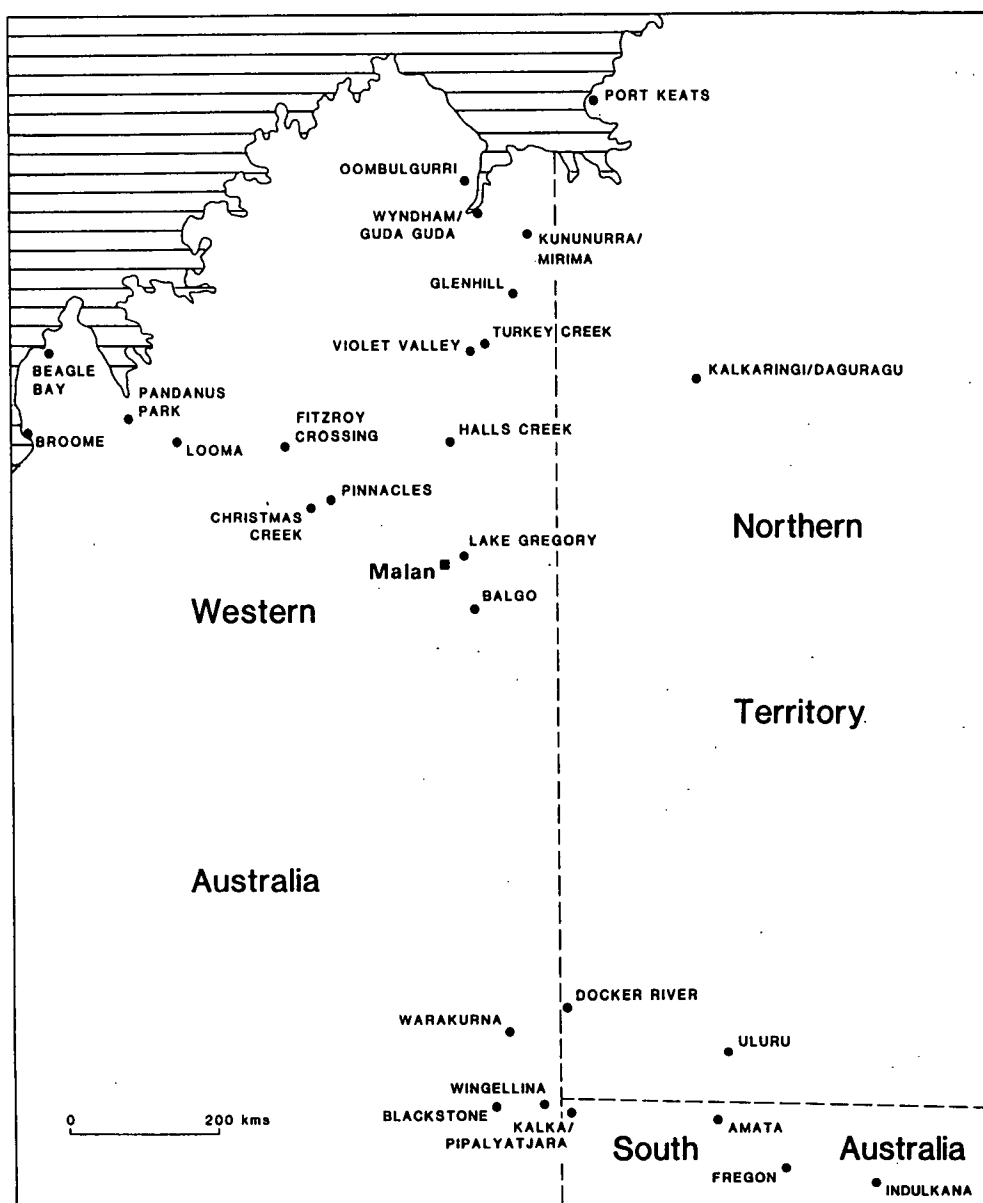


Figure 4.2 Source communities for women attending the Malan meeting

important role in coping with the long hours of driving; however Kimberley women, who numbered at least 200, only had three non-Aboriginal assistants, three Toyotas and one truck. Several groups suffered considerable inconvenience en

route. Women from the West Kimberley, for example, ended up sharing the Toyota from Ringer's Soak and, along with a number of young children, were stranded for 24 hours with little food or water until picked up 30 kms north of Balgo. Once groups began to arrive several vehicles ran a shuttle service between Malan and Bililuna, picking up women whose transport, including a bus hired from Halls Creek was unable to take them the whole journey.

All groups camped about 15 kms from the community at the women's ceremonial ground. Ritual performances of the Dreamtime journeys followed, and the mobility of all Aboriginal women became severely restricted because the power and potency of these ceremonies is considered to be dangerous to children and men. People left the area only when food and water supplies had to be replenished. Over the next three days and nights ceremonies continued, stories and contemporary political knowledge and experiences were exchanged and information shared. The strength of ceremonial linkages between different groups was demonstrated through many rituals in sequence, with one group of women singing and dancing for a section of the story, and then watching while the tale was taken up by another group.

The ceremonies continued to influence mobility on the return journey. For example, a strict travelling style was imposed on all vehicles returning to Central Australia via Balgo and Yuendumu (Fig.4.1). The 'Law' truck, the main repository of knowledge of the events of the meeting, travelled slowly at the head of the convoy. Despite the fact that this slow journey made the hot and dusty Tanami road seem much longer than usual, everyone accepted that this procedure could not be abandoned until the vehicles reached Yuendumu. Once there, ritual leaders from both Yuendumu and the travelling group officially lifted the travel restrictions, and vehicles could break from the convoy and take whichever route their occupants chose. One group decided to follow the tracks of the 'Two Sisters', active and enduring women who, according to the legend, travelled extensively throughout the Western Desert and Central Australia. Although this journey, which took the Pitjantjatjara women the back way from Yuendumu through Kintore to Kalka, was much less exciting than that of the 'Two Sisters', the fact that it followed their tracks added new dimensions to people's social and ritual knowledge and status. People saw new places, heard new tales, met groups of Aboriginal women with whom they would otherwise have had very little contact and learned at first hand of the essential linkages of ritual to place. These experiences expanded networks of obligation, responsibility and rights to country, and provided security for future journeys into that region. As Berndt (1943, 38) has commented, 'By the showing of ritual objects to fully initiated visitors and strangers there is an ever-widening

circle in which (the 'owners' of these rituals) may travel'. Journeys such as those undertaken by the Pitjantjatjara women to Malan are likely to lead to more frequent ceremonial and other movement between these two areas in the future.

In broad terms it is also worth considering the cost of carrying out such large and ambitious meetings. The approximate cost to organising groups of the Malan meeting was \$15000, of which \$14500 came from a DAA grant, and the remainder from the Kimberley Land Council. Communities themselves contributed varying amounts towards travel costs and individual women found the necessary remainder. Port Keats and Daguragu/Kalkaringi women received \$1200 from the Aboriginal Cultural Foundation to assist with their travel. Of the \$15000 spent on the meeting over one third went on the hire of buses and trucks, and an air charter; stores, including 'killers' and food at the meeting and some food for travelling, took up about another third; and the remainder was used for fuel, wages for organisers and sundry expenses such as the hire of a generator.

(B) Ceremonial activity related to Land Claims - Mt Allen, 1982

Although ceremonies celebrating the relationship of family groups to their country, and ensuring the continuation and replenishment of the land's resources are not confined to particular occasions, periods culminating in the presentation of Land Claim hearings have often been marked by a flurry of activity of this type. During the prolonged documentation of genealogies and discussion of traditional land ownership many Aboriginal groups have suggested that it is not only important to visit their country, and especially sites within it, but also to perform the rituals associated with it. These two activities complement each other, and, while clearly demonstrating the complexities of the human/land relationships to non-Aboriginal outsiders such as lawyers, anthropologists and government officials, also reinforce the knowledge of these matters held by members of the group. Marked population movement takes place as a result.

The recording of information about traditional land ownership, for most Aboriginal groups in the Northern Territory, means extensive travel to find the appropriate informants. While such travel often involves the researcher moving between communities, it also involves people coming to the community directly affected by the claim. The claim for the conversion of the Aboriginal-owned pastoral lease of Mt Allen involved considerable movement of this type. It arose partly because of the earlier impact of non-Aboriginal settlement on the traditional land owners of Mt Allen

country. As described above Mt Allen people were camping elsewhere, on adjacent cattle stations such as Coniston and Napperby and in the newly established government settlement at Yuendumu when the lease of the property was taken up in 1946. Other people, mostly those with some European ancestry, had moved to Alice Springs. While some families subsequently moved back others remained, married, and conceived and brought up their children in these places. All retained their responsibility for Mt Allen country. These places, and others such as Willowra and Ti-Tree, also had residents who, through patterns of intermarriage from pre-contact times, had a traditional interest in Mt Allen, and still others whose secondary ritual responsibilities were important because of shared Dreaming Tracks.

During the six weeks prior to the presentation of the Mt Allen Claim in July 1982 people visited sites in all parts of the cattle station. Visitors included both residents of the Mt Allen community, and kin who had come from elsewhere. The presence of these non-Mt Allen residents was particularly important for two of the land-owning groups, many of whose members were, for the reasons given above, normally living away from Mt Allen. One group, Jungarrayi/Japaljarri, had most of its traditional owners living in Yuendumu and Napperby, while in the case of another, Jampijinpa/Jangala, people lived in Napperby, Ti-Tree and Alice Springs. Site visiting associated with the latter group was particularly interesting because many of those involved were young and had limited knowledge of the country under claim, and the whole process became a significant educational experience. In the 1940s two of the women in this group had been sent to live in the Bungalow in Alice Springs while children, because their mother had been part-European. Although they had both remained in close contact with their Napperby kin and had grown up speaking Anmatyerre, their knowledge of their grandfather's country within Mt Allen was superficial. Even their half sisters, who, because they were of full Aboriginal parentage, remained at Napperby as children, were not fully informed because they had married Anmatyerre men from further east, and had little chance to visit this most westerly part of their country. Site visits were conducted for this group under the supervision of other people who had interests in that country through their maternal grandparents and, as long term residents of Mt Allen had been custodians of the necessary knowledge.

Once people had talked at length about their country, and had visited important places within it, they became very enthusiastic about holding ceremonies which demonstrated their knowledge and responsibilities. This decision sparked off increased mobility. For the women holding the ceremonies it meant waiting until some people particularly

knowledgeable about the songs, paintings and dancing associated with 'yawalyu' arrived. Telegrams were sent to more distant communities such as Willowra, and people travelled to nearer places like Yuendumu to collect these particular individuals. While the right people assembled others started to collect the resources which would be needed - the decorated head-dresses made from the feathers of the Major Mitchell cockatoo; red and white ochre from ground deposits used for these purposes for many generations; and other objects such as the ceremonial boards and nulla-nullas used in performing the dances. Eventually when all the important performers had arrived, the ceremonies started. Women's rituals continued almost every afternoon for about the next five weeks. While some non-Mt Allen participants stayed in the 'business' camp throughout this period, most returned home after some time, but later, when the Claim hearing was imminent and the Aboriginal Land Commissioner expected, they returned. At this final point other women, not seen as traditional owners of Mt Allen country but acknowledged to have detailed knowledge of many of the stories, paintings and dances, were also invited to come and take part. Most of these women were ritual Warlpiri leaders from Yuendumu, and were classificatory sisters of different Mt Allen groups. The whole was completed in the early morning of the day on which the Judge opened the hearing and the whole group, Mt Allen residents and visitors, then spent the next few days presenting their evidence and listening to the presentations of others. Mt Allen men went through a similar, although less protracted process, and during the days of the hearing itself the total Aboriginal population of Mt Allen probably increased by between 50 and 100 per cent.

As far as the women were concerned the completion of the hearing and the ceremonies associated with it did not mean that mobility ceased. Three weeks later Yuendumu held its annual Sports Weekend, and women who had been at Mt Allen decided to perform these 'yawalyu' again, this time in public. Performers on this occasion came to Yuendumu from Mt Allen, Napperby, Willowra and Alice Springs and spent several days camping there.

Unlike the Malan women's meeting in the Kimberley, these Mt Allen ceremonies were not planned well in advance, and involved almost no non-Aboriginal input except for that from the anthropological consultants working on the Land Claim. No outside money was used, and visitors found their own vehicles, cash and clothing to cover the journey. Other resources, such as the supplies of ochre, were obtained remarkably quickly and the community also organised all the necessary facilities with great efficiency. This included using the station grader to clear scrub from the areas to be used for the ceremonial grounds, erecting

brushwood windbreaks, sending young men out with the tractor to collect large quantities of firewood for the ceremonial camps, and killing some cattle to provide supplies of fresh meat.

(C) Initiation ceremonies

Rituals to mark the change from boyhood to manhood, are, in contrast to the other examples, more predictable in their timing, location and in the group of participants involved. In Central Australia most initiation ceremonies take place during the summer, the hot time when other forms of activity are more limited, and it is widely recognised that during this period mobility related to such ceremonies will be marked. The location of initiation ceremonies is selected to be appropriate for the young men involved, and depends on their ancestry and their traditional land-holding responsibilities held through paternal and maternal grandparents. Actual locations are often, but not always, within walking distance of a permanent camp, so that everyone, including young children and older people will easily be able to attend meetings. If the ceremonial ground is more distant, a temporary camp with flimsy brushwood and canvas shelters will be erected. Participation, as far as the main actors are concerned, is defined by kin relationships to the initiates - mothers, sisters, uncles and brothers, both classificatory and actual, all have important roles to perform; and, when possible, most other people in the community also participate at least in dances which mark the final stages of the ceremony.

Decisions about who will be initiated at a particular time, and which group of young men should experience the ceremony together, follow protracted periods of discussion and speculation which may have lasted for many months. While most initiates in Central Australia tend to come from age groups in the puberty stage around fourteen years some are younger, and factors such as the need for certain individuals to begin that part of the learning process, or even the behaviour of the proposed initiates can affect this. Delayed initiation also sometimes occurs, and in some Pitjantjatjara communities has occurred because young men appear to be addicted to petrol-sniffing, and are not considered reliable enough to learn customs and behaviour associated with the status of manhood. Conversely, some youths who are involved in anti-social behaviour of this or other types may be initiated in the hope that this will make them settle down.

Once the decision on the identity of initiates, and the location of the ceremony has been made people discuss the process and talk about attending. They collect the resources

needed for the ceremonies, arrange transport if necessary and, for the host community, prepare for an influx of visitors. The ceremonies themselves are long drawn out. They start with the isolation of the boys in the bush, under the supervision of the men. During this period initiates will not be seen by any other members of the community, and the location of their camp, while well known, is strictly avoided particularly by the women. The men are also absent from their family camps for much of this time but do return to eat, or to collect food prepared by the women. Family groups of visitors who arrive from elsewhere during this period split up, and the men join the bush camp while the women set up their camps with their female relatives. This fairly strict segregation, with information about the timing of the next part in the ritual being passed to and fro between men and women, is maintained until the main part has been prepared. Then follows two or three nights of dancing, and ceremonies marking the passing of responsibility for the initiates from the mothers to the men. These are often attended by a large group of people, and whole families camp overnight at the ceremonial ground. By the time of the final rituals in this stage most members of the community will attend, and nearby camps become deserted except for the dogs. However once the ceremony is completed women return to their camps leaving the men once more in seclusion.

The ceremonies culminate in the departure of the initiates, and their teachers, on ritual journeys. These are designed to introduce them to other communities, and also provide the opportunity to impart more and more information about the full responsibilities of manhood. These journeys can involve long distance travel. Pitjantjatjara initiates from Ernabella for example, have followed circuits to Ti-Tree, Willowra and Yuendumu before returning home and Willowra initiates have travelled to Daguragu/Kalkiringi, Lajamanu and Yuendumu and then back. Usually, in the case of the Warlpiri or Anmatyerre, initiates will be accompanied by only a small number of men of particular ritual importance to them. But on some stages of these journeys, where stopping points can be reached after only an hour or two's travel, women also attend and take part in the rituals which mark the progress of the group. Because of the prohibition on contact between women and new initiates, these women's groups have to travel separately, and ensure that they will reach the destination before the main party appears. If transport is available women may participate in these movements over much longer distances, as in December 1986 when members of the Yuendumu community arranged to use one of the community buses to go to Ernabella on such business. It appears to be more common for Pitjantjatjara women to take part in these long distance journeys, although once again availability of transport is today a limiting factor.

Variations such as these between different Central Australian groups make generalisations on mobility associated with ritual very risky. Whatever the arrangements, the road actually being traversed by the initiates is closed to all Aboriginal travellers until the 'business men' have passed, and the disruption to other forms of movement can be considerable. Such disruption can last for several days because, although people know that the 'Law' is coming, the timing is usually uncertain. Thus people prefer to stay at home rather than risk unwanted encounters with ritual groups.

The impact of ceremonial mobility

Non-Aboriginal understanding of the mobility which occurs in response to ceremonial activity is usually quite limited. Aborigines retain the private nature of these processes, and thus safeguard the essential cultural elements of their society. But occasionally movement for ritual purposes enters into the public domain and may utilize the support of workers in communities or Aboriginal organisations. Examples of such events include journeys undertaken by invited Aboriginal groups to participate in cultural festivals such as the Adelaide Festival, the Pacific Arts Festival or others. Or, on a more local basis, Aborigines perform ceremonies to 'open up' a new school, a craft centre or a store, or to celebrate significant occasions such as the handover of title of Uluru to the people of the Mutitjulu community in October 1985. In events such as these an exchange occurs between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society. And it is through such occasions that non-Aborigines begin to gain some comprehension of what is involved, and can use such information to lessen the impact of ceremonial movement on communities.

Ceremonial mobility in general leads to widespread variations in the size of community populations, and thus directly affects the whole process of service delivery. The sudden influx of visitors to a host community puts pressure on essential services such as water supplies and sewerage. It also affects the supply of basic foodstuffs, fuel and other items. Isolated community stores work on a fortnightly or even monthly ordering system for most supplies, and obtain fresh foods only once a week. The appearance of a large number of visitors can deplete stocks in no time at all, leaving the store bare of goods. Fuel supplies, similarly, are only periodically replenished, and the passage of a convoy of vehicles on ceremonial business can leave the community with insufficient petrol or diesel to last until the next order is due. Other services affected by the sudden population increase are the school and health clinic. Staff of the latter find themselves having to deal with numbers of patients and, although most problems will

probably be minor, some of the patients are people on continuous medication. Clinics sometimes do not carry ready supplies of specific drugs needed for such prescriptions. In some cases the day to day health problems which arise during such journeys can be met by ensuring that any Aboriginal health workers travelling with the party carry first aid kits with them. Schools can also be affected by ceremonial visits because children who accompany their parents on such trips are perceived to be a nuisance when the ceremony is in progress. It is not uncommon for the visiting children to be sent off to school, with no warning to the teachers and no attempt to control them. During the 'Purlapa Wiri' a public inter-community ceremony held at Ali-Curung in 1978, about 70 Yuendumu children attended school. All, regardless of age elected to join the pre-school class, and not surprisingly their presence was so disruptive that they were asked not to come back the next day.

Increases of population through ceremonial activity in some places are accompanied by decreases elsewhere. This also affects some services. Schools may find themselves with greatly reduced numbers of pupils, and the workforce in the shop, the council office or the health clinic may become a mere skeleton of its normal self. Aborigines accept these changes without much question because they recognise the necessity for certain people to be involved on ceremonial business. In fact, for many people, such business could well be described as hard work, albeit of a most satisfying and enjoyable kind. But many non-Aborigines find it difficult to accept this, and may threaten to sack people when they are absent. Almost always they complain loudly about absenteeism, lack of commitment to wage jobs and the general failure to accept the non-Aboriginal work ethic.

Ceremonial mobility also has an impact on the individual. Many ceremonies are not quickly completed and participation may mean weeks and even months of absence from one's home. This means either that other members of the family will have to travel as well, or that arrangements will have to be made for them to stay with others. Lengthy absences mean that people have problems in obtaining their cash incomes through the usual channels. Social security cheques continue to go to the home community, and people often have to make brief fortnightly journeys back to collect their money. If they do not do this they have to rely on friends and kin in the host group, and the financial burden can become quite severe. Food supplies and clothing provided by the visitors at the beginning of the period soon become depleted. Bad weather adds to these problems. This is a relatively common happening with initiation ceremonies which, in Central Australia, often coincide with the period of heavy summer thunderstorms. In January 1984 about sixty people were trapped for ten days in the Napperby community because their

vehicles could not cross the swollen creeks, and lack of cash became one of the major worries.

CHAPTER 5

VISITING FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Visiting, as a means of maintaining contact with family and friends, is a major reason for Aboriginal mobility. People feel a strong need not only to hear that those about whom they care are well and happy, but also to see them whenever possible. The need for personal contact seems to be considerably stronger than for many non-Aborigines, probably because Aborigines not only have more limited access to alternative forms of communication such as telephones and postal services but also because they are less accustomed to using them. In addition, since most rural Aboriginal families in Central Australia have remained within the region, people's social networks, comprising both family and friends, tend to be locally based and therefore personal contact is possible.

In travelling around with Aborigines from Central Australian communities, it soon becomes apparent that people have very extensive contacts, and that seeing people from their own social networks means a great deal to them. When one tells people of the destination for a journey there are almost invariably a number of requests to be able to join the group, to go and see parents, or children, aunts or uncles, or other relatives. The range of requests varies according to the destination - whether it is a place with which people are thoroughly familiar, and whether they feel at home there; or whether it is a place outside the normal range of casual movement. Alice Springs, for example, is seen as an alien and potentially dangerous place by many Warlpiri, and their enthusiasm for going there would be tempered with apprehension. Arrernte, in contrast, feel much less worried about going casually to the town, and would join trips at the slightest encouragement.

Moving for social reasons should not be interpreted as indiscriminate, purposeless travelling between Aboriginal communities. Social networks are fairly well-defined, and people are very selective about where they go, and very dependent on their contacts when they arrive. A journey from Mt Allen to Willowra, a distance of about 150 kms, provides a good example of this situation. The travelling group included two older women who, although they had grown up in nearby Coniston, had never been to Willowra in their lives. They were very keen to go because they knew that the older women who were the main traditional owners of Willowra belonged to the same (Nungarrayi) subsection as themselves and they decided they would like to meet them. As we drove north along the Lander they became more and more confused about where we were going and apprehensive about their reception. One thought that after about 70 kms, we must be

close to Darwin. On arrival, although they were greeted very warmly by the Willowra Nungarrayis, and clearly enjoyed talking to them as 'sisters', they depended very heavily on the researcher to arrange their camping place, and organise their cooking arrangements. Other Willowra people were also curious about their presence and asked questions such as 'Who is that old woman?' or 'Why have these people come here?' After only one day the Mt Allen women indicated that they had been there long enough and would like to go home. These women had in effect stepped beyond their normal social networks and felt themselves to be in a very awkward position.

Social networks and mobility in space

Analysis of the relationship of mobility to the social network must be based on a realistic definition of that network. In broad terms it is defined as an individual's series of personal contacts, including both kin and friends. In Aboriginal terms the definition of kin becomes broader than in non-Aboriginal terms; it includes not only people related by blood ties but also others who in a classificatory sense are kin. In fact friends could all be fitted into the classificatory kinship system, and addressed by the appropriate kinship terms. Thus, for any Napaljarri living at Willowra, there would be a set of other Napaljaris who might be her true siblings, many of whom might also be at Willowra; other Willowra people in these subsections would also be referred to as 'sisters', and that same individual would have other classificatory sisters in other communities, Napaljaris she had come to know as friends. All these Napaljaris would be part of her social network, and their places of residence would to a large extent explain the spatial extent of mobility associated with this network. When one extends this process to people in different relationships, and then considers what it means not only in terms of individuals but in terms of members of a whole population group, then it is clear that, for every community, there is a complex social network which forms a framework within which people are happy to move. While the kinship linkages described here are a major component of that network, other factors such as common language affiliation are also significant. Knowledge of the spread of this network would provide useful insight into intra- and inter-community linkages, and to the spatial patterns of movement which express those linkages. However it is not possible to record the whereabouts of all who belong to each individual network, and therefore such analysis has to be more restricted. It can, nevertheless, be useful. Examples of analysis based on fairly limited information about these forms of community social networks follow.

The network of traditional land owners

Mt Allen

Figure 5.1 shows where those people commonly defined as traditional owners of Mt Allen were living in 1982. The two most important single locations in this case apart from Mt Allen itself were the adjacent Aboriginal communities of Napperby and Yuendumu. Other places included nearby communities, such as Ti-Tree station and Pmara Jutunta, Willowra and Pine Hill. Alice Springs were by far the most important (of the more distant places) but some traditional owners were much further afield, in one case even overseas in New Zealand. This distribution represents the dispersal of those families whose ancestors traditionally had customary responsibility for one comparatively small area of Central Australia. It demonstrates how the process of non-Aboriginal settlement and land alienation has caused outward moves from that area, and has led to the concentration of those movers in other specific localities. While the distribution of traditional owners indicated is a major part of the network for Mt Allen, it must be stressed that it is not complete. Present day residents of Mt Allen also include wives and husbands of those accepted as traditional owners, and some other families who, although recognised as long-standing members of the community, do not claim to be owners of any Mt Allen sacred sites. However, when the analysis is extended to include these two groups, the spatial pattern is not markedly affected. Most of these partners came from the same communities in which traditional owners of Mt Allen are now residing, for example Yuendumu, Ti-Tree, Willowra and Napperby.

The networks of birthplace and kin

Other ways of examining these community social networks are through analysing information on the birthplace of residents, and on the current location of their immediate kin. Information of this type presents severe problems of definition. Birthplace information is difficult to use because, particularly nowadays, most children in Central Australia are born in Alice Springs hospital, and unless the question is carefully framed this will emerge as the prime location. The question should really be 'Where was your mother a resident when you were born?' The information presented here is based on the latter question. Definitions of close kin are obviously also hard to arrive at. Do they include only immediate relatives or should they be extended to include more distant relatives? And should your classificatory sister with whom you grew up be included, but her sister who was brought up by another family, excluded? Here close kin include parents, children and siblings, as defined by individual respondents.

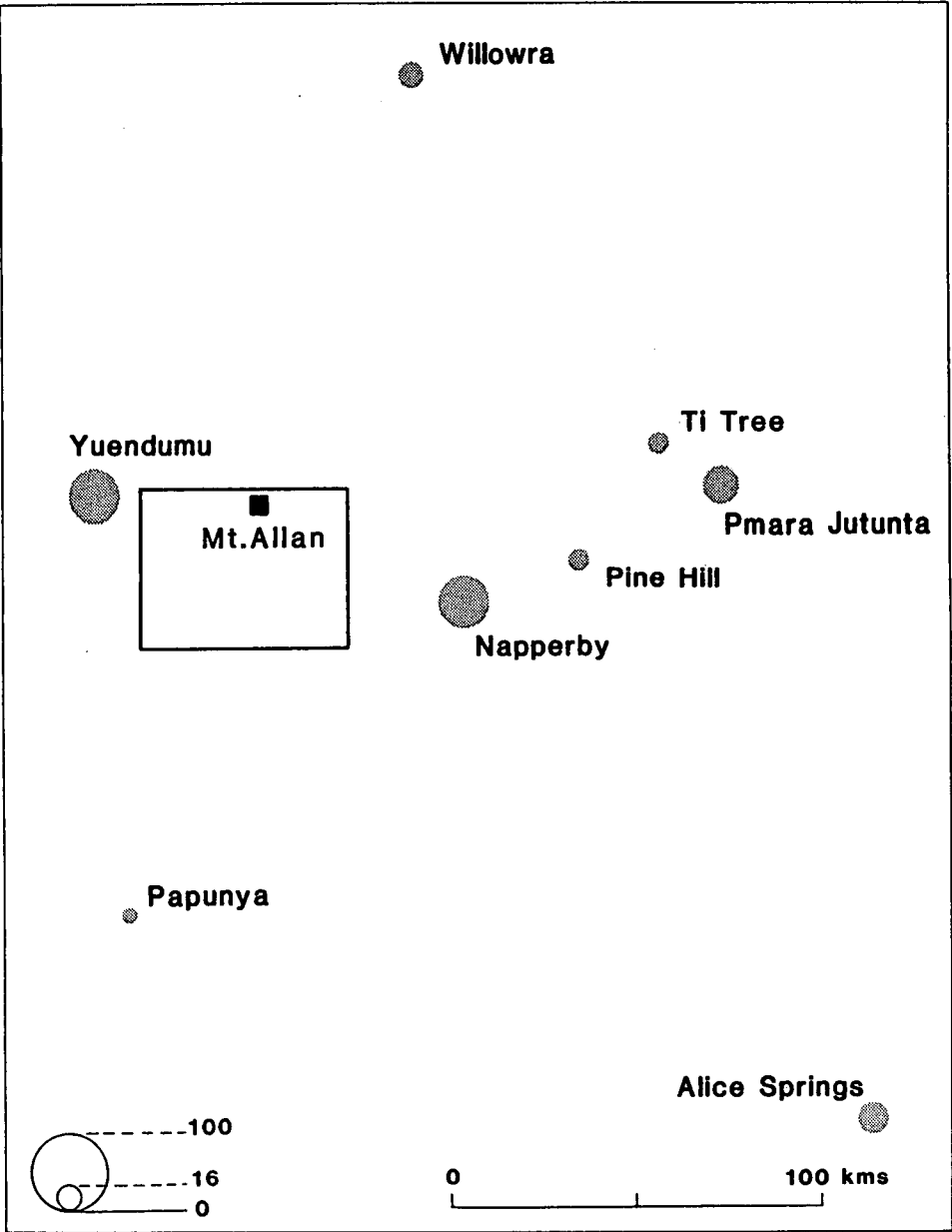


Figure 5.1 Traditional owners of Mt Allen country living outside the community, 1982

Ti-Tree

In 1984 about one third of people then resident in Ti-Tree was actually born in one of the three communities on Ti-Tree station. Of the remainder Aileron was the most important birthplace, a reflection of the long established settlement of Ti-Tree people on that property before their relocation at Pmara Jutunta in 1975 (Fig. 5.2). Woolla Downs, formerly a separate pastoral property but now part of Ti-Tree station was another important birthplace location, and others of note included Pine Hill, Anningie, Coniston, Napperby and Willowra.

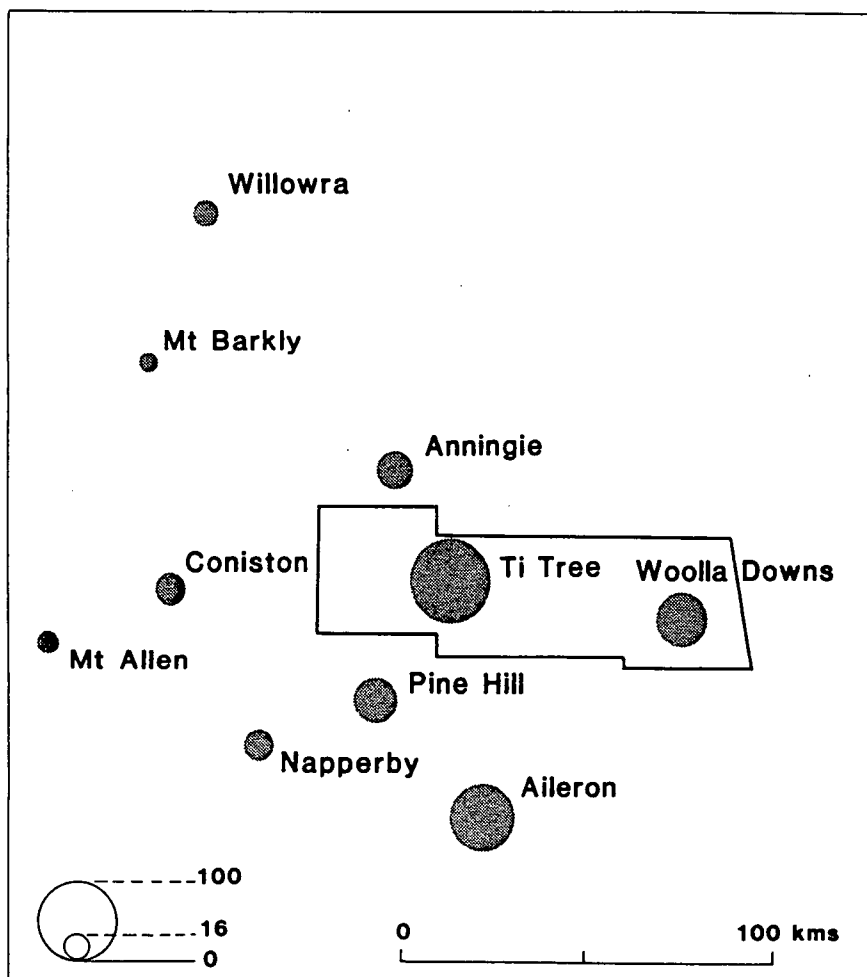


Figure 5.2 Birthplaces of Ti-Tree residents, 1984

When these data are further disaggregated according to where people actually camped on Ti-Tree some interesting differences emerge. Ti-Tree station, Anningie and Pine Hill together accounted for the birthplaces of almost three-quarters of those resident at the homestead; over half the residents of Pmara Jutunta were born at Aileron; and over 80 per cent of those at Adelaide Bore were born at Woola Downs. These variations highlight not only the relatively small spatial extent of these birthplace networks but also how stable they are. Families tend to stick together, and to remain close to their birth places. These attachments to place can remain important even when a whole community, such as that which formerly existed at Aileron, has been forced to move. Pmara Jutunta people have continued to travel backwards and forwards to Aileron, not because there were family living there but more because it was a familiar place, one where they spent many years of their lives and to which they had become accustomed as a service centre.

Continued attachment to birthplace also reflects people's needs to look after sacred sites in that area. In the course of presentation of both the Mt Allen and Ti-Tree Land Claims traditional owners argued that people born in those places could take on ritual responsibilities in the same way as if they were members of local descent groups by inheritance. These arguments were accepted by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner on behalf of a number of individuals at and these people were subsequently included in the lists of traditional owners in both places. As Hiatt (1984) has commented, acceptance of birthplace as a criterion for land responsibility is a long established concept in Aboriginal society, although it may be more apparent today, following resettlement due to land alienation.

Networks suggested by birthplace figures of this type are dynamic rather than static. As community population structures change, these birthplace distributions also change, and ultimately this will be reflected in changes in the spatial characteristics of the social network. Ti-Tree provides a particularly interesting example of this because of the population redistribution which has occurred in the last decade. Ti-Tree children show a different birthplace distribution from their elders. Almost half of the children had been born at Ti-Tree, and most of the remainder either at Aileron or Woola Downs. In contrast Ti-Tree adults had been born not only in those three locations but also in more distant places such as Willowra, Mt Barkly, Coniston and Utopia. Places such as Coniston, which formerly had a large Aboriginal community but where the present owners have discouraged settlement, were completely lacking from the children's distribution. These differences will affect people's future relationships to land and to other

communities. One would expect that, in a few decades, the link between the Ti-Tree community and Aileron will have become much more tenuous as later generations will know little about how or why it originally developed. At the same time, children born on Ti-Tree station will in many cases take on customary responsibility for local sites and dreamings, thus demonstrating the inherent dynamism of a land tenure pattern designed to take account of population movement as well as demographic fluctuations affecting small groups.

Additional information on Ti-Tree social networks comes from examining the usual places of residence of close kin of each adult in the community. These data show not only that the three Ti-Tree communities formed a closely integrated network, but also that they were linked to other communities beyond the bounds of Ti-Tree. For example, of the 25 'camps', here defined as groups of people generally living and eating together, at Ti-Tree homestead in early 1984 four had close kin at Pmara Jutunta and eight had close kin at Adelaide Bore; similarly, six of the eight camps at Adelaide Bore had close kin at Ti-Tree station, and, of the 22 camps at Pmara Jutunta, seven had close kin at Ti-Tree station. These types of intra-community linkage are particularly important in understanding the dynamics of short-distance moves, some of which are of short-term and some of longer-term duration. People commonly visit the camps of their relatives and may sleep there overnight or for longer periods. Children continually make such visits, both to see aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents, and also, when family arguments occur, to find somewhere else to stay until the trouble blows over.

Ti-Tree residents also had many close relatives living in other communities, most of which were within the adjacent region. Only three of the localities mentioned - Alice Springs, Darwin and Port Augusta - were non-Aboriginal towns and the last two of these were not important. In both cases the kin who lived there were people of partly European descent who had been removed from the care of their Ti-Tree mothers at an early age to be brought up under non-Aboriginal influence. In some cases they did retain contact with their families in Ti-Tree but in other cases the Ti-Tree people knew very little about them.

The situation of the Ti-Tree people in Alice Springs was different because they included many individuals who grew up at Ti-Tree itself. Some were older adults who moved to town after marrying Aborigines from outside the conventional area, or because they had married non-Aborigines living in town; some were younger people who had moved to town on their own or with their families. In some cases single people in Alice Springs lived with their married friends or

kin. All of these groups provided Ti-Tree residents with several town bases which they could use when visiting. Nowadays most of these bases - relative's houses - were conventional dwellings, either rented from the Housing Commission or from private owners, or grouped in town camps such as Charles River Village, Mt Nancy and Woodyard. Altogether 30 per cent of resident Ti-Tree families had close kin in Alice Springs. The Alice Springs group maintained close contact with their Ti-Tree kin, took a strong interest in the land claim and often attended other ceremonies.

Ti-Tree people also had close kin in many other Aboriginal communities, particularly Napperby, Willowra, Mt Barkly, Utopia, Woodgreen, Stirling, Alcoota, Mt Allen and Anningie. However the relative importance of these places varied between the three Ti-Tree communities. As far as Ti-Tree station was concerned, if one excludes Alice Springs where more than half of the camps had close kin, the main places where relatives lived were Willowra and Mt Barkly (over 30 per cent of camping groups in each case) and Anningie (27 per cent). As Fig. 5.3a shows, these links have a distinctly western orientation. For Pmara Jutunta the orientation is southwest - Napperby (48 per cent of family groups), Mt Allen (33 per cent) (Fig. 5.3b). In the case of Adelaide Bore, if Alice Springs is again excluded, the orientation is eastwards to Utopia, Alcoota, Woodgreen and Stirling (Fig. 5.3c).

Finke

Birthplace information for Finke, like that for Ti-Tree, reflects earlier events in the history of the community, particularly the development of homesteads and sidings along the railway line, and the movement of Pitjantjatjara people from the west (Fig. 5.4). Several Aboriginal women in Finke talked of the days when they were young girls and the railway was under construction, with the camels being used for transport. As one woman commented 'We were naked then, those railway men were the first white fellas I'd seen; we went to Hamilton Station then.' The continuing importance of these places is demonstrated by the roads which people prefer to take when travelling out of Finke. It is possible to reach Oodnadatta, a place with which Finke people have close connections and often visit, either by using the main road via Indulkana and Marla Bore, or along the old railway line through Charlotte Waters and Hamilton. People much prefer the latter route, even although the Ambing Creek is sometimes difficult to negotiate after rain. They describe it as 'an Aboriginal road. We travelled in this country with our relations, then we followed those camels; good water this way; good country.' Despite the fact that many of the

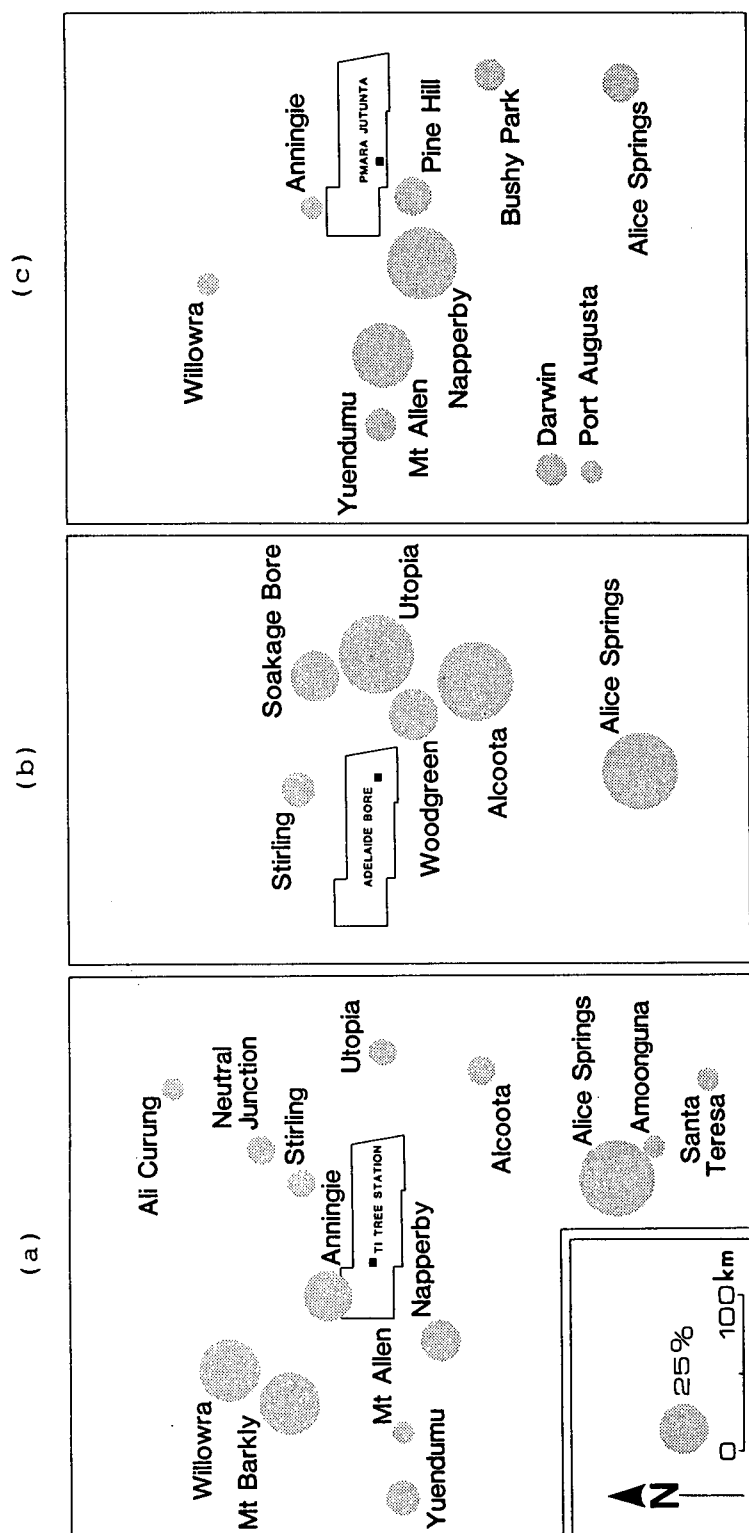


Figure 5.3 Residential locations of kin of Ti-Tree families, 1984

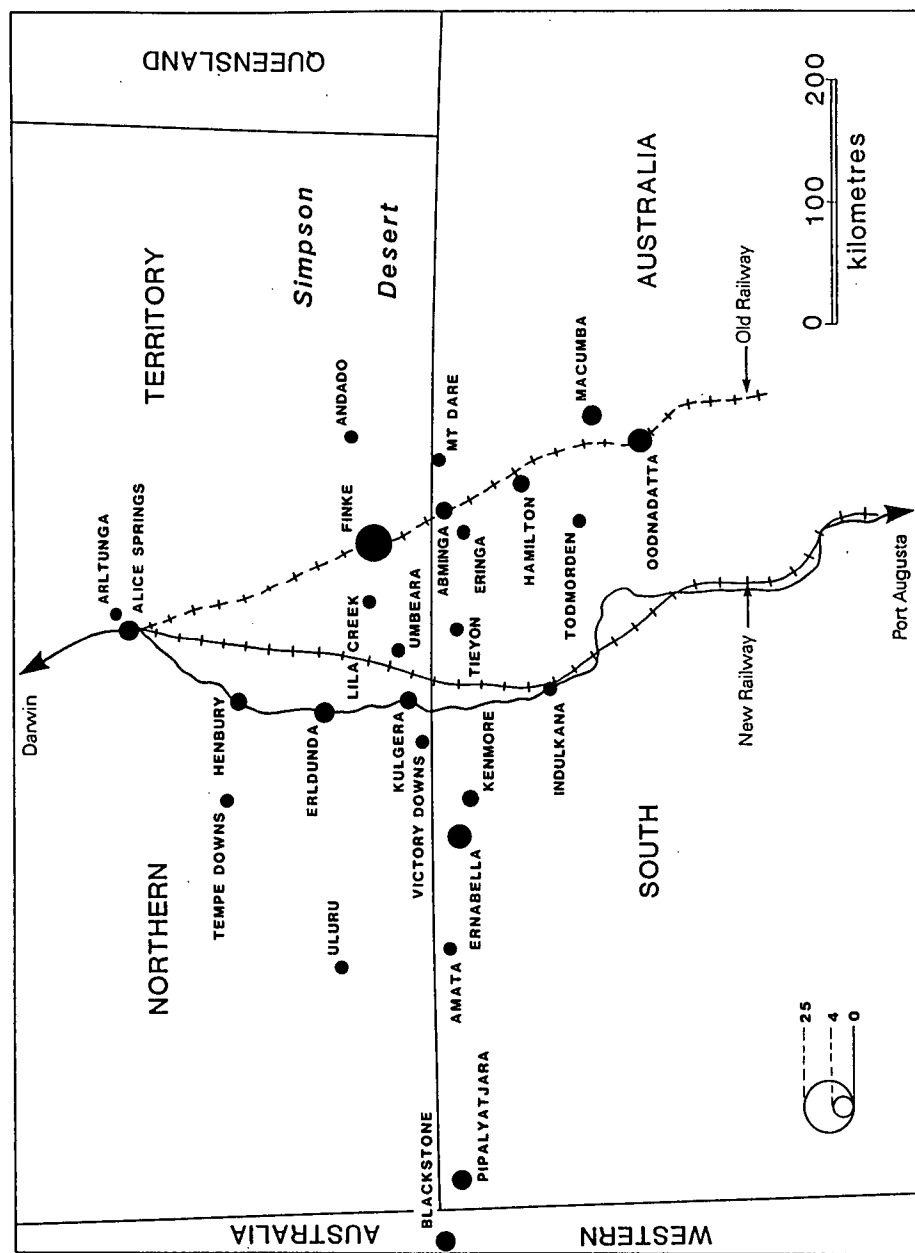


Figure 5.4 Birthplaces of Finke residents, 1985

old places, particularly the railway sidings, are now abandoned some of the larger stations such as Hamilton, Todmorden and Macumba still have Aboriginal people living in them.

The current location of close kin for Finke people shows a different pattern from the location of birthplaces (Fig. 5.5). While eastern Pitjantjatjara communities such as Ernabella, Indulkana, Amata, Mimili figure prominently Alice Springs has become by far the most important place of family residence. Of the old railway towns only Oodnadatta remains significant, but there are also strong connections today with distant Port Augusta and even Adelaide. These differences reflect the changing distribution of population within the current lifetime of Finke residents. Mobility related to kin location is now likely to be more important than that related to visits to people's birthplaces although, as the comments related above show, these are not forgotten.

Internal camp networks

Internal linkages between different camping groups in a community also have a significant effect on population mobility. These connections determine where people spend their leisure periods, and may frequently lead to individuals shifting their sleeping places, sometimes for quite long periods. They are also important when people have to move camp after a death. When a person dies, whether that person is very young, very old, or a mature adult, close kin must, in obedience to custom, move to a 'sorry' camp. The length of time spent in this camp and the choice of who will move there depend to a large extent on the status of the deceased in the group. Thus a 'sorry' camp for the death of a young infant would probably only involve the parents but when an important person dies many relatives, particularly classificatory 'mothers' or 'sisters', will stay in this camp for varying periods of time. And, following the completion of the period of mourning, the original camp site may or may not be reoccupied, and if it is reoccupied the new inhabitants will probably be members of different families.

Examples of intra-camp linkages can be examined for Ti-Tree. As Fig. 5.6 shows, camps in the Ti-Tree station community were all linked to at least one other camp through the presence of close kin (parents, children, siblings), and certain camps formed distinct groups. Thus, Camps A, B, C, D, F, G, H and N could be seen as a 'closely related mob'. Camp A belonged to the parents of the group, their children lived in camps B and D and the marriage partners of these children extended the linkages to Camps C, F, G, H and N. Other individuals in Camps G, H and N then in turn extended

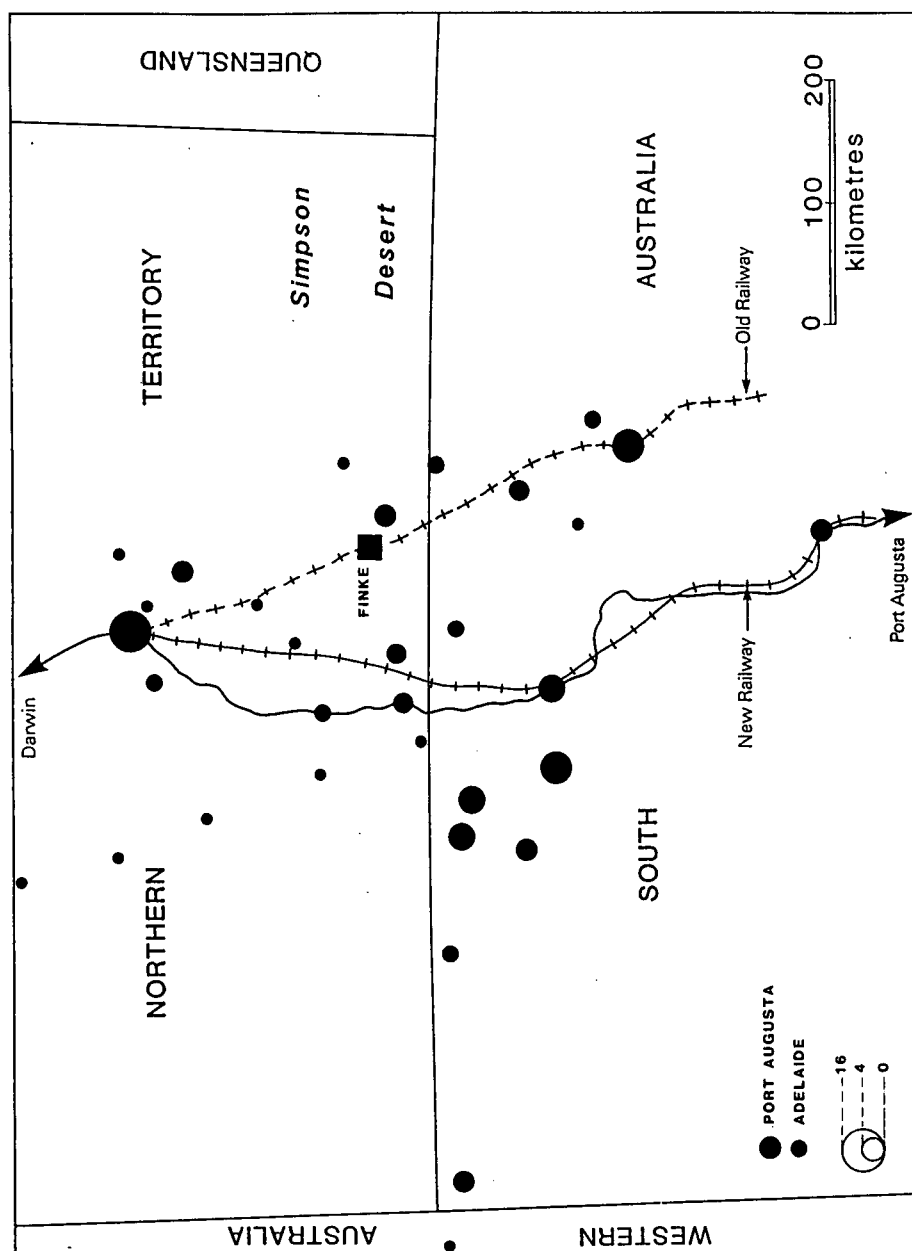


Figure 5.5 Residential locations of kin of Finke residents, 1985

the linkages to Camps O and W, and the process then continued to Camps U and R. Ultimately this type of process would bring the entire community together, as well as involving people living in other locations. The same process could be followed for the other Ti-Tree communities of Pmara Jutunta, and Adelaide Bore, and no doubt for any other Aboriginal community in Central Australia. Any event causing the movement of people belonging to Camp A would have repercussions elsewhere, although whether it would actually lead to complete relocation of settlement would, as stated above, depend on the importance of the particular happening.

Mobility and networks

These examples indicate the kind of kinship relationships which underlie the mobility processes which take place primarily for social reasons. Instances of the actual movements follow. They have been classified into several different categories - intra-community; inter-community; and between Aboriginal communities and Alice Springs, a non-Aboriginal town.

Intra-community

Intra-community movements occur in response to a number of social factors - disagreements between kin and friends; the need to establish new living situations because of changing relationships; the death of individuals within the community. They also occasionally occur in response to physical conditions, such as floods. Several visits made to Willowra between 1979 and 1981 provided good examples of such mobility.

During the period in question Willowra contained about 35 groups of people who normally camped together. These groups included conventional nuclear families, nuclear families which were polygynous, extended families and camps which were composed largely of people of the same gender, mostly women's camps. Only five of these camps were located in conventional houses built of permanent materials, although one other permanent house, built of stone blocks, existed. The family who owned this house usually slept elsewhere because, in the periods in question, it was often too hot and uncomfortable inside. Most families therefore lived in humpies, formed from canvas sheets, tree boughs, old car bodies and broken-down caravans. In January 1979, when daytime temperatures averaged over 40°C throughout the month, many people decided to set up camp in the middle of the Lander River bed, where the river red-gums provided good shade, the sandy surface was relatively clean, and water could be obtained from creek-bed soakages. Although the Willowra community had reticulated water supplies and a sufficient number of stand pipes, these supplies

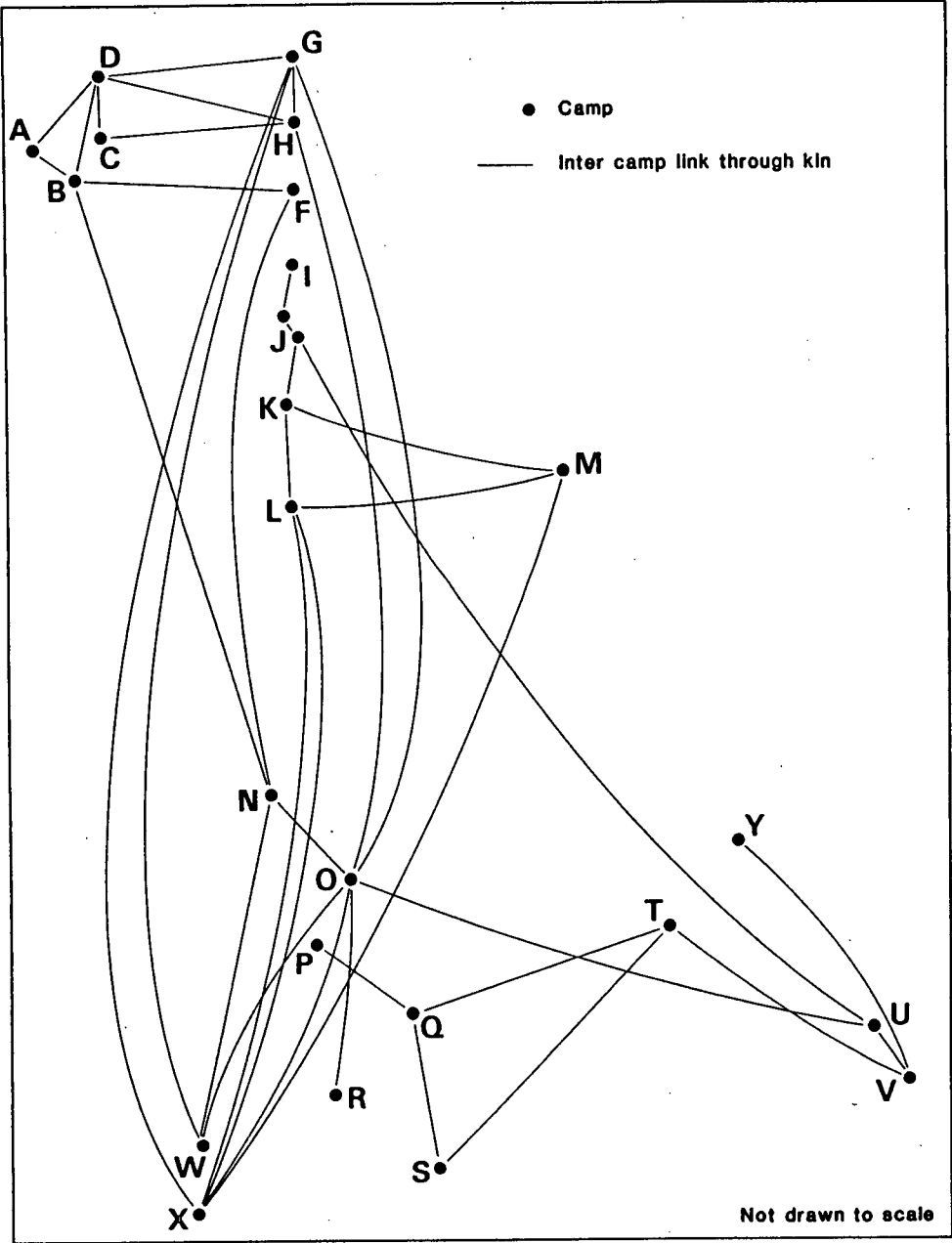


Figure 5.6 Inter-camp linkages at Ti-Tree station, 1984

came from a bore, and because of their high salinity were regarded as much inferior in taste to the creek-bed water.

In early February, after some days of extremely humid weather, Willowra had a long and extended rainstorm, which produced over 200mm in a period of approximately 36 hours. At the end of that period the river bed was completely saturated, and large numbers of frogs, which in dry times hibernate in the sand, appeared. People, realising that floods were likely, began to shift their camps as soon as the rain stopped and within a few hours all belongings had been moved to a new series of structures on the top of the river bank. As expected, the Lander came down in flood about 24 hours later, and maintained a considerable flow of water for about two months, effectively preventing the movement of settlement back into the river bed (Figs. 5.7a and b). However by the end of 1979, following another extended dry period, the creek-bed camps had been re-established and most families were once more in the centre of the dry bed of the Lander.

Figure 5.7c shows the layout of the Willowra community at a later period, in May 1981. In the intervening period two important men, both of whom lived in the permanent houses at the southern end of the settlement, died. Their families vacated these houses and established camps at the northern end, near the old station homestead. They were accompanied by all the other families who had been living near them at the southern end. All the permanent houses were abandoned, and the entire group of about 300 people became humpy dwellers. This move was not temporary. By June 1982 the layout of the community had hardly changed. Although meanwhile people had begun to discuss returning to the former camp-sites, these plans were aborted when another community leader, a former resident of another of the permanent houses, also died. This caused some groups to move even further away to the north, about three kms from the homestead.

Intra-community moves such as these have obvious implications in terms of service delivery. Not only were permanent and extremely costly, houses abandoned (each house apparently cost about \$50000 in 1977) but other services were no longer located in convenient places for community use. In particular the shop, the health clinic and the reticulated water supplies were affected. The relocation of Willowra's living area meant that most camps were a considerable distance from water, either reticulated or soakage, and women in particular faced a considerable extra burden in collecting water for drinking and cooking. Moreover, the communal ablutions block, which was located near the permanent houses in the southern end of the living area, could not be used at all because no-one was allowed to

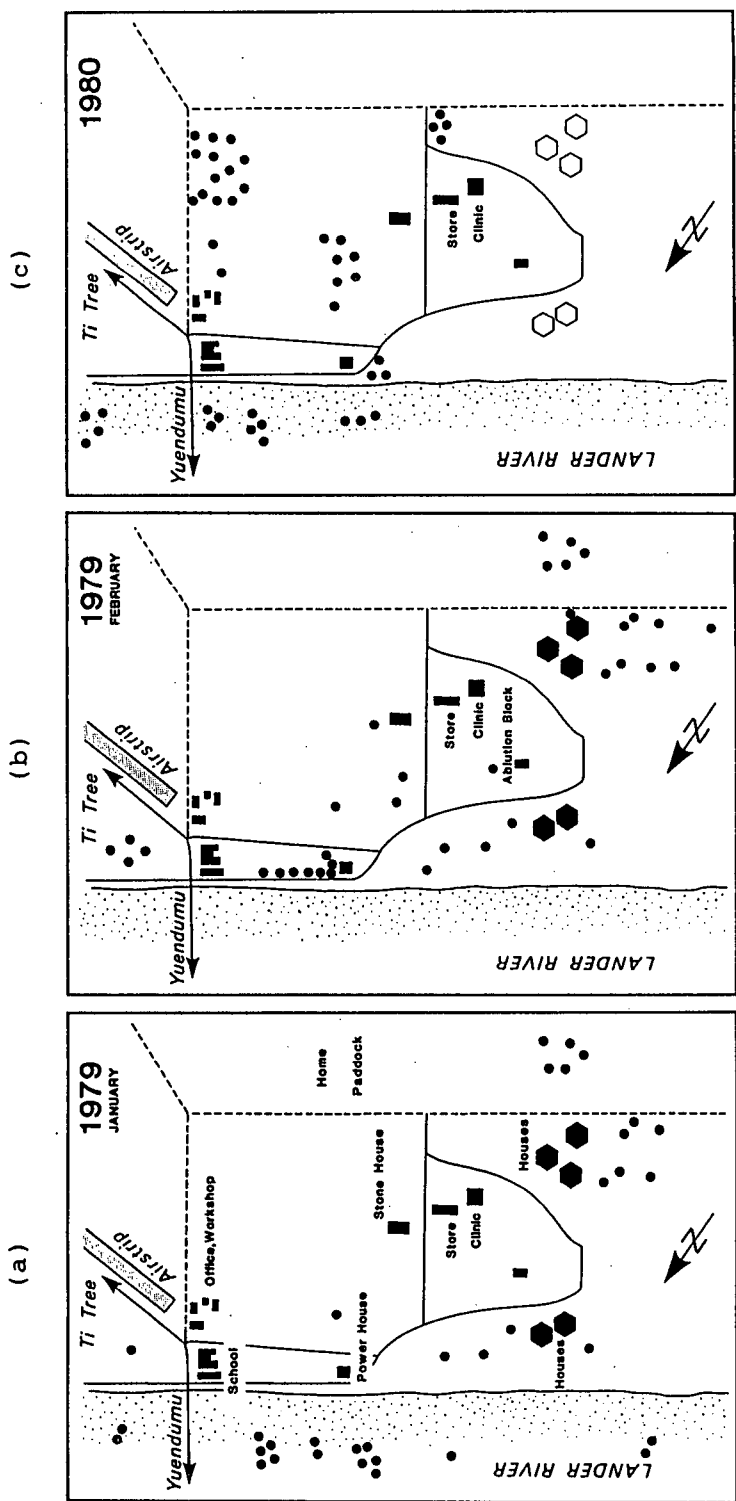


Figure 5.7 Internal residential shifts at Willowra, 1979 and 1981

go there. Use of this facility had in fact always been a problem because it became identified with one or two particular camps, and was regarded as being under the control of these specific families. One of the consequences was increased use of school washing and toilet facilities. Although the use of these was theoretically restricted to the children, the school staff and, by agreement, some members of their families also had access, and the close knit nature of the Willowra community enabled a considerable number of people to legitimately use the school showers and washing machines.

The shop and the health clinic were also situated near the abandoned camp. For some time immediately following the death a large number of people felt that they could not use the shop, and the store-keeper was asked to set up a small store in a room at the back of the old homestead where he lived. Although this allowed people to buy food and cash cheques, the variety of goods available was greatly curtailed, and they had to be content with basic necessities. The problem of the health clinic was more serious because the nursing sister had to have access to her medicines and equipment. People overcame this problem by arranging for a vehicle to take them to the clinic, confining their visits only to essentials, and otherwise trying to persuade the nurse to treat them in her own house beside the homestead. Some old and infirm people found it highly inconvenient having to camp at a distance of some kilometres from the clinic.

Since 1982 the situation of the Willowra community has again changed. A considerable building programme, involving the construction of a new shop and a number of permanent houses, has gone ahead. The community decided that the shop should be placed adjacent to the old shop, but that most of the new houses should be built at the northern end of the camping area, near the homestead and school. The long distance between houses and the shop and clinic has therefore been maintained, and the need to travel backwards and forwards to make use of these services has now become an accepted part of Willowra life. This structure may now be fairly stable. Now that Willowra families have better housing they may be less willing to abandon dwellings after events such as deaths, and may allow reoccupation after an acceptable mourning period has elapsed. This type of adaptation has been widely observed elsewhere, for example in Yuendumu where renovated dwellings are, at a later stage, reallocated to different, but appropriate families.

Movement between communities

Examples of inter-community mobility include movement between outstations and the centralised service centres to

school on a daily basis. The mobility of people living in these nearby outstations tended to differ slightly from that of others. Residents of the commuting outstations frequently went to Yuendumu to see their families. In some cases those women whose husbands had regular wage jobs in Yuendumu travelled in every day with the entire family, and spent the day with their relatives before going back at night. Wakurlpu, for example, was often completely deserted on weekdays. At weekends, however, it became busy both because its regular residents were at home and also because other visitors arrived out from Yuendumu.

For people from more distant outstations, journeys to see their families in Yuendumu were much less frequent. Such trips could only be made when transport was available. Since few families had their own cars they had to depend on community owned vehicles, and had to combine their social visits to Yuendumu with journeys taking place largely for other purposes. For example, when older people living in outstations had to go to Yuendumu to visit the health clinic, this provided a good opportunity for staying with their children and grandchildren. These visits often became quite extended, and led not only to absences of days and even weeks from the outstation but also the growth of numbers of residents in Yuendumu houses and camps. Journeys in the opposite direction, from Yuendumu to the outstations, were also vehicle dependent, but since a considerable number of the Yuendumu families involved were wage-earning, access to privately owned vehicles was more common. Because they had jobs or children in school these trips were often confined to weekends. Saturdays and Sundays in Yuendumu have now become very quiet because most people who can find a vehicle have gone visiting, frequently to the outstations where their families live. These visits are highly important both for checking up on the health and well-being of other members of their family, and also for visiting their country.

Frequent social movements such as these can be paralleled in any other community with several different residential groups. In Ti-Tree they occur between Ti-Tree homestead, Pmara Jutunta and Adelaide Bore; in Willowra, between Willowra and Mt Barkly; and in Mt Allen, between Mt Allen and its outstations at Ilyupinyu and Pularidi. Because many of these outstation groups are small and consist primarily of extended families, such movements can easily result in the outstation being completely emptied. Moreover, the period for which it is abandoned cannot be determined because the return of the residents depends on so many factors, such as the health of their kin, whether problems arise while they are away, and whether they can find the transport to return. Ultimately the need to maintain direct contact with kin, scattered largely through the effects of

non-Aboriginal settlement and land alienation in the area, has been a main cause of the fluidity and unpredictability of outstation populations.

Socially related movement between separate Aboriginal communities is essentially the same as that between major centres and outstations. Non-Aboriginal settlement, along with government and mission policies promoting population concentration has disrupted and scattered family groups. This has occurred throughout Central Australia. Families have to move between major communities in order to maintain contact with their kin. Movements of this kind include those between Mt Allen, Napperby and Ti-Tree; and those between Yuendumu, Lajamanu and Balgo. In the former case individual members of Anmatyerre families have, because of historical pressures, settled in three cattle stations which are virtually adjacent to each other. The presence of specific families in one or other of these cattle stations owes much to early employment history, when particular people formed the core of station stockcamp groups, and to later events such as enforced movement from some properties, or the purchase of others for the Aboriginal residents. Thus, one large family with, on the paternal side, traditional rights and responsibilities to land on the eastern side of Mt Allen and the western side of Napperby, is split between all three communities. Some siblings live in Mt Allen, some in Ti-Tree and the majority in Napperby. For this family, movement between all three groups is an important part of their social system and, as with movement between Yuendumu and outstations, people will generally take advantage of any available opportunity to make such journeys. While conducting fieldwork for the Ti-Tree land claim it became clear that these individuals could turn up unexpectedly in any of these places. Visits to Pmara Jutunta almost always led to a reunion with friends widely recognised as residents of Mt Allen and last seen in that community. And travelling along the roads linking these settlements would reveal the same type of pattern, a frequent flow of individuals 'just going to visit'.

Where communities are more widely separated, as in the case of Yuendumu, Lajamanu and Balgo, these social visits are obviously much harder to make, and occur less frequently. In fact, because of the problems of finding a suitable vehicle and amassing sufficient resources to support such long journeys of at least 600 kms, these visits could rarely be described as simply trips associated with 'just visiting family' in order to maintain the social network. Other reasons for moving, such as attending ceremonies or other meetings, normally occur at the same time.

Social network movement usually has a less dramatic effect on the total populations of major communities than it has on

outstations, both because the numbers of people are larger and because groups are less homogenous. Thus visits from Mt Allen to Pmara Jutunta affect only some families and neither place is abandoned. Such movements do not make much impact on service provision in the community as a whole. But, as far as the individual is concerned, the influence can be fairly important. For example, when people travel to distant places to see their family, possibly not knowing when they will return, they may well find themselves running short of food and cash. Although they will be cared for by their kin, the need to reciprocate and eventually support themselves, makes them fairly anxious to return to the place where they are registered as social security recipients. People make determined efforts to get back for pension day, or, if they feel that they should stay longer, even find transport to make a quick return visit merely to collect their pensions.

Social visiting, both between larger communities, and between communities and outstations, has recently been affected by improved access to communication systems. Today many outstations have two-way radios through which they can communicate with their families on regular schedules; and in larger communities the conventional telephone or radiotelephone can be used for that purpose. Some Central Australian communities are already, through the micro-wave link, part of the STD telephone system, and such access will be extended to most other major groups by 1990. As communications improve, people become more accustomed to using them, and undoubtedly come to depend more and more on this form of contact for keeping in touch with their kin. Such contact certainly does not cut out socially-motivated mobility altogether, but it does allow people to obtain accurate news of their family indirectly. Altogether these new communication systems have done much to increase the efficiency of the 'bush telegraph'. Preliminary studies carried out to determine communication priorities in Central Australia in late 1979 revealed that people were most anxious about the improvement of this form of communication aid (Heppell and Young, 1980). Differences in access to communications are important. For example, the Laramba community (Napperby), is extremely difficult to contact because the radio-telephone/radio is situated in the non-Aboriginal owner's house, and people do not have direct access to it. In contrast, outstation radios, and radio-telephones in communities such as Willowra where the office has been more strongly controlled by the local group, are readily used by a wide range of Aboriginal people. In 1980, following an office training course conducted at the request of the Willowra people, the presence of young Aboriginal women to supervise the placing of radio-telephone calls made a marked improvement in the communications between people and their families (Young, 1981).

Movement between outlying communities and Alice Springs

The development of Alice Springs as the major service centre of Central Australia, during the last forty years or so, has made a major impact on the mobility of Aboriginal groups in outlying rural communities. Much of this movement is related to the maintenance of social networks. Those who have moved to Alice Springs over the years include Arrernte people displaced from their traditional countries; part European/Aborigines taken or resettled in the town as a deliberate attempt to implement the assimilation policy; and others who have moved there to distance themselves from family problems, to gain better access to services, or to be free from restrictions such as those imposed through the liquor licensing legislation. Families who settle in town automatically become foci for visits from their rural-dwelling relatives, and play an extremely important part in movement.

Reasons for movement to Alice Springs are many and varied. However, as brief studies in Yuendumu and Willowra in 1978/79 showed, trips primarily to visit relatives and friends play an important part, particularly for the women. Over one third of women from Yuendumu and 20 per cent of women from Willowra who had ever been to the town had gone mainly for this purpose (Young, 1981, 325-7), and it can be assumed that many other people who went to the town for meetings, or to attend the hospital, or to have a drinking spree also visited kin.

Town-dwelling kin play a vital role in providing out-of-town visitors with accommodation. During the two months leading up to the Mount Allen Land Claim hearing in July 1982, long term Alice Springs residents with ritual responsibility for that country were eager to participate in all the ceremonies being held. Women travelled continually between the town and Mt Allen. The homes of these women in Alice Springs, all Housing Commission residences, were in effect Mt Allen camps, and any Mt Allen person in town and needing to return home could almost certainly be found there. The presence of these visitors from the rural areas made a considerable impact on the town-dwellers, sometimes swelling the numbers of residents in a house from four or five up to fifteen or twenty, and forcing those in the town to share their cash and food resources very widely. This was not a one-way movement. When the town dwellers went to Mt Allen they were also sheltered, fed and gifts were exchanged.

These patterns described for Mt Allen could be replicated for any other rural Central Australian community. In both Yuendumu and Willowra almost every adult male respondent in 1978/79 had at some time visited the town (98.4 per cent from Yuendumu and 90 per cent from Willowra) and the

majority of the women had also been there (83.7 per cent from Yuendumu and 67.3 per cent from Willowra) (Young 1983, 43). But for both these Warlpiri communities and for the Anmatyerre community at Mt Allen it must be remembered that Alice Springs is, to some extent alien territory. When people go to the town they feel a strong need to stay in a safe place, with their relatives. Social visiting may therefore play a particularly prominent part in their movement. It may well be that a higher proportion of Arrernte, for example from Santa Teresa, go to the town for recreational reasons, and because they feel relatively secure, will wander around at ease, sleeping where they wish until they feel the urge to go home.

Socially related population mobility, of the type described here, is clearly a very important component of population movement in Central Australia. Indeed it could be described as a cornerstone. When people visit family and friends they are not merely taking part in an enjoyable social occasion. They are also reinforcing reciprocal ties and obligations, all of which are essential parts of their social fabric. In addition they are ensuring that ritual rights and responsibilities to the land will be carried out. Social visiting demonstrates the high degree of interdependence which is an essential characteristic of past and present Aboriginal society.

CHAPTER 6

BUSH TUCKER AND MOBILITY

The daily search for sustenance and for the basic materials from which to manufacture tools, shelters and body coverings has been perceived as the main reason for the former nomadic behaviour of Central Desert Aborigines. People were required to move around in order to find water and food in sufficient quantity and variety to provide a satisfactory diet. In the desert, where different types of country offer different food resources, and where marked seasonal variations affect the availability of vegetables, game and water, such movement was of great importance. But this type of mobility was not random. Extended family groups normally ranged within the country with which many of them had spiritual ties expressed through ritual responsibilities. These individuals, from early childhood onwards developed a detailed knowledge of the natural resources of that area and of how these resources would be affected by changing physical conditions. Such families also included other people, related by marriage, who may only have joined the group as adults but who thereafter also built up extensive knowledge of the subsistence base of the region. Altogether resource use was built into the whole religious relationship of groups to their country, and was not, as most non-Aborigines thought, purely an economic activity. Through hunting and gathering, and collecting wood to make water carriers or spears, people not only obtained the means to survival but also continually reinforced their knowledge and understanding of their spiritual links to the land. Children collecting bush tucker with their mothers learned not only how to identify edible, as opposed to poisonous, varieties of *solanum*, but also heard stories of the ancestral beings which inhabited that territory. Through this educational process they came to identify specific points in the landscape with the events which marked the lives of dreamtime ancestors.

These linkages between the exploitation of the economic resources of the land and the expression of Aboriginal beliefs in its spiritual importance still affect the contemporary scene. People still prefer, if it is at all possible, to visit their own country or that of kin when they are hunting or foraging. This is the country of which they not only have the best knowledge of what is available, but where they also are aware of other characteristics which influence their use of it. Of prime importance are the location of significant spiritual sites, which often can only be visited by one gender, or with permission of spiritual leaders. Lack of knowledge of these places makes people apprehensive about ranging at random over the land in

search of food. In general, therefore, travelling to hunt and gather does not occur merely because people want bush tucker; it is also an expression of the spiritual attachment to land, and has a more complex meaning than is often realised.

Although people still see the use of economic resources as only one element in their relationship with country, contact with non-Aboriginal society has forced them to change their subsistence practices. In particular the redistribution of their settlement patterns, and the removal of many Aboriginal groups far from their traditional countries has forced them to adapt their hunting and gathering habits to the new situation. Many people can no longer visit their own country easily, either because it is too far away or because the non-Aboriginal owner denies or restricts their access. While pastoralists are legally supposed to allow Aborigines to use the natural resources provided they do not interfere with improvements or with cattle, both denial and restriction of access is fairly common in Central Australia. Access can easily be denied within the bounds of the law by making Aboriginal groups feel frightened and threatened by being on their traditional country. These problems of access have forced people to negotiate with other Aborigines for foraging rights elsewhere. Such arrangements are common, and indeed are not only a product of the new situation. In earlier times of drought Aborigines from badly affected country would certainly hunt and gather in other areas, and recognition of the common rights to the means for survival was universal.

Other elements which have forced people to change their subsistence practices include the depletion of natural resources through decades of grazing by cattle. This has changed the vegetation pattern, and hence both the availability of vegetables and fruits and of the game which graze on these products. Resources have also become depleted because of population growth and areas close to large Aboriginal towns like Yuendumu and even smaller cattle station communities like Mt Allen now have only limited food resources. Around towns like Alice Springs this kind of depletion is also strongly marked, making it difficult for town dwelling Aborigines to gain access to bush tucker, firewood and other necessities.

A further factor is the widespread dependence on foods and technology introduced from non-Aboriginal society. Traditional economic activities are no longer a means for survival. Many people today, particularly younger people in towns such as Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, have only a sketchy knowledge of how to hunt game or gather bush tucker, or of how to use bush materials to make tools or ceremonial objects. Hunting and gathering for them has

become a spasmodic activity, more like a picnic in the non-Aboriginal sense. But they are still aware of the cultural importance of being close to the land. It is, therefore, a picnic with a difference - one which may not mean much in terms of food production, but which creates a very valuable feeling of well-being. People express these feelings clearly in statements such as 'You can eat as much steak and bread as you like but you can still be hungry for bush tucker. It means far more.'

New technology has also changed Aboriginal foraging activity. Obvious changes include the substitution of iron crow bars and billy cans for wooden digging sticks and carriers, the use of rifles to hunt larger game, and the use of vehicles to gain access to appropriate hunting and gathering areas. Such introductions have transformed many components of subsistence activity. Iron crow bars may enable women to dig deep holes more rapidly than with wooden digging sticks, and the tools certainly last longer without needing to be sharpened. Metal axes, files and chisels greatly speed not only the collection of wood for spears and boomerangs but also the manufacture of such implements. Rifles allow men to hunt larger game without having to stalk close to the animals. And, above all, vehicles take people to preferred hunting and gathering grounds, and create the linkages which allow people to return to their own country for these activities, even although they may actually be living considerable distances away.

Factors such as the wish to use the resources in specific areas, the relocation of Aboriginal families away from their traditional land, and access to motor vehicles have created types of mobility specifically associated with hunting, gathering and the collection of useful materials. These factors have different effects in different types of community. In general, Aborigines living in large non-Aboriginal towns such as Tennant Creek or Alice Springs spend less time foraging or hunting than do the residents of Aboriginal towns like Yuendumu or Fregon. And people living in small groups on excisions or other areas within non-Aboriginal pastoral territory, such as Harts Range, would probably spend less time in such occupations than their fellows on Aboriginal-owned properties like Ti-Tree or in outstations. These differences have not yet been accurately assessed for Central Australia. Fisk (1985:20-21) estimates, using a number of sources drawn from all over Australia, that subsistence foods contribute nothing to food consumption of people in non-Aboriginal towns, only about five per cent of consumption for the residents of Aboriginal towns, but 70 per cent of consumption for people in Aboriginal cattle stations and outstations. But his data sources are drawn from towns such as Bourke and Wilcannia, or outstations in northern Arnhem Land. They fail to take

into account factors such as the strong linkages between many Alice Springs families and their ancestral countries, and the unreliability of food resources in many desert outstations. They probably underestimate the role of bush tucker for Central Australian urban groups and over-estimate its significance in outstations. And even for outstations the contribution of bush tucker to sustenance would vary. Cane and Stanley (1985, 196) estimated that in 1984 bush foods constituted up to 50 per cent of the diet in Pintupi outstations, where people were relatively isolated from community retail stores; but people living in camps around Ernabella, to which many of them commuted daily to work, obtained only 10 to 15 per cent of their food from bush tucker. It seems likely that the common outstation figure for subsistence contribution to the diet lies somewhere within this range, significantly below Fisk's estimate. Nevertheless the general pattern described by Fisk, of increasing reliance on bush tucker with decreasing settlement size, is probably valid. It provides a useful framework within which to examine mobility and traditional economic activity in different types of community.

Outstation subsistence mobility

Outstation groups in Central Australia are almost all situated either on or within relatively easy access to their traditional lands, and on land which is now held under Aboriginal freehold title. Moreover, many outstation populations are fairly small and have only been established on a semi-permanent basis for a few years. Resources have not been depleted to the same extent as has occurred around longer established, larger settlements. Mobility related to using natural resources from outstations need not, therefore, involve long journeys, and can in fact consist of travelling on foot. Because transport is not always necessary, people can go hunting every day if they wish, and are free to choose long or short journeys, depending on their relative degree of success.

Hunting and gathering on foot was one of the attractions for many people when outstations were established out of Yuendumu in the late 1970s. People returned to the central settlement with exciting tales of chasing kangaroos through the spinifex out at Jila Well and killing them with boomerangs, sitting beside the ephemeral clay pan at Ngarna and watching the emus coming down to drink in the evening, and digging yams within easy reach of the camps at Ngarna and Yarripirlangu. During one visit to Nyirrpi, while the men persuaded the researcher to spend several hours searching for kangaroo in the scrub to the east of Mt Gurner, the women, left behind because there was no room on the truck, caught rabbits in the sandhills immediately

behind the camp. When the unsuccessful kangaroo hunters returned, thirsty, hungry and frustrated, the women and children were already bedded down for the night, replete. Not a scrap of rabbit was left. In these early days of outstation establishment people showed great enthusiasm about regaining access to the natural resources of their home country, and brought products back to Yuendumu for less fortunate friends and relatives. These were greatly valued both for their taste, and also because they came from the ancestral lands. Yams, found in large quantities in many areas to the west of Yuendumu but not common either around the settlement or on its eastern side, were particularly popular and some tubers travelled considerable distances, passing through the hands of a number of people on the way. Families at Mt Allen, for example, received yams dug up at Ngarna by relatives of one of the Mt Allen residents. During the process of eating these, discussion centred on Ngarna, what people were doing there and how the country was being properly cared for once more.

Today, while Yuendumu outstation people still gather bush tucker without having to rely on vehicles to reach the right place, transport is more readily available to them and it is easier for them to range further afield if they wish to. This is an opportunity of which they will take advantage whenever possible. This was clearly demonstrated in visits to Nyirrpi and Emu Bore in 1984 and 1986. By 1984 these two communities had a combined population of at least 150, including Warlpiri families as well as almost all the Pintupi who had formerly been living at Yuendumu. While many of the Warlpiri were from the surrounding area, and carried ritual responsibility for sites within Waite Creek and nearby hills such as Mt Stanley, some Warlpiri and all the Pintupi originally came from country far to the west. They liked to go hunting in that direction when possible, and on both occasions the Pintupi women selected a particular location, within the sandhills about 25 kms west of Nyirrpi, as the place where they wished to go and collect solanum. This meant that vehicles had to be used, and an absence of several hours from camp was necessary. Similar food could have been found much closer but, as far as the Pintupi women were concerned, this was not the correct place for them to forage. Men also wanted to take advantage of the presence of an extra truck in the community to visit an area about an hours drive away through thick scrub on the south side of Mt Gurner, where some of them had observed a good growth of young mulga suitable for making new spears. A third trip consisted of a visit to Mt Stanley, to climb up inside the red ochre mine and collect ochre to be used in forthcoming initiation ceremonies and for decorating spears and boomerangs. This trip was undertaken by women and young boys seen as physically most suited to crawling down inside the narrow passages of the mine. While most of the ochre was

handed over to the older men who held responsibility for these sites as well as for the conduct of the ceremonies, some was put aside to be taken all the way back to Yuendumu where it was much prized for similar uses.

Outstation residents are not the only people moving in these remote regions in order to hunt or forage. Their friends and kin who live elsewhere explicitly visit the outstations to gain access to bush tucker. Weekend hunting trips from Yuendumu often focus on Nyirrpi, Yarripirlangu or Puturlu, because participants hold responsibility for those places, and because they know that the chance of obtaining certain foods and materials there is good. The presence of these visitors, who bring vehicles, possibly rifles and ammunition and other resources only to be found in Yuendumu town, also helps the outstation residents.

Obtaining bush foods and materials at outstations can therefore lead to several different types of mobility. Movements can be short or long both in terms of the physical distances covered and in terms of the time spent on the journeys. The movements themselves are unpredictable because they occur not only when people feel the urge to go out hunting or collecting, but also when people need specific resources, such as raw materials to make ceremonial objects. They are also influenced by environmental conditions, which mean that certain types of food are more readily available at some times than others, and by competing demands on people's time. Harvesting these resources must often explain why nobody is present in an outstation when unexpected visitors turn up.

Subsistence movement on Aboriginal-owned cattle stations

People living in Aboriginal-owned cattle stations also make heavy use of subsistence resources. However these communities do tend to be larger and less homogenous than outstation groups. And, while most are located on land which is now under Aboriginal freehold title, that land has in the past and possibly still is being heavily grazed by cattle. Resources are therefore more likely to be depleted, at least in the immediate vicinity of the settlement area. Gathering resources on foot is not nearly so productive, and even the collection of daily supplies of firewood, which in the outstations can usually be done on foot, may become very difficult if no transport is available. The contrasts between the two situations can be seen by examining such mobility at Willowra and Mt Allen compared with the newly established communities at Mt Barkly, Pulardi, and Yulyipinyu.

Willowra and Mt Allen communities both lie in heavily used pastoral country, surrounded by the home paddocks which for

decades have supported the cattle herd for much of the year. These paddocks have long since lost their cover of mulga thickets, the home of honey ants, goannas, snakes and other important food sources, and supplies of many vegetables are fairly limited. Larger game such as kangaroos rarely comes close. People have to travel further afield to hunt, and therefore rely to a large extent on vehicles. Because they are enthusiastic about these activities they use vehicles whenever possible, frequently arranging to be dropped off in a good hunting location and picked up several hours later. When they can do so, they will go to their own grandparents country to hunt and gather. In the case of Willowra this means, for some groups, travelling at least 50 kms to the west of the settlement, to country around a permanent spring of great significance for Jungarrayi/Japaljarri subsections; or beyond the northern boundary to a group of hills (Mt Windajong) important to Japangardi/Japananka people, and recognised as good country for kangaroos and less frequently seen game such as euros and porcupines. In the case of Mt Allen it may mean going down the Lander River past the homestead of Coniston station, journeying westwards on to Mt Denison to collect goannas around the scene of Brooks killing in the Western Creek, or travelling a shorter distance to the mulga areas near the Tanami road, where honey ants abound. Journeys such as these often mean a whole day's absence from the camp. People take basic resources, such as tea, damper and possibly tinned meat with them. They set up a central 'dinner' camp beside the vehicle, or where the vehicle will later pick them up, and young children, old people and others who would not be able to tolerate long walks in the heat camp there. Organisation is obviously much more elaborate than that required if people are only going away for a short time.

The contrast with Mt Barkly, essentially a Willowra outstation when it was established, and the Mt Allen outstations at Pulardi and Yulyipinyu is marked. Hunting and gathering there is much more similar to that described for other outstations. Soon after some Willowra families moved to Mt Barkly stories about the productivity of the land in that area started to come back to the main community. Mt Barkly country, for many years prior to the purchase of the station by Willowra Pastoral Company, had carried only a few cattle and the impact of grazing had been much less. Yams were especially plentiful and people talked about being able to walk only a short distance from their humpies and collect sacks of yams in only an hour or two. Willowra families frequently visited Mt Barkly to take advantage of this resource, and the yams, like those mentioned earlier in connection with Ngarna, travelled far to other groups. In 1982 and 1983 yams dug up by Mt Barkly people went to families in Alice Springs and Mt Allen.

Non-Aboriginal cattle station groups and subsistence

For population groups living on or surrounded by land owned by non-Aboriginal pastoralists access to these resources, and mobility associated with obtaining them is usually much more restricted. Those who have been granted excisions rarely have more than one square kilometre of land, enough for residential purposes but for little else. They need to be able to use adjacent pastoral leases, often land for which they hold ritual responsibility, and access to these areas can present problems. Harts Range provides an example of this situation.

Harts Range people have often commented about their problems of access to their traditional country and its natural resources, and about the restrictions which pastoralists have imposed on them and others in similar situations. These restrictions may include being confined to the main roads crossing properties, not shooting on the land, not camping and not removing firewood for artefacts or fires. While pastoralists do not necessarily impose all of these restrictions some at least are common, and people assess property owners on the basis of whether they are 'really properly hard', 'cheeky one' or 'not too cheeky'. Sometimes people are obviously afraid to engage in hunting or gathering activities, even when fruits and vegetables are visible from the road. Older Aborigines in particular often become confused and upset by this problem, and comment 'We are not greedy for his cattle, why can't he let us have our kangaroo and bush tucker, we own the land and the 'Law' for the country. He has got his cattle and the grass. Too hard that fella.' Such confusion is increased when one remembers that many of the older people formerly had to supplement their station rations with bush tucker, with the full encouragement of the pastoralists. Although people are aware of their legal rights in non-Aboriginal law it is often impossible for them to assert them, because this might lead to conflict which would further jeopardise their tenuous positions. Few have tenure to the land on which they live. Ultimately the pastoralists determine conditions which Aborigines in these communities have to accept. At Harts Range, for example, the pastoralist at one point demanded, among other things, that the gate from the community's excision into the pastoral lease be too narrow for a vehicle to pass through. This would obviously restrict people's ability to collect wood and to travel on to their land either for hunting and gathering or to carry out rituals.

Under restrictions such as these it is hard for communities like Harts Range to participate in the use of their natural resources as they would wish to. Not only does this force

them into increased dependence on a diet of purchased foods, but it denies them the opportunity to experience the social significance of their relationships to the land, and prevents them from maintaining ritual practices which they feel to be necessary. They have become trespassers in their own country.

Subsistence for Aboriginal town-dwellers

People who live in large Aboriginal towns like Yuendumu or Fregon, or in towns like Finke where Aborigines are in the majority, are also restricted in their involvement in traditional economic activity. But the restrictions are, for the most part, different and more easily overcome than those imposed on many of the small groups living on non-Aboriginal owned properties. Instead of resulting from non-Aboriginal determination to force Aborigines off the land or at least to control their movements, they stem from other factors. These include the depletion of natural resources with the growth of population, and lack of transport to reach productive areas or the areas where people have a right to hunt and collect. They also include the fact that many people are wage earners and have to be in town from Monday to Friday. Inevitably traditional economic activities have, for many, become relegated to weekends, provided transport is available. They are nonetheless extremely important and, in terms of mobility, have led to the virtual desertion of many Aboriginal towns on Saturdays and Sundays, except by the old or disabled.

Yuendumu, where there has been a substantial population concentration for over forty years, provides a good example of resource depletion and its effect on hunting and gathering. Few bush foods are found within easy walking distance of the town and firewood is only available in small quantities. The environment is generally perceived as offering little for subsistence purposes. Its depletion is due not only to concentrated activities of the Aboriginal population, but also to cattle grazing since the 1950s. It is rare for Yuendumu people to go out hunting on foot, and gathering only occurs when certain foods, such as solanum grow on the football ovals after rain. Transport has therefore become essential for hunting and gathering. It has also become essential for the provision of firewood. The Council formerly recognised this by employing people to take the tractor out to cut firewood for the camps and in 1978, when probably 70 per cent of Yuendumu people lived in humpies, provided an efficient service. Today, with a decline in population following the outstation movement and housing improvements, fewer people live in humpies. Firewood collection has become largely an individual responsibility, a situation acceptable for those people who have their own transport and are fit enough to go out to collect wood, but

a problem for others who have no vehicles and are too old and infirm to carry out these tasks.

Yuendumu people use a variety of different types of transport to go out hunting at weekends. Most families own conventional saloon cars, usually fairly old and unreliable, and these cannot be taken safely to more remote areas. However they are considered sufficiently strong to use to visit outstations where kin live and many people choose these as weekend destinations. Others, who either do not want to travel long distances, or do not have outstation-based relatives whom they want to visit, stay nearer at hand, usually within the bounds of the former Yuendumu Reserve. This area now seems to be recognised as one where anyone is eligible to use whatever resources are available. Regardless of Yuendumu people's traditional country, they and their children have come to know the resources of this region, and also which areas have to be avoided for customary reasons and which are safe. They therefore feel at home foraging there. Particularly popular places within the Yuendumu Reserve include Keredi waterhole and bore, about 20 kilometres south of the town, where there is a good chance of finding larger game especially in the evening; the large areas of mulga scrub east of Yuendumu which are rich in honey ants and goannas; and the low hills both to the north and the south, which have a variety of game including euro, porcupine, and kangaroo. Several families know the southern area very well because they formerly lived there, looking after the garden established during the government era of the town. The northern area, Wakurlpu, has also been well-known, particularly in recent times since two outstations Wakurlpu and Ngarliyikirlangu have been established there. Wakurlpu is an unusual outstation because, although some of the residents are traditional owners of that area, others have no customary connection with it. They live there purely as friends. The relaxation of customary behaviour which stems from this also affects mobility for hunting and gathering, because people from different Yuendumu groups freely visit Wakurlpu in a way which would be relatively uncommon in many of the other outstations. Formal permission appears to be less necessary. Altogether, at weekends, all these areas close to Yuendumu are likely to be visited by hunters and foragers of mixed ages and genders and in large and small groups, some staying out for only a few hours and some all day.

Visiting more distant places to obtain bush tucker or collect raw materials takes more careful preparation, and requires reasonably reliable transport. These visits nowadays often focus on established outstations, located throughout Warlpiri and even Pintupi country to the south, west and northwest of the town. In 1978, when there were only five recognised outstations, people commonly went back to their

own country without planning to contact any other groups during the weekend. These visits could be quite hazardous; there were no roads, no other people in the vicinity and hardly any vehicles had radios. Breakdowns were common, and it was not always clear where people had gone. But these were very important journeys, not just because people were able to hunt back in their own land, but also because they reinforced the desire to move back there and set up outstations. Many of the outstations which have now been established are in locations which were commonly visited on weekend hunting and gathering trips in the late 1970s.

The need for transport for subsistence activities not only limits the participation of many people, but also tends to discriminate in favour of men. Although some vehicles are owned by women, it is still relatively uncommon for them to be the drivers, and women owners are often obliged to lend their vehicles to male relatives. Inevitably this means that they get much less opportunity to use them themselves. Commonly the vehicle will be filled with men carrying rifles and intent only on hunting large game, usually kangaroo. Such hunting is done principally from the vehicle, sometimes with individuals perched on the roof to spot game while in motion. First attempts at shooting are also, if possible, done from the car, and it is only if these are unsuccessful that people then leave the car and begin to stalk or chase on foot. This kind of hunting means keeping on the move. It is not compatible with women's gathering activities, which are more successful if people go to a specific place and stay there for several hours, footwalking to obtain whatever foods they can find. Thus, the fact that women are left behind even when they own the vehicles not only indicates that they cannot exert authority because they are not recognised drivers; it can also indicate that contemporary hunting and gathering methods differ too greatly for men and women to carry out successful joint expeditions. This does not mean that joint expeditions do not occur. Middle-aged and older husbands often accompany their wives and wives' friends. But these trips focus on the women's rather than the men's needs and commonly no large game will be obtained. Men who go on these types of trips do not always take rifles, and instead of hunting kangaroo they, along with the women, gather fruits and vegetables, and dig for goannas and small game. On occasions when slightly less common larger game, such as perenti or pussy cat, are found the women are often very pleased that some men are present because obtaining these may involve greater physical effort than they are accustomed to expend. Catching a pussy cat, which in the Central Desert often reaches a weight of ten kilos or more, without a rifle may mean isolating it up a tree, climbing the tree, and then chasing it down to the assembled throng below.

Contemporary subsistence mobility also differs according to the age of participants. Generally the best women foragers are people aged thirty or more, who have the skills and the knowledge and also the freedom to move around because their children are past the infant stage. Younger women in towns like Yuendumu or Finke lack the experience and in some cases the motivation to take part frequently in gathering trips. And when they do go they often remain at the 'dinner camp' looking after the children while others go hunting. When women with young children are also keen foragers they take older children along so that baby minding can be handed over to another person. If they have very young babies needing frequent feeding, they carry the child while gathering but this is tiring, and sometimes hard to cope with. It also restricts them and reduces their efficiency. With men the differentiation is less marked. Although older men may be more highly skilled in hunting lore and techniques such as stalking, younger men are often more knowledgeable about using rifles and driving vehicles. And therefore many successful hunting trips are essentially young men's journeys.

A further factor which influences subsistence mobility for Aboriginal town residents is the involvement of a significant number of people in wage employment. Council workers, school teachers, health workers and others are much more restricted in their movements than are those without jobs, particularly when journeys are casual and not perceived to be of vital importance. Hunting and gathering would often fall into this category. As a result many people only take part in this type of mobility at weekends, or sometimes in the brief period between the finish of work and dusk.

In general subsistence mobility for the residents of Aboriginal towns has many features which reflect the social and economic structure of these communities. It depends heavily on access to transport, it is much more marked at weekends than during the week, and, because people come from a number of different groups and are often living a long way from their traditional country, it can involve fairly long distance movement. In Finke, for example, the Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara people would travel up to 100 kms westwards along the main road, passing areas of productive country on the way, before they would stop to forage. They said that this nearer country was Arrernte territory. The more distant areas to which they went were their own country, and was described as 'good'. Like other Aboriginal groups they perceived it as having the fattest game, the most plentiful supplies of fruit and vegetables, and a place of which they were very proud. Going there meant not only hunting but caring for the land.

Aboriginal foragers living in non-Aboriginal towns

Most non-Aborigines would believe that Aborigines living in towns like Alice Springs have lost any interest in hunting and gathering, and prefer to live a life of ease, spending their days talking or drinking grog in the creek bed or camp, and depending entirely on a diet of store bought foods. Such an interpretation may well be true in some cases. But for many people this situation does not reflect their own choice, but rather their unfortunate circumstances - living in comparatively crowded conditions a long way from their traditional country; surrounded by the country of other groups, in some cases different linguistic groups; and lacking the means of transport to gain access to appropriate areas in which to obtain subsistence resources. Alice Springs people do go out bush. They do so both to carry out their responsibilities for country where they can no longer live and also to teach their children, many of whom have lived in the town all their lives, the skills and experience needed. Drakakis-Smith (1982: 122) found in a survey of four Alice Springs town-camps in 1978 that 25 per cent of people said that they went hunting outside the town. It is not only people who live in the town camps who are commonly felt to have strongly retained their linkages with rural dwelling kin, who participate in such activity; it is also an activity for those in conventional housing, such as Housing Commission dwellings or government houses.

Subsistence mobility for people living in Alice Springs bears some similarity to that carried on by people living in Aboriginal towns. It entails dependence on vehicles, often travelling long distances because people want to hunt in or near their own country, and is particularly common at weekends. But it is probably a less common practice than in a town like Yuendumu, and certainly the feeling of emptiness which is strong in Yuendumu on Saturdays and Sundays is not as pervasive in an Alice Springs camp. When people leave town to hunt and gather they, like their Yuendumu counterparts, do make considerable use of the immediate environs of the town, an area which they have come to know well and many parts of which, with agreement from Arrernte custodians, are seen as places of open access. But they also go to their own country, and much of the recent movement to gain excisions on which to establish outstations or country camps indicates how important such contacts are, particularly to Arrernte groups which have lost most of their land to pastoralism. Regardless of whether families expressing an interest in these country camps actually live there all the time or not, their establishment is crucial in allowing town dwellers to continue their subsistence activities and retain their customary responsibilities.

Although the types of mobility associated with subsistence hunting and gathering, and with the collection of other natural materials from the land have changed markedly from those occurring before non-Aboriginal settlement, the underlying principles remain the same. People still have a strong need to carry out these activities, and to do that in the areas with which they are closely associated in ritual terms. They do not lose that need even when, from the dietary point of view, the food obtained only plays a small part in their sustenance. And it does not appear that, for Central Australian Aborigines, they are going to lose that need for the foreseeable future. Access to land for these purposes will remain very important, and is a factor which must be recognised by those in administration, as well as by those who control the land through non-Aboriginal law.

CHAPTER 7

THE ATTRACTION OF CASH

All Central Australian Aborigines are now partly dependent on cash incomes for survival, although the relative importance of this component of sustenance varies between those who live in outstations and residents of larger communities such as Aboriginal towns and cattle stations. In general, as discussed above, outstation people can derive a higher proportion of their support from non-monetary sources such as bush tucker than can people who live in larger settlements. Cash for economic survival can be divided into two different categories; cash that is used for the support of individuals and families; and cash that is used for the provision and support of the community infrastructure. The former is used for the purchase of necessities such as food, clothing and tools, the payment of rentals and costs of essential services, and important additional items such as fuel, tobacco, alcohol, and the transfer of ceremonial knowledge. The latter, obtained through public and private funding bodies, provides essential services, housing and social needs. In terms of mobility it is the former type of cash with which we are mostly concerned, although it is also important to consider how population movement affects the appropriate and efficient use of services provided through bulk public and private funding.

Mobility and individual cash incomes

Central Australian Aborigines obtain their cash incomes from two main sources: wage-earning, and social security payments. In addition, in a few communities, incomes come from money paid out under the Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP), a special scheme whereby the total unemployment benefit allocation for a population group is, following assessment, paid to the community at six monthly intervals for use as wages for jobs which they feel should be carried out. Pitjantjatjara communities in this study, such as Fregon, Ernabella and Pipalyatjara, operated under CDEP.

Wage-earning

Wage-earning opportunities in Central Australia are, for Aborigines, limited both in number and job variety. They are also limited spatially. Few outstations offer any wage employment, and the chances of getting a job when you are living in a small community on a non-Aboriginal owned cattle station are also often very slim. In Aboriginal towns and in Aboriginal-owned cattle stations prospects are better, but they still fall far below what might be aimed at for the

numbers of people involved. Such jobs as do exist are either service activities, such as working in the school or health clinic, for the Council or Housing Association, or in the store; or are concerned with locally run enterprises such as cattle stations, mining companies or artefact manufacturing. Most of the former are publicly funded, through various government departments such as the Northern Territory Departments of Health and Community Services (DHCS), Education and Transport and Works (T&W) or Commonwealth Departments such as Aboriginal Affairs and Employment, Education and Training (DEET). As such they depend on fund allocation decisions made outside the community, and are vulnerable when financial cut-backs and other reductions in public funding occur. The number of publicly funded jobs in rural Aboriginal communities has tended to decrease in recent years, as funds have been reduced in real terms, and higher and higher proportions of funds have had to go to the support of the existing capital infrastructure. In Yuendumu, for example, in 1983, the number of wage jobs available was only half that existing in 1978 (Young 1985, 171), and similar reductions seem to have been occurring elsewhere.

While these trends have probably continued, publicly funded employment has shown some recent increase because of schemes such as Commonwealth Employment Programme (CEP), and the introduction of special training schemes to provide opportunities for young people. In 1986 Yuendumu's wage force had once more increased, although it was still below the 1978 level. This increase was concentrated in only a few sectors, such as education, where over twice as many Aborigines held jobs in 1986 compared to 1983. This had been achieved through successful applications for CEP grants to assist adult education, and support the new media services requested by the community. The Council workforce also showed an increase, although of a much smaller proportion. Healthworkers, in contrast, had been reduced from ten to four, a reduction attributed to lack of funding. While these increases have certainly helped the community, the jobs created are still vulnerable, and in many cases funds have to be requested anew every twelve months. Unpredictability remains a characteristic of public employment in Aboriginal communities.

Private enterprise, in general, is unable to compensate. Enterprise development in remote areas is limited by high costs, which affect its competitiveness, lack of usable local raw materials, problems of marketing the goods, and problems associated with the management and operation of commercial businesses in ways which are compatible with the priorities which Aborigines themselves wish to emphasise (Young 1988). In Yuendumu in 1986, for example, enterprise employment accounted for only 24 per cent of all wage jobs in the community (Ellanna et al. 1988, 115).

Wage jobs are not only limited in number. They are limited in scope. Many are casual and seasonal. In cattle enterprises, where the active period in Central Australia covers only eight or nine months of the year, most stockworkers have no jobs during the hot season and are forced to fall back on unemployment benefit for cash. And in other private businesses such as community owned retail stores the size of the workforce depends on the profits made by the enterprise. If the shop is in financial difficulties the Aboriginal workforce may find itself decimated with little warning.

Aboriginal views on participation in wage-earning employment are also important factors. In theory, the decision to be part of the wage-force is an individual one, based on how one assesses the advantages offered, compared to those arising from not participating. It seems that Aborigines from remote rural communities, where many of the traditional aspects of social life have been strongly maintained, may well have strong reservations about the value of being a wage-earner, particularly when the job is boring and appears to contribute little to the well-being of the community. They do not subscribe wholly to the non-Aboriginal work ethic, and moreover, often take part in other activities which seemingly are work, but which would not be judged as such in conventional non-Aboriginal terms (Young, 1985). Types of activity which fall into this category include organisation and participation in ceremonies, or playing a co-ordinating role for an outstation group. These perceptions of the value of work, combined with the limited numbers of jobs available, affect Aboriginal mobility. Unlike many non-Aborigines, Aborigines in Central Australia do not seem to move around primarily because they want to find a wage job. Some examples follow.

Yuendumu in late 1978 had a total Aboriginal wage force of 138, over half of whom worked for the Community Council, with most of the remainder employed in the school, or by the Cattle Company, Housing Association or Social Club (store). This represented 63 per cent of the labour force, giving Yuendumu at that time an unemployment rate, measured as the percentage of those working or receiving unemployment benefits, of 37 per cent. When these data were disaggregated by age group, it was clear that the rate of unemployment was highest amongst the youngest group (aged 15-24) where 54 per cent were unemployed. Discussions about this situation revealed that the workforce was fairly stable, and that many people had been wage earners for many years. Older men in particular, who tended to dominate the more skilled and responsible positions in organisations such as the Housing Association, stated that this stability was maintained by giving preference to older adult workers with family responsibilities. They felt that this was better for the

organisation. The situation therefore was one where the number of jobs available was not only very limited, but also the turnover was low, and it was hard for young people to join the workforce unless the job demanded specific formal educational skills. It might be expected that in those circumstances young people from Yuendumu, most of whom had had at least six years primary education, would leave the community to find work elsewhere. This did not seem to be happening. The only opportunities in nearby communities were positions as stockmen, many of which were not made available to Aborigines and for which these young people, who today lack close contact with pastoral activities, were not qualified anyway. Moreover although people visited Alice Springs often, they rarely seemed to do so for the purpose of finding work. These impressions were confirmed by the results of a brief survey on why a sample of Yuendumu people went to Alice Springs - only seven per cent of this group said that their prime reason for going to town was to find work.

It seems, therefore, that despite the high rate of unemployment in Yuendumu, people preferred to remain in the community, where they knew that they could rely upon social and financial support from their network of family and friends, rather than to move away on the off-chance that they would find a job elsewhere. While the main reasons for this situation were probably low motivation to join the wageforce and knowledge of the limited opportunities available, an additional reason concerned the location of Alice Springs. For non-Arrernte groups like the Warlpiri Alice Springs is alien territory and the chances of knowing the right people to help in finding employment are comparatively slim. Arrernte people from places such as Santa Teresa may well move more frequently and in larger numbers to seek work in Alice Springs.

If the wage-employment situation in Yuendumu was bad, then that of the surrounding outstations was even worse. In 1978 there were no wage-earners among the core outstation populations, and by the mid 1980s this situation had only changed in Nyirrpi which by then had a population of well over 100. But it must be acknowledged that people who moved to outstations did not place a high value on wage-earning. In fact it is clear that some individuals opted out of moving to distant outstations because they held jobs in Yuendumu. If they did want to move to a smaller community, it had to be within commuting distance. The outstation at Wakurlpu, only 20 kms from Yuendumu has from its establishment, had several resident families commuting daily to jobs with the Housing Association. Although some are traditional owners of the country around Wakurlpu, others have no recognised responsibility for the region and have become Wakurlpu residents mainly through friendships made at

work. Similarly, another Yuendumu outstation, Ngarliykirlangu, also within commuting distance of the town was established by a particular section of the workforce, those who work for the Cattle Company. In 1987 this group moved the whole of the company's operations to Ngarliykirlangu. This move increased the efficiency and independence of the enterprise, by relocating in within the cattle grazing area rather than in the town. It also allowed many of the Company's directors and workers, mostly traditional owners of Ngarliykirlangu country, to maintain their customary rights and responsibilities for that land more effectively.

For people living in more distant outstations commuting is not possible and it might therefore be expected that some, particularly the young, would keep moving back to Yuendumu in the hope of finding work. However, such movement does not seem to be common. The reasons are probably similar to those affecting job related mobility between Alice Springs and Yuendumu. Most outstation people are peripheral to Yuendumu power groups, such as those who run the council, and have little influence on the choice of workers. Indeed, for one particular group, the Pintupi, the problem of joining the wage-force in Yuendumu would be as intractable as that of Warlpiri joining the Alice Springs workforce - Pintupi at Yuendumu, like Warlpiri in Alice Springs are in alien country, and in 1978, before the Pintupi moved to outstations at Nyirrpi and further west, hardly any Pintupi were in the workforce.

The wage-force situation in Aboriginal towns such as Yuendumu or Papunya is complex because of the variety of different service agencies which fund positions. In all cases many jobs, such as those in education or health, stem directly from government funding. Others, such as those available at the Council or Housing Association, are also dependent on public funds. In Aboriginal-owned cattle stations, where private enterprise is supposedly of greater importance, one would expect that the employment situation would be less affected by government financial allocations. To some extent this is the case. In 1979 in Willowra, for example, the total workforce during the high season for mustering numbered only 27, of whom 12 (44 per cent) were working for the Pastoral Company (Young 1981, 148-9). But during the summer, when stockworkers and other casual employees at the school were laid off the wage force consisted of only four men and four women, mostly in government funded jobs. At both times unemployment rates were high, 69 per cent for men in the mustering season and an incredible 83 per cent for men during the summer. Figures such as these raise questions about the role of such cattle enterprises in employment. Even when run on a labour intensive basis their pastoral operations will never be able

to provide work for more than a handful of the Aboriginal residents. Although Willowra is now recognised as an Aboriginal community rather than a cattle enterprise, and consequently receives funds for essential and community services, the number of additional government jobs provided remains relatively small.

Similar situations occur in other Aboriginal-owned cattle stations. Ti-Tree, in early 1984, had a wage-force of only 22, out of a total population of over 300 people. This represented a low period in stock-camp employment because of the season and BTEC destocking. However, even the addition of about ten stock-camp workers would only have increased the workforce to around 30. Mt Allen similarly, in mid-1982 had a wageforce of only 13, mainly consisting of stock-men. Both these communities, like Willowra, received only limited additional government funding, and allocations of funds for the construction of houses, made through ADC, had not led to any marked increase in employment because the work was being done largely by outside non-Aboriginal contractors. Aboriginal cattle stations do show a higher turnover in the workforce than seems to occur in the Aboriginal towns. For example, during the 1978 mustering season over 40 Willowra men participated in the stock-camp. As a result more individuals had the opportunity to earn a cash wage. But most are seasonally and casually employed and hence do not earn sufficient cash to cover all their needs. The possibilities of Aboriginal-owned cattle stations in Central Australia becoming financially self-supporting seem very remote. Moreover their populations, now exceeding 300 in both Willowra and Ti-Tree, have grown significantly through the in-migration of families with customary rights and responsibilities to the land. Future employment prospects for most people, particularly the young, are bleak.

From the point of view of mobility the Aboriginal-owned cattle station communities are in much the same situation as the Aboriginal town communities. They offer little attraction to potential wage-earners, but most of their residents value staying within the community more highly than moving in the hopes of finding work elsewhere. One slight difference is that, compared to Yuendumu, more young men in places such as Mt Allen or Willowra are skilled stock-workers and therefore there may be job opportunities for them on adjacent non-Aboriginal properties. Mt Allen men, for example, regularly form the core of the Coniston stock-camp, and at least on one occasion in the past have also carried out contract musters on Mt Doreen. They have even mustered for Willowra, when the residents were heavily involved in ceremonial business and considered that it was worth while employing Mt Allen people rather than disrupting their customary activities to do the work themselves. But many non-Aboriginal stations nowadays only employ fairly

small numbers of stockmen, and have come to rely heavily on helicopter mustering and other more capital intensive methods. Also, in many cases, preference has been given to non-Aborigines, although the inexperience and instability of the young men who come from other parts of the country to take on these jobs may, as Holmes (1985) has suggested, be causing some pastoralists to re-consider this policy.

Wage-earning opportunities for people who live in the non-Aboriginal owned cattle stations are even more limited. Residents of communities such as Harts Range do not have access to service jobs such as working in the school or clinic, because these services do not exist, and many are no longer employed on the stations as stock-workers. While some young men from Harts Range do move to other properties where casual work is available, such chances are open to only a few. Also, while their presence as workers is accepted, that of their families may be unwelcome and they may be forced to live away from their wives and children. They may also be discouraged from inviting their relatives from coming to visit them. During the mustering season such workers move backwards and forwards between their workplace and their home community. However some workers are able to take their families with them. At Coniston, for example, Mt Allen stockmen are accompanied by their wives and children and during the season this camp also becomes an important focus for casual visitors. Most come both to see their relatives and also to carry out their customary responsibilities to Coniston country.

Social security

Low levels of employment, coupled with a lack of interest in moving away from the home community to seek for jobs, presents a major problem for Aborigines in rural Central Australian communities. Cash is now an essential element in their lives. The only source as far as many families are concerned, is social security pensions and benefits. Access to social security, which has never been equally easy for every body, can be an important motive for mobility. Since the Department of Social Security lacks sufficient field staff to deal with the rural side of their operations, people living away from main towns depend on others - the local pastoral managers, the shop-keepers and the community advisors - to deal with what is often a fairly complex administration. These individuals often do not feel that is their responsibility, and are unwilling to put much effort into the work. Some feel, in a paternalistic way, that Aborigines should not be receiving these 'hand-outs' anyway and provide only minimal assistance with paperwork. Others, particularly those who run rural stores, realise that it benefits them if everyone receives their entitlement, and then spends the cash in the shop. They are generally

helpful, albeit hardly in an altruistic fashion. Other differences reflect the way that regional and state offices of the Department of Social Security implement and interpret policies. Although it would generally be true to say that social security benefits are today more widely available to Aborigines in remote rural communities, including outstations, than they were even three or four years ago, obvious variations in access still exist. These affect mobility.

Most people reach social security services by travelling to the centre where they are registered. Most Yuendumu outstation dwellers, for example, travel to Yuendumu on pension days primarily for this purpose, and effectively turn the journey into a community trip, in which all but the infirm participate. Although these trips often only last for a day, they can sometimes be extended to several days, depending on availability of transport, and these journeys may have several other purposes such as shopping, going to meetings or staying with relatives. In Yuendumu many people spend pension day sitting near the store and bank complex, waiting first for the mail to come in; then for the mail to be sorted and the cheques to be given out; and finally for everyone to do their shopping. This can take hours, during which time the normal business of the town may be interrupted. A similar pattern would be observed in all other centralised communities.

The choice of where people arrange to collect their cheques is largely up to them, and although most people would choose the place most convenient to themselves, this is not always possible. It is not uncommon for groups of people who are absent from their main camp for a few days to have to return home simply to collect and cash their cheques. These round trips may cover several hundred kilometres, and the length of time for the journey may be quite unpredictable. People make these trips not only because they have run short of money and may be incurring large obligations in the host community but also because they are following a well-established pattern of use of social security services. Movements of this type would be less necessary if their cheques were paid regularly into a bank account. Such measures have now been introduced in Alice Springs, but because of the lack of banking facilities in the outback, and the fact that people prefer to have cash in hand rather than in accounts, no radical changes are likely elsewhere. Improvements in outback banking services seem unlikely because the banks perceive out of town operations, in which investment is small but the number of transactions large, to be unprofitable (Stanley 1982).

A further factor determining where people go to cash their cheques is the contact built up between the claimant and the

shop-keeper or pastoralist concerned. This can lead to obvious anomalies. Pmara Jutunta people, for example, have until recently still travelled as a group to Aileron store, about 100 km away, every second Thursday to cash cheques, because this is the centre they generally used during their lengthy sojourn on that station. Although they could have arranged to cash their cheques at Ti-Tree homestead, only 25 kms away, they continued to make these regular journeys. In 1986, with the opening of the Pmara Jutunta store, this linkage with Aileron has finally been partly broken. Adelaide Bore people also, although now part of the Ti-Tree community, still see themselves as members of the Urupuntja Council at Utopia, and travel there every two weeks to cash their cheques.

The alternative to travelling to a particular point to cash cheques is to wait for the cheques to be brought to you, either in the outstation or small community. At various times plans have been mooted for the establishment of mobile services of this type. They have usually, in Central Australia at least, proved very difficult to carry out. In 1978 Yuendumu Council, in collaboration with the Social Club, tried to provide mobile cheque cashing and shopping services, but the project soon foundered because staff could never be certain if the outstation groups would be there when they arrived. Today these problems of communication could be overcome using two-way radios. However, because outstation people now have better access to vehicles they may prefer travelling independently to the service centre. The trip to town, after all, is multi-purpose and provides entertainment and recreation as well. Mobile services have also been planned for groups living on non-Aboriginal cattle stations, many of whom have very limited access to social security administration. For example, in 1985 the Ingerreke Resource Centre in Alice Springs provided this type of service for people living on Yambah station. This occurred largely because these families had recently been living in town camps and their cheques were already channelled through Alice Springs-based Aboriginal organisations. An alternative approach for outstations is for one outstation person to be given the responsibility for collecting the cheques from the resource centre and cashing them after returning home. This is really only a possibility where there is somebody from the outstation who is sufficiently literate to deal with the operation and when the outstation is large enough to support its own retail store. Nyirrpi formerly obtained its cheques in this way. The resident non-Aboriginal missionary travelled fortnightly to Yuendumu, collected all the cheques for the community and returned with a load of store goods sold when Nyirrpi people cashed their cheques.

Community Development Employment Project

CDEP, a system which lies at the interface between wage employment and social security, provides a third avenue to cash for the Pitjantjatjara communities included in this study - Fregon, Ernabella and Pipalyatjara. This scheme was introduced as a pilot project in the late 1970s. It attempted to find an acceptable alternative method of cash delivery, one which would avoid the stigma of unemployment benefit, and at the same time would enable people to finance those day to day tasks which they felt to be of greatest common benefit. Under CDEP the total unemployment benefit for the community is assessed and a bulk cheque for that amount paid from DSS to DAA who are then responsible for the administration. An additional loading of 20 per cent of the allocation is granted to cover on-costs and overheads in the project. The community is then responsible for the use of these funds to pay wages for whatever jobs are felt necessary. CDEP allocations are made on a six monthly basis, and hence a realistic assessment not only of the current but also of the future population size and structure is needed. It is here that population mobility becomes important. Because of population movement communities may find themselves with the wrong allocations of funds. From their point of view this is not a problem when the amount allocated is too great, but certainly presents difficulties when there is too little money. Over-allocation of funds is obviously of great concern to DAA and DSS. However under allocation seems to be more common. This can have serious consequences for individuals. People who have moved from a CDEP community to elsewhere will find that, until the next review, or until the six months have elapsed, they cannot join the new CDEP scheme or go back on to unemployment benefit. Meanwhile they have no cash income. In addition, because of the administrative complexity of CDEP, communities do not always receive their six monthly reviews. Pipalyatjara's CDEP allocation had, in late 1982, not been reviewed for 18 months. Altogether, the scheme is insufficiently flexible to cope with population movement.

On the other hand, CDEP does allow a community to determine what kinds of activities can be classified as paid work. It is interesting to note in this regard that the majority of communities in the Pitjantjatjara lands have decided that attending meetings of administrative importance constitutes work and people on CDEP will continue to receive their wages while carrying out such obligations. Such meetings can be of a traditional as well as non-traditional nature. Thus the women chosen to travel to the big meeting at Malan in 1985 were all paid their regular wage and some travel expenses because the community perceived this to be important women's work. This flexibility in defining work

also allows outstation people to participate in CDEP. Essential outstation jobs such as driving the communal truck, maintaining the bore and other equipment, or even acting as the outstation liaison person can be paid for, and people have a better opportunity of choosing which activities are the most important.

CDEP can also restrict mobility. When the Pitjantjatjara Women's Council held their meeting at Uluru in March 1985, women travelled from western regions as far away as Blackstone, and from eastern communities such as as Indulkana. The meeting was held over the weekend and was to be followed by two other very important meetings; one was for Anangu Pitjantjatjaraku to discuss Aboriginal involvement in the formation of an oil company in which they would be partners, an agreement finally signed on 1st November, 1985; the other was to discuss the details and conditions of the transfer of title for Ayers Rock to the traditional owners on 26th October, 1985. However, despite the fact that these were very important meetings, and that everyone wanted to remain until business was completed, some people returned early to their communities because they were concerned that they would not receive their CDEP allocations unless they completed their normal tasks.

Mobility and Community Funding

Cash is not only an important commodity from the individual or family perception, providing the essential means for survival in the contemporary world. It is also vital to the maintenance and improvement of a community's infrastructure, providing houses and schools, maintaining roads and airstrips and paying the wages and salaries of the workforce. Such cash comes predominantly from government funding, from Commonwealth Departments such as Aboriginal Affairs, Education, Employment and Training and Social Security; and Northern Territory Departments such as Health and Community Services and Transport and Works and other statutory bodies such as the Aboriginal Development Commission. Non-government sources, usually approached by the community itself, include groups such as the World Council of Churches, and Greening Australia. Although these funding agencies play different roles in different types of community, their assessment of how much will be granted and how the money will be used usually takes population size and structure into account. Population movement therefore becomes important. Changes in the age-sex structure, for example, can affect the use of and future demand for schools or health clinics, and fluctuations in population numbers affects the demand for housing. Funding agencies therefore have to operate with sufficient flexibility to accommodate population change, a challenge which is often hard to meet. Major difficulties occur because of the delay between the

acknowledgement of needs, the decision to allocate funds, and the actual implementation of projects.

Problems of administering funds to communities affected by population mobility are not restricted to those places which operate CDEP. They also occur elsewhere. For example, in the case of Yuendumu, the development of outstations has, during the last eight years, led to a redistribution of population which has left the central settlement with total numbers of only around 600, compared to the former total of over 1000. But major funding agencies, such as the NT Department of Health and Community Services, responsible for essential services, has not readily adapted to this new semi dispersed structure. Funding for outstations remains the responsibility of DAA and ADC, and while this provides for essential needs such as water supplies, shelter and access, other facilities to which the outstation dwellers had access while they lived in Yuendumu are no longer available. In particular, there is no provision for the funding of outstation employment; and the activities of groups such as the Housing Association or the Social Club do little to assist the outstation dwellers. This has led to outstation people becoming divorced administratively and politically from centralised bodies such as the community council, and the establishment of an outstation resource centre, which only occurred in Yuendumu in early 1984, only partially compensates. Moreover, because of their physical isolation, outstation people tend to experience greater problems in communicating their needs to outside agencies, and almost certainly are less well informed about possibilities for development. In effect, the growth of the outstation movement has probably enabled government bodies to save money on what in other circumstances would be termed essential services.

Similar factors operated in the establishment of the Aboriginal cattle station groups. In the early years there were frequent arguments about whether such groups should be treated as commercial enterprises, then funded under DAA's enterprise vote, or whether they were to be considered as communities, funded under DAA's Town Management and Public Utilities vote. Most, such as Willowra and Mount Allen, were funded as enterprises, thus eliminating the need for funding for community services. And now, although such groups have received more allocations for facilities and capital infrastructure, the discrepancy still remains. In effect, as has been suggested elsewhere (Young 1981), the Aboriginal cattle stations have been a cheap option as far as government funding bodies are concerned.

Discrepancies between the allocation of funds for community infrastructure and the actual numbers of people using the facilities provided should, it might be assumed, lead to a

movement of population to the service centres. This has not been a significant trend. Although people are certainly aware of such differences they do not seem to see these as sufficient reason to move to gain access to improved facilities. In effect, they still prefer to stay in the place for which they feel a strong responsibility, and where they can practise an acceptable lifestyle. These priorities may well lead to people moving out to outstations which receive only minimal material support. In the early stages of such a move there may in fact be no support at all. In 1978 Yuendumu outstation groups were still in the establishment phase and were required to remain in their new localities for at least six months just to prove that they meant to stay. They could then apply for funding for basic water supplies. As a result some outstations had to collect their water from springs and creek-bed soakages, while others depended on ephemeral clay-pans and drums of water replenished from Yuendumu. In the case of the Aboriginal cattle stations there is again no strong evidence that people moved there to take advantage of the possibility of sharing an income from the profits of the station or because they thought housing might be provided. They moved there because the land had once more come wholly under Aboriginal control, and they were therefore able to carry out their customary responsibilities in the best possible way. Moreover, in many cases, the presence of these particular individuals was requested by people already in residence. In the case of Mt Allen, for example, those who returned after the purchase in 1976 included older traditional 'owners' of the honey-ant dreaming sites at Yulumu, who had for many years been resident on neighbouring Mt Denison station.

Access to cash, through wage earning and social security, has indeed become essential for the survival of all Aboriginal families in Central Australia. And since cash can normally be obtained only in a small number of locations population movement plays a vital role in that access. But the motive for obtaining cash should not be judged primarily in non-Aboriginal terms. Most rural Aboriginal families are still concerned mainly with obtaining enough cash for their needs; they do not aim to accumulate surplus capital in order to improve their material status. Their knowledge of the restrictions imposed by the capitalistic world around them is realistic, and the security provided by their own social structure remains very important.

CHAPTER 8

SCHOOLING, HEALTH AND SHOPPING: TRAVELLING FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

From initial contact desert Aborigines were introduced to non-Aboriginal goods such as food, tobacco and clothing. Although at first given as presents, these commodities quickly became used as rewards for labour or service. People began to congregate in those places where such exchanges occurred, often station homesteads like Coniston, Napperby and Mount Doreen, all of which were important Aboriginal population centres before 1930. Older members of the present Yuendumu community recall receiving blankets as payment for tending sheep and goats at old Mount Doreen station. They were rewarded in the same way for collecting surface deposits of wolfram in the 1930s. Exchanges such as these effectively fostered the process of assimilation eventually adopted as the official policy on Aboriginal development. The provision of shelter and of social services such as health and education are other mechanisms seen as important in helping Aborigines to accept the conventional sedentary non-Aboriginal life-style. These were offered mainly at government and mission stations such as Yuendumu, Papunya, Hermannsburg and Santa Teresa. Housing played a particularly significant part in this process, and schemes were adopted whereby families were resettled in residences of increasing complexity as they demonstrated their ability to cope with the attributes of conventional shelter. Houses constructed at Yuendumu in the 1960s and early 1970s, for example, included aluminium Kingstrand dwellings offering little more than basic shelter from the elements; concrete one-roomed 'dog boxes', with their more solid construction; and at the upper level of the hierarchy, houses with several rooms, and connected to power and reticulated water supplies. In the 1960s, with the change from payment of wages in kind (for example rations and tobacco) to payment in cash, an additional community service, the retail store, also contributed to assimilation. All of these services attracted people and hence affected population mobility.

Today the main social and community services which exert an important influence on population movement are education, health, retailing and, in a less direct way, administration. Their influence varies according to how the service is provided. If it is strongly centralised people are pulled into certain specific localities or, for those who were already there when the service was established, people are loathe to move away to more remote places. However if the service is dispersed into smaller less complex units people are able to live in more scattered communities, often in

considerable isolation. This approach, generally only adopted in the last two decades, has been vital in the development of outstations and ultimately enables Aborigines to practise their own choice of lifestyle. Examples of both approaches to service provision can be cited from schooling, health and retailing.

Mobility and Education

Most education services in Central Australian Aboriginal communities are highly centralised. At primary level they consist of community schools, mostly located in large Aboriginal towns and cattle stations such as Yuendumu, Willowra, Santa Teresa and Papunya. When numbers are sufficient, schools have also been built on non-Aboriginal cattle stations or excisions from these properties, such as at Napperby, Stirling (Wilora) and Mount Ebenezer (Imanpa). Smaller Aboriginal groups, either, like Harts Range or Alcoota, on non-Aboriginal cattle stations or on outstations rarely have direct access to a local primary school.

At secondary level schools are much more strongly centralised. For many years larger Aboriginal towns such as Yuendumu have had on-site post-primary classes, but these did not offer young people the opportunity of gaining recognised scholastic qualifications. In 1987 a new system of community education, combining the post-primary sections with adult education, has been introduced into some larger communities, including Yuendumu. Children of secondary school age therefore now have the choice of staying with their families while continuing their education. However Alice Springs, the main location for secondary school facilities, is still the place where most young people must stay for this part of their education, boarding in hostels at Yirara College. Some Aboriginal children are sent further afield, primarily to Adelaide. Post-primary youngsters from the South Australian community of Fregon have often attended high school in Adelaide, and Santa Teresa, although located in the Northern Territory, has in the past sent a considerable number of students to Catholic high schools in the city. The assumption appeared to be that this would both assist their education and also their assimilation in non-Aboriginal society. This practice seems to be less prevalent nowadays, probably because Santa Teresa school itself offers post-primary training, facilities in Alice Springs have improved and assimilation is no longer promoted so assiduously.

Adult education, like other levels of education services, varies on a state/territory basis, but for Northern Territory and South Australian communities can be described as partly dispersed. In both cases larger population groups

like Yuendumu, Finke and Ernabella have resident adult educators to teach and co-ordinate local activities. They also draw on special facilities available only in towns such as Alice Springs, Darwin and Adelaide. In Western Australia adult education is much more strongly centralised, and Central Desert residents from places such as Warburton or Warakurna might well have to spend considerable periods of time in Kalgoorlie, Port Hedland or even Perth if they wished to advance their skills.

Mobility and primary education services

Yuendumu provides a clear example of the organisation and functioning of centralised primary school facilities, and of how these have been affected by recent population redistribution. In 1978 Yuendumu community school had an enrolment of about two hundred pupils with an attendance rate normally between 75 and 80 per cent. Outstation groups, then very recently formed, lacked significant numbers of school age children. It therefore seemed that the central primary school could provide an adequate service for all potential users in the community. This, however, was not necessarily the case. As some families in Yuendumu commented, the lack of schooling at outstations had effectively prevented them from moving out to join their kin. They did not see the alternative approach, leaving their school-age children to stay in Yuendumu with relatives, as acceptable, because they were worried about their welfare. Such concerns had in fact been voiced much earlier, when those in the process of establishing Nyirrpi in 1973 officially asked the Department of Education for a resident teacher.

In 1984 Yuendumu school still had an enrolment of around 200, with a percentage attendance of about 75. But in the interim the population of the central settlement had dropped significantly, from about 1100 to about 800, largely due to the stabilisation of earlier outstations and the establishment of new ones. Clearly the enrolment included a considerable number of children whose parents lived in the outstations and it is likely that a high proportion of irregular attenders belonged to this group. Outstation children had two options; either they commuted or they lived with friends or relatives during the week, and possibly joined their parents at weekends. Since most of the Yuendumu outstations are situated at least 50 kms from the main community (Fig. 5.8) commuting was rarely a viable option. Children from Wakurlpu and Ngarliykirlangu were able to make daily journeys to Yuendumu fairly easily because some of the adults had regular wage jobs and were themselves commuters. Youngsters from Wayililinyapa, 56 kms away, also sometimes commuted daily to school, although this was less straightforward because neither a truck nor a wage

earning adult was always present. As a result children from this group were more likely to be irregular attenders than those from closer to the town.

For all other outstations the only way for children to have access to schooling was for them to be left in Yuendumu. In many cases this occurred. But the problems which ensued were a continual source of worry and frustration. Parents in distant centres such as Puyurru or Nyirrpi were never sure whether their children were being properly looked after in terms of food and shelter, and were also concerned about the inevitable breakdown in family structures and parental control. In fact, during 1984, this concern proved to be well-founded when Yuendumu experienced its first major outbreak of petrol-sniffing and it was discovered that a high percentage of the culprits were children whose parents were in the outstations. Considerable vandalism occurred in Yuendumu during this outbreak, and that, combined with the worries of outstation parents, prompted the council to take the step of forcibly returning the outstation children to their homes. Inevitably this meant that their opportunities for obtaining a formal education disappeared. At that stage, the problem could only be overcome if parents abandoned their outstations and returned to Yuendumu, at least on a weekly basis. In other words, they would be forced to adopt a certain mobility process in order to meet the deficiencies of a service which they felt to be necessary for the future welfare of their children.

In 1985 continual lobbying in the political and governmental arena finally bore fruit when a teacher was appointed to establish a school at Nyirrpi. This teacher, to the relief of the community, was a long-term, committed non-Aboriginal resident of Yuendumu, a fluent Warlpiri speaker with many years of experience in the school. She had been enthusiastic about taking on this job for some time, but, until then, was unable to combat the conditions laid down by Department of Education officials in the head office in Darwin. These conditions were that a non-Aboriginal teacher could not be asked to go to Nyirrpi until the community had reliable power and reticulated water supplies, and hence the basic infrastructure needed for the construction of a standard government dwelling. Despite the fact that the teacher involved, who was prepared to operate in temporary shelter with few amenities, did not see these conditions as essential they could not be waived by the Department. Not surprisingly, these restrictions led to suspicions that the Education Department did not really want a school in an isolated community like Nyirrpi, and were using rules and regulations to thwart attempts at establishing it. It suggested the perpetuation of a policy which was essentially assimilationist. In 1986 the Nyirrpi school, with a roll of

40 pupils, was expanded through the allocation of a second non-Aboriginal teacher and two Aboriginal teacher aides were also employed.

Other communities have faced similar problems with educational services no longer located within easy reach of their population. Examples include Utopia, where in 1983 the central school was accessible to no more than 20 per cent of families. Although a school had been set up at Boundary Bore, one of the outstations, most children at other outstations missed out altogether on schooling. And few outstation families had relatives living close enough to the school to provide board. The Utopia community is highly fragmented, with each extended family in their own outstation on their own ancestral land, and those who live near the old cattle station homestead, the location of the caravan school, are also the traditional owners of the immediate area. Consequently, in contrast to Yuendumu, there is no large service centre with a population drawn from many different countries.

Fregon has also encountered problems in providing schooling for small mobile population groups. In February 1985 Fregon community school had an enrolment of 107, in six classes, including pre-school. But one month later, in March, more than 25 children on the original role were no longer attending school, in most cases because they had moved to outstations or to other Pitjantjatjara communities. The current headmaster, with more than five years experience of education at Fregon, was anxious to develop an alternative system which would ensure that outstation centre children received formal instruction. He proposed a system based on the employment of an Anangu Education Worker (AEW) at each centre, using as far as possible people from that particular population group, and paid through CDEP funds (Gobbett 1984, a and b). He envisaged that AEWs would receive training and support from qualified teachers attached to Fregon community school, people who have a roving commission, visiting outstations during the school week and providing materials and advice as necessary. As he describes, services similar to this have been established elsewhere in Central Australia, notably at Waliny-nga (Cave Hill) near Amata, and in several of the Alice Springs town camps through Yipereye. Educational services established to meet the needs of the new Hermannsburg outstations in the 1970s followed a similar structure. And in 1983 the Yirrkala community in NE Arnhem Land had this type of service, with about eight locally based outstation schools run by Aboriginal teachers supervised and assisted by an experienced non-Aboriginal teacher periodically travelling out from Yirrkala. These systems obviously provide a useful alternative to sedentary schools at outstations. However there are serious problems. First the NT Department of

Education has to be convinced that such approaches are relevant, and in fact essential if outstation people and their children are not to be further disadvantaged. Secondly the financial resources must be available. Teachers for these outstation schools have in many cases been paid not by the State or Territory government concerned but through additional grants from DAA or, as suggested for a place such as Fregon which operates CDEP, from the local community.

Many other small communities in Central Australia also have to do without schools. Non-Aboriginal families, mostly on cattle stations, use 'school of the air'. But for Aboriginal children, for whom English is a second language and who find it very difficult to learn unless they have direct contact with their teachers, this service would rarely be appropriate. Other approaches include bussing children from small communities to a centralised school. For a variety of reasons, exemplified by the situation at Ti-Tree, this has had only limited success.

Ti-Tree primary school is unusual in Central Australia because it is situated not in one of the Aboriginal communities which it serves, but in a neighbouring non-Aboriginal township, on the Stuart Highway. It has been designed to act as the primary school for the three communities on Ti-Tree - the homestead community, Pmara Jutunta and Adelaide Bore, 20 kms, 10kms and 60 kms away respectively. It is also supposed to provide education for children living at Anningie, about 50 kms away to the northwest, and for other small groups on other local cattle stations. The school was planned for a total regional enrolment of about 300 but has never approached these numbers and is unlikely to do so in the near future. As a consequence, a highly expensive complex of buildings is only partially used, and has on several occasions been referred to as the 'Ti-Tree white elephant' or the 'Central Australian Opera House'. Not only has money been wasted on this institution, but children from the more distant communities are finding the travelling distances too great to endure and many miss school. The journey from Adelaide Bore, which involves being picked up at 7.30 am and returned home about 5.00 pm, is obviously wearing for small children, some of whom are only six years old. A further disadvantage, from the community point of view, is that parents feel awkward about visiting the school because it is situated in a non-Aboriginal township. Since very few of them have themselves had any formal education, the lack of such contacts hinders the development of an understanding of what schooling entails. The school remains a facet of the white person's world, not adaptable to the needs of its Aboriginal clients.

For other communities, such as Harts Range, where no local school is available, the only solution for Aboriginal parents is to arrange for children to board elsewhere. The normal choice is Alice Springs, where children live with relatives in the town camps, or other town residences. From the social point of view it is clearly not a good solution, both because of disruption to family life and also, as in Yuendumu, because of the deep concern which parents have over what might happen to their children when they are living away from home.

Altogether, it seems that the spatial distribution of primary education services in Central Australia is currently out of kilter with the distribution of the Aboriginal population, now more scattered than in the recent past. Mobility is affected as a result. In the process they have had several effects on mobility. In some cases people stay in large communities rather than outstations so that their children can attend school. In other cases children commute daily to school. And in still other cases people do not consider school as a priority and move away to remote areas regardless of the facilities. This usually means that their children will never attend school. Although things may improve with better communications, through the operation of AUSSAT for transmission of educational programmes, the difficulties appear likely to remain into the foreseeable future. Whole generations of primary age Aboriginal children are educationally disadvantaged.

Mobility and secondary education

Aboriginal secondary schools are even more strongly centralised than primary schools. Apart from post-primary facilities available at some of the larger rural primary schools, the only significant Aboriginal secondary school in the region is Yirara College in Alice Springs. Before 1987 it catered for all levels of secondary education, up to Junior School Certificate. Although its curricula are now confined to non-certificated courses, and Aboriginal pupils in more academic streams now attend Alice Springs High School, it still provides boarding facilities for rural Aboriginal secondary students. Since it serves the whole of Central Australia many of these students have to travel considerable distances from their home communities. Boarders come from places as far away as Elliot, Fregon, Pipalyatjara, and Finke and from a wide variety of language groups - Arrernte, Anmatyerre, Pintupi, Warlpiri and different sections of Pitjantjatjara. Consequently the school population is extremely mixed and rather fragmented. Mobility related to attendance at Yirara includes periodic travelling by pupils between the school and outlying rural communities, and reciprocal travelling by parents from the

bush to town, to check on the welfare of their children. Moreover since rural communities are not universally enthusiastic about their young people living in town to attend school, these types of movement vary within the Central Australian region.

Young people who stay at Yirara spend most of the year in Alice Springs, only returning home during holidays, and moving largely on trips paid for and arranged by the Department of Education. At the beginning of each term they are asked to assemble at pick-up points and are then taken into town as groups; similarly they are provided with the means to return home. In between they may travel fairly widely on educational or recreational trips beyond the Alice Springs region - to Darwin, Adelaide and other towns, as well as to sports meetings in Aboriginal communities. Although these journeys are organised for them, and could therefore be seen as involuntary, they extend the experience of young people by showing them different country, different cultures and different people. Many of these youngsters might otherwise never move far outside the bounds of the area within which their immediate kinship network functions. Through these experiences young people risk increasing alienation from their own tight-knit Aboriginal communities. Yirara pupils tend to be less willing to accept the restrictions imposed through the social codes of their group, and, in time to come, are likely to be the young people who will step outside the conventions of Central Australian Aboriginal society. This will probably be demonstrated through increased long-distance movement, to other parts of the north such as Darwin, but also to towns outside the region altogether. Many of the older people in rural communities are concerned about the effects of such alienation, and argue that the centralisation of secondary education facilities in Alice Springs is not acceptable. The young people themselves also find their situation difficult and in many cases respond by failing to complete their courses in town. In some cases they return to their own communities after only a single term at the school and refuse to continue.

The concentration of secondary school facilities in Alice Springs not only affects the mobility of pupils themselves, but also affects the mobility of their parents. Anxieties about what is happening at Yirara or whether their children need clothes, or money, or food are common, and people from outlying communities often make considerable efforts to visit their youngsters in Alice Springs. These visits, involving the need to find suitable vehicles, fuel, cash for gifts for the schoolchildren and goods to give to other friends and relatives in town can be fairly expensive. Although some of these visits are combined with other purposes such as attending meetings, or going to see people

in the hospital, others occur solely because parents are worried about their children's welfare. If news could be obtained in other ways many of these trips would be unnecessary. Yuendumu parents as early as 1979 suggested that a direct telephone link with Yirara would be of great benefit. This was finally achieved in 1987 when the STD telephone network was extended to the community.

People in outlying Aboriginal communities have often discussed alternative secondary school services. Most seem to prefer locally based secondary schooling, which, like primary schooling, can take account of specific linguistic and cultural variations and can also allow children in that age-group to attend school while maintaining their cultural links. In effect, this would give young people both sides of the educational system, the non-Aboriginal side which would equip them to cope with the demands of that part of their lives, and the Aboriginal side, which would ensure their continuing knowledge of and involvement in the whole tradition of the group. For practical reasons, it is obviously impossible to consider a system of rural-based high schools for these fairly small populations, and even broad regional units would encounter some of the problems which have arisen at Yirara. A Warlpiri high school at Yuendumu might suit Yuendumu children fairly well, but would not necessarily be acceptable to Warlpiri children from Lajamanu, and almost certainly would be viewed with apprehension by Warlpiri from Willowra, many of whom see Yuendumu as a tough, dangerous and 'drinking' town.

Dissatisfaction with the situation in Alice Springs and at Yirara has led to many outlying groups deciding that they will not allow their young people to attend the college. Apart from the problem of cultural alienation, they worry about the way that youngsters are supervised and cared for while in town; about the kinds of trouble in which they may become involved; about the fact that, for everyone except the Arrernte, Alice Springs is an alien, and potentially dangerous place; and they distrust an establishment which tries to merge people from so many different and potentially antagonistic linguistic and tribal backgrounds. On the whole the larger communities, like Yuendumu, Papunya or Hermannsburg have been more willing to allow students, both boys and girls, to go to Alice Springs than have parents from more isolated and smaller groups. Willowra, for example, has very rarely encouraged children to take up the opportunity. When a small number of students from Willowra enrolled at Yirara in 1981/82, almost all were back home within three months and they had no intention of returning. These responses show that the secondary school system has failed to cater adequately for people's needs. Such failure has had serious consequences for future development. Many population groups lack people with sufficient formal

education to cope with administrative demands especially those involving paperwork, or to qualify for further training which would enable them to take on many of the positions currently occupied by non-Aborigines. This has retarded the whole process of self-determination, and, for even the smallest population groups, has made it much more difficult for people to achieve the types of independent life-style they may want. Recent plans to promote rural-based community education centres, combining adult education, post primary training and primary training within the same establishment aim to meet some of these problems. These educational sectors will be more closely integrated than in the past. Such centres will probably be located only in the larger communities, the Aboriginal towns. A pilot scheme has already begun at Yuendumu, and the system should be extended to all larger Aboriginal communities by 1990. These community education centres will form part of the new Northern Territory Open College.

Mobility and adult education

Adult education services in Central Australia are both centralised and dispersed. Several Northern Territory and South Australian Aboriginal communities have resident adult educators, but such facilities are not generally available in Western Australia. And in all states/territories higher order adult education services, for example tertiary or technical institutions, are located only in major towns, and there is a high level of centralisation. The relationship between the pattern of provision of adult education services and the mobility of the Aboriginal 'clients' is complex, and is affected by factors such as physical isolation, the perceived utility of the courses and whether people are willing to move away from their families and friends. A recent survey of TAFE in the Northern Territory (Loveday and Young, 1984) showed that Central Australian Aborigines were disadvantaged compared to their fellows in the Top End, and that, within Central Australia, access to these services was uneven. These aspects obviously affect mobility.

Most resident adult educators are based in larger communities such as Yuendumu, Papunya or Santa Teresa, and people living in outstations or in cattle station Aboriginal towns have little chance of receiving much assistance. Resident field-based adult educators, such as at Yuendumu, teach or co-ordinate the teaching of a broad range of skills including driving motor vehicles, basic english literacy and numeracy, the use of video equipment and film production, technical and trade skills, book-keeping and commercial skills. They also run courses designed specifically to support people in particular jobs, such as school-teachers, health workers or shop assistants. Many of these courses are vocationally oriented. Comments such as 'What's the point

of doing further training if there is no job available at the end of it?' indicate that most Aborigines interviewed during the 1983 survey wanted the vocational emphasis. Because of the stress on job skills adult education has been seen as largely irrelevant for people living in outstations where paid employment is rare. On the whole, therefore, most of those who attend adult education classes live in the Aboriginal towns and do not have to travel far to participate. This does not mean that outstation people have no interest in adult education. On the contrary, courses which teach skills appropriate to outstation living have proved very popular. The work of the Applied Technology Unit at the Community College of Central Australia has shown that education aimed at providing outstation people with skills to enhance their self-sufficiency is popular. People in remote outstations have asked instructors to come out from Alice Springs and teach them about basic bore and pump maintenance, and some have also been enthusiastic enough to attend such courses in town. Driver education is another course regarded as useful by outstation people, and in some communities groups have asked the adult educator to visit them specifically to provide such training. This has occurred at Yuendumu.

Despite these opportunities, the number of field-based adult educators in Central Australia is by no means sufficient to provide even basic services for everyone, and many people have no access whatsoever. Estimates suggest that in 1983 70 per cent of Central Australian Aborigines were without adult education services (Loveday and Young 1984, 21). They could only obtain assistance by moving. However such mobility was rare. Reasons included lack of information about the opportunities available, lack of preliminary qualifications which would enable them to benefit from courses, and unwillingness to move away from the home community for extended periods of time.

People who do not have direct access to the services of a resident adult educator also lack information on the training opportunities which exist elsewhere. In general such knowledge is channelled from centrally located educational administrators, usually in Alice Springs, to their field-based staff, and other people are bypassed. Although regional offices employ itinerant field staff, who theoretically should concentrate on filling in the gaps caused by the absence of resident field staff, these people work in response to requests from outlying communities. Most of these requests tend to come from people living in places which already have a resident adult educator. This problem of communication demonstrates the breadth of the adult educator's role, not by any means confined to teaching, but also covering many vital aspects of community information, often in an advisory capacity.

Lack of access to adult education may also reflect poor provision of education at primary level. Outside the larger communities, many Central Australian Aborigines have, until recent years, had poor access to any formal education. This effectively prevents them from taking part in other vocationally oriented courses. In Utopia, for example, the lack of a school until the 1970s meant that few adults had even minimal literacy. They are well aware of this deficiency, and are particularly concerned because it forces them to employ outsiders in managerial positions, and perpetuates a situation of dependency which they would like to abolish. But their needs for general adult education in english and numeracy have not as yet been met because they lack an adult educator, and do not know who to approach to make their wishes known. People in other cattle station communities, such as Ti-Tree and Willowra, face similar problems.

Even if people have the relevant educational background to allow them to enrol for further education courses elsewhere most are loath to do so. This depends on where the courses are offered, and the length of absence required. On the whole, people in Central Australian communities do not want to attend courses run in Darwin or other northern centres, or in more distant locations such as Adelaide, particularly if the courses are for periods of several months. Since Darwin is the main centre for the Northern Territory, this has hindered the training of key people in Central Australian communities; most young men who have attended power house operator courses, for example, have come from the Top End, and Central Australian communities are forced to continue employing outsiders in these jobs. The majority of students attending the Teacher Training courses at Batchelor College have also been from the Top End. While this problem has been partly alleviated by the introduction of Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE), which allows students to complete their first, and possibly second, years of training in their own communities, Central Australians would still, on the whole, be under-represented in these programmes on a numerical basis.

Adult education courses run in Alice Springs are more attractive. Not only is the town more familiar to adults from outlying communities, but it is possible to maintain continuous contact with family and friends. However most people would still prefer short-term courses. Healthworker training courses, for example, usually run for only a week at a time, and can normally be undertaken along with other family commitments. Considering that most healthworkers are married women with children, this is an important provision. Courses run by the Institute for Aboriginal Development, similarly, can meet such needs, and since accommodation is often arranged, children can accompany

parents, and husbands can feel assured that their wives will be looked after.

In general, adult education services do not exert a strong influence on the mobility of rural-dwelling Central Australian Aborigines. This does not mean that people do not want the service; it demonstrates that adult education is still provided in ways which make it hard for people to participate. The priorities of living in one's own community, with one's own family, on one's own land and according to one's own desires tend to outweigh the perceived advantages of going away for such educational reasons.

Mobility and health services

Health facilities have, from the early establishment of mission and government communities, exerted a strong influence on people's mobility. In early contact times, when the poor health of Aborigines was recognised, medical authorities tried to solve the problem by forcing people to attend the new health clinics when they were sick. The approach was primarily paternalistic, based on the assumption that skilled non-Aboriginal health personnel knew best and need not explain what they were doing or what remedies they were using. Not surprisingly many Aborigines were frightened to come and ran away. At later stages, as contact became more constant, some of this fear was lost, and people began to come to health centres because they knew they could be helped. However, while they came to appreciate the assistance given by nurses and medical officers, it is doubtful whether the existence of the health services in centralised communities was a major factor causing Aborigines to move there on a permanent basis.

More recently the influence of health services on population mobility has depended more on how these services are organised, especially on whether they are centralised or decentralised. Here the situation is somewhat similar to that of education, although Aboriginal control over health administration in Central Australia is still stronger than that exerted on the provision of schooling.

Health services for Aborigines in Central Australia include outstation services, clinics situated in rural communities, and regional services, mostly located in Alice Springs. In general the complexity and comprehensiveness of these services increases with the degree of centralisation. Outstation health services are provided by Aboriginal healthworkers, and cater only for basic first aid and the specific needs of the local residents. Rural community clinics are staffed by non-Aboriginal nurses together with

Aboriginal healthworkers, cover most day-to-day demands by residents, and have direct links to regional health centres so that advice about less common needs can be sought. And regional health centres are staffed by doctors as well as other health personnel, and deal with most health problems, except for serious illnesses requiring specialist treatment such as chemotherapy. Aboriginal-controlled medical services deviate from this pattern because most employ qualified medical practitioners operating from the rural health clinics. Examples of these different types of health service, and their effects on mobility, are drawn from a number of communities - Yuendumu, Mt Allen, Ti-Tree, Utopia and the Pitjantjatjara Lands.

Yuendumu and its outstations provide an example of health services which are partly centralised and partly dispersed. Before outstations were firmly established in the late 1970s, the entire community relied on a large health centre, concentrating on basic health care but also including some preventive medical support, such as organising child welfare clinics. Most people in Yuendumu visited the clinic when necessary, although nurses and Aboriginal health workers did periodic rounds of camps to see older, less mobile people and others whom they knew were sick. Although the clinic was available to everyone, it tended to be used most heavily by women with young children, and was one of the main focal points in town where those groups met socially. If young women were absent from their homes people knew that they were most likely to be found at the clinic or the shop. When outstation groups formed, nurses established a routine whereby one outstation resident took responsibility for a basic first aid kit, and for medication prescribed for any members of the group. Medical supplies were issued when outstation people came into Yuendumu, and replenished as necessary. But those responsible for administering these supplies had little or no health training. Thus in most cases outstation people still had to find transport and travel to the main health centre if they needed treatment. The alternative was for nurses from the centre to carry out periodic field visits. But, because outstations were still in the establishment phase and had widely fluctuating populations such mobile services were difficult to operate efficiently. Eventually they were restricted to larger outstations, such as Nyirrpi. In fact the outstation movement was adversely affected by this centralised system of service provision because some people, particularly the elderly, had health problems which forced them to remain permanently near the clinic.

Yuendumu today, with its recent growth of outstations, requires a system of health services appropriate both to a large centre and to a considerable number of small dispersed groups. Ideally these services would be run by a core staff

at the central clinic along with resident health workers in each outstation. As early as 1979/80 this was perceived to be the best solution and a number of outstation residents were chosen for health-worker training. However problems have occurred. Funds for these positions, possibly for up to ten extra health workers, are difficult to obtain. Moreover there is no guarantee that the outstation health workers will actually live in their designated localities. Some were never firmly committed to living in the outstations, some were from family groups other than the main ones responsible for the outstations, some have had to give up outstation living because of other commitments, or because of health problems, and some have continued to live in the main community because they want to advance their skills beyond those required for outstation health workers. Because of these problems on-site outstation health services are still lacking and people continue to come to Yuendumu specifically to visit the clinic. These visits can present problems because people are often unaware of how long they will have to stay. In some cases they find themselves having to wait for one of the doctor's periodic visits from Alice Springs, or they may even be referred to Alice Springs hospital. This means that they must depend on relatives and friends for accommodation, food and perhaps clothing, and it is not uncommon to see makeshift camps housing the families of sick outstation people springing up alongside established houses and shelters.

Health needs also force Yuendumu people to move to Alice Springs, and every Friday a Toyota-load of patients travels the 300 kms to the base hospital in town. Although many may return on the same day, others remain in town for indefinite periods. More urgent cases are also evacuated on other days, sometimes using the Royal Flying Doctor Service. All these patients come to form a Yuendumu enclave in Alice Springs, with some members partly resident at the hospital and some, in the case of out-patients, living with friends or relatives. Many are forced to depend on assistance from town-based kin and their presence helps to put pressure on town facilities. They are also often joined by other visitors from Yuendumu, anxious for their welfare. People eagerly await bulletins sent from the hospital to the Yuendumu clinic, and want to visit sick friends if at all possible to reassure themselves about their health. When young children are hospitalised their mothers have to spend periods in town with them, usually having to arrange their own accommodation, and also having to find others to look after those members of their families left in Yuendumu. Questions about why Yuendumu people visited Alice Springs showed that, in 1978/79, health needs were of major significance. Over half of the 77 adult women interviewed in the survey said that their last visit had been primarily to go to the hospital (Young 1981b, 326). Altogether,

therefore, it could be said that access to health services exerts a considerable influence on the mobility of Yuendumu people, and that this to some extent indicates that the present organisation is not entirely appropriate to the needs of the population.

Yuendumu's situation is not unique, and would be paralleled by many other large communities with satellite outstations. However some other communities have adopted a slightly different approach to health care provision. The Urupuntja community, most of whose members live on Utopia, a former cattle station which came under Aboriginal ownership in 1976, has consistently emphasised the need for an Aboriginal-controlled health service. This service, the Urupuntja Medical Service, is largely dispersed, to correspond with the dispersal of the population into ten or more separate outstation groups. Each group has a resident Aboriginal health worker, operating from a caravan where equipment and supplies can be stored, and the health workers themselves are supported by a non-Aboriginal doctor and two nurses, living at the community centre. These staff, unlike their counterparts in Yuendumu, spend most of their time on the move visiting the outstations, and people expect to receive their basic health care in their own communities rather than having to make frequent visits to the centre. The advantages of this type of arrangement are recognised not only by Utopia people but also by Aborigines living elsewhere. As Nathan and Leichleitner (1983) report, people in other outstations comment about the need for health caravans and resident healthworkers. They also stress the advantages of having their own resident doctor rather than having to go to Alice Springs for specialised medical treatment.

Utopia's health services essentially reflect the stated desires of the Aboriginal group, and this clearly accounts for their success. People have argued that health services provided by the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services fail to take people's wishes into account, ignore social factors and lie outside Aboriginal control. Social factors can certainly be extremely important. At Mt Allen, for example, the government health authorities finally responded in 1981 to numerous requests for a local clinic by funding a resident health-worker, housed in a caravan. When the caravan first arrived it was used by non-Aboriginal residents for supplementary accommodation, and when it was finally installed in the Aboriginal camp there were problems with finding an appropriate person as health-worker. Because formal education had only recently been introduced in Mt Allen, few adults had sufficient basic numeracy and literacy to take on the job, and a Yuendumu person, with Mt Allen connections, was appointed. However since that person really preferred to

live in Yuendumu, where most of his kin were, he was rarely at Mt Allen. The Mt Allen people were still forced to make frequent journeys to the Yuendumu clinic, and Yuendumu staff in their turn had to organise frequent health visits to Mt Allen. Subsequently there have been various attempts to find the right person to provide continuous primary health care at Mt Allen, but none have been totally successful. Mt Allen people still rely on the Yuendumu clinic for health care.

Many other Aboriginal communities lack both centralised and decentralised health services and mobility is essential if people are to find help. These less satisfactory solutions occur commonly on non-Aboriginal cattle stations and some Aboriginal-owned properties. Ti-Tree clinic provides a good example of this type of system.

The Northern Territory DHCS runs a clinic in Ti-Tree township, staffed by one non-Aboriginal nurse and about four Aboriginal healthworkers. This clinic is designed to care for both the population of the township, which is largely non-Aboriginal, and for people living on surrounding cattle stations, including Stirling, Napperby, Anningie and the Aboriginal-owned property of Ti-Tree itself. Access occurs through visits to the clinic, usually with transport arranged by the patients or their friends, or through field trips regularly carried out by clinic staff. The lack of proper health facilities in the communities concerned undoubtedly contributes to the high mobility of their residents to Ti-Tree township. In early 1984, for example, it would have been rare for a day to pass without some vehicle or other making a health-related trip over the 25 km from Ti-Tree station to the clinic. While these trips were basically for health purposes the vehicles were also often used by others who wished to go drinking at the roadhouse, and this caused some anxiety among their families. Moreover, most of the Aboriginal health-workers had to commute daily to work. Unlike their non-Aboriginal counterparts they were not considered to be eligible for government housing in Ti-Tree township. Because of constant transport problems, particularly during school holidays when there were no school buses, one of the health workers commonly camped in a humpy in the mulga scrub which surrounds the town. In general the fact that the clinic was not in the community, but in a 'whitefella' township where 'whitefella' behaviour was expected, made it hard for people to feel at home in the surroundings and almost certainly retarded their understanding of how they could make use of the facilities offered by non-Aboriginal medicine.

For people in the more distant communities such as Anningie (about 80 kms away) or Napperby (over 150 kms away) the

problem of regular contact to health services is obviously greater. While they do receive periodic visits, usually on set days so that they know when to stay in camp, at any other time they must make the effort to reach the Ti-Tree clinic and, because of transport difficulties, sometimes find this difficult. As with their fellows on Ti-Tree station, the lack of an on-the-spot service has hindered their understanding of the system and made it harder for them to adapt in appropriate ways. In addition the Ti-Tree clinic staff feel that the present arrangements put them under considerable pressure because they have to drive long distances to other communities and, if any staff are absent, have difficulty in carrying their workloads.

As the example of Urupuntja Health Service indicated, Central Australian Aborigines have clear priorities as far as the contribution of non-Aboriginal health services are concerned. These are related to mobility. They feel strongly that Aboriginal communities should, where possible, have resident doctors; and that where the community is dispersed, the health personnel and especially Aboriginal health personnel should also be dispersed. Mobile services based on centralised clinics seem to be regarded as much less satisfactory. One overall aim of Aboriginal controlled services, at the primary health care level, is to reduce mobility as much as possible. Another aim, the essential reason for emphasising the superiority of these services, is to control both the activities of health employees and the services which they provide. Two other Aboriginal medical services - the Pitjantjatjara Homelands Health Service and the Nganampa Health Service - provide examples of the implementation of such ideas in the Pitjantjatjara Lands.

The Pitjantjatjara Homelands Health Service (PHHS) came into being in the late 1970s when the Pitjantjatjara Council applied for funds to establish an Aboriginal-controlled health service for people in the region close to the borders of the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. Apart from the issue of control, the need for such a service arose from inter-state conflicts over methods of health provision in this remote area, and the fact that although existing service provision was centralised the population was highly dispersed. A health centre and administrative base was set up at Kalka, near Pipalyatjara. As Ivan Baker, the chairman of the health service, noted 'this is a neutral area, no-one could say that's our health service, this one is for all the Anangu in this country'. The health service was staffed with a doctor, two non-Aboriginal nurses and a educator, and Aboriginal health workers trained with the assistance of the Northern Territory DHC health worker education programme in Alice Springs. While staff were based at Kalka they were expected

to travel widely through the Pitjantjatjara Homelands and, as far as possible, provide primary health care in the places where people lived. Control of the organisation lay in the hands of a committee, with members drawn from Aboriginal groups living in the area, and with ultimate responsibility for hiring and firing staff.

In 1983 a similar type of Aboriginal-controlled body, the Nganampa Health Council, was set up to provide health care in the eastern part of Pitjantjatjara Lands, centring on the communities of Amata, Pukatja (Ernabella), Aparawatatja (Fregon), Iwantja/Indulkana and Mimili and their associated homelands. Its objectives are very similar to those of PHHS - Aboriginal control of the organisation and its staff; training Aboriginal health workers as the main agents of primary health care; incorporation of Aboriginal medical practices with non-Aboriginal methods of healing; and provision not only of primary health care but also of preventative medicine and community education for improvement of nutritional status and living conditions. Nganampa Health Council operates through four units located in the four main centres, each staffed by a doctor, non-Aboriginal nurses, Aboriginal health workers, an administrator and a Community appointed Anangu director. As with PHHS, staff are expected to travel widely within the regions which they serve, and to meet the people's needs within their own region.

With both PHHS and Nganampa Health Council a main aim is to provide people with primary health care in the places where they live. People therefore do not expect to have to move often for health reasons, although when they require more specific assistance they will obviously have to do so. Both services have trained resident doctors and therefore many problems can be dealt with at the Pitjantjatjara centres. This contrasts with the situation in places such as Yuendumu where nurses often have to seek advice from Alice Springs based doctors, and patients either have to be kept within easy access of the clinic until the doctor makes his periodic visit, or have to be sent to town for relatively minor complaints. More major problems, in either type of service, mean evacuation to Alice Springs, and the Royal Flying Doctor Service assists both government and Aboriginal-controlled services with the necessary transport. But, on the whole, people living in communities which have Aboriginal-controlled health services seem to be able to obtain the assistance they need without having to move as frequently than do people who receive health care through the government bodies. This reflects the priorities which they stress, and which they are able to exercise because they exert control. While these aspects are extremely positive, it must be acknowledged that there are problems. The Aboriginal-controlled organisations themselves depend on

government funding, they have to demonstrate complete efficiency in their organisation, and they do employ a relatively large number of skilled staff. While in the long run the decentralised type of service which they run may be cheaper simply because health care is better and fewer people become seriously ill, public bodies still tend to weigh up costs in a more pragmatic way, and see centralisation as the logical way to go.

Mobility and retail services

All Aboriginal families in Central Australia now derive a large part of their sustenance from purchased foods, and require many other items such as clothing, bedding, tools, household equipment and, when they can afford it, electrical goods and other consumer items. As a result retail stores have become essential service points and shopping is an activity which generates population movement. The development of stores as foci for travel is not entirely new. For many Central Australian Aborigines early contact with non-Aboriginal miners and pastoralists was established through the exchange of goods, often for services and people congregated near the homesteads of newly established cattle stations such as Coniston, Napperby and Ti-Tree (Young 1984, 6). In areas beyond the bounds of pastoral development Aborigines came together at mining camps, and at other centres where natural resources such as water were available, and in drought periods they formed groups of several hundred. Recognition of the problems caused by pressure of such groups on limited food and water supplies was a main factor in the establishment of ration depots, like that set up for the western Warlpiri at Tanami during World War II. These depots were also, of course, a preliminary step in the assimilation process, and particularly important in furthering the population concentration which was central to those policies. At ration depots goods were usually distributed without expectation of return, although a labour component was sometimes included. As far as the Aborigines were concerned, they established at least a partial dependence on goods not naturally available within the environment, and, when cash became a feature of the economy, the purchase of such goods came to be expected. Ration depots and trading posts could therefore be called the 'prototype' of stores (Young 1984, 5-7).

The development of conventional types of retail stores in Aboriginal communities followed the introduction of wages in payment for labour rather than reward solely in the kind. In both government and mission communities these stores were initially operated in a highly paternalistic way, a channel through which people could learn skills such as how to 'manage money', or how to select nutritious, although

sometimes unpopular food. Managers and staff were almost invariably non-Aboriginal, and communities had little input into the enterprise. However in the early 1970s, with the adoption of the policy of self-management, Aboriginal involvement in enterprises was perceived to be of great importance. Since the retail stores were often the only commercial enterprises in rural communities, they were seen to be the obvious point at which to introduce change. Most came under Aboriginal ownership, usually as incorporated bodies with Aboriginal directors. But management remained almost entirely in non-Aboriginal hands, and therefore true community involvement in and understanding of how the store operated was in fact very limited. While a detailed discussion, such as that in Young 1984, is not relevant here, these issues do have a bearing on population movement. People's preferences about which stores to use are still often related to their experiences and feelings about the store employees who serve them, and, as the implications of ownership become more clearly understood, people begin to feel an obligation to shop at the store in which they, as community members, have an interest.

Central Australian Aboriginal retail services today consist largely of community-owned stores sited in central locations. Although many provide the only retail service for their particular community, some may compete with a few other more specialised outlets, for example local butcheries or bakeries. People on Aboriginal-owned cattle stations also normally have their own shops, but people who live in small groups on non-Aboriginal owned properties often have to depend on shops run by the pastoralist or his family, and thus exert no control over the enterprise. With the establishment of excisions for some of these groups, such shops may now be quite inaccessible to their former Aboriginal customers, and considerable effort and organisation may be needed in order to do daily shopping. Outstation dwellers also, with a few exceptions, lack easy access to shops and in most cases have to travel to the large centralised stores, using whatever transport is available. Alternative methods of service provision for those with no local store include mobile services run by the central shops, or hawkers, operating without a permanent retail base. Different forms of population mobility tend to be related to these different forms of services.

Large centralised community stores, such as those at Yuendumu, Fregon, Finke or Willowra, provide good examples of the influence of retailing on population movement. Yuendumu store, for example, is a main focus of movement, often on a daily basis, within the main settlement. Because of factors such as lack of storage facilities, prevalence of day-to-day rather than weekly budgeting, and the tendency to consume food quickly, most families in Yuendumu need to

visit the shop almost every day. Shopping activity tends to be concentrated at times when people with jobs are free to take time off, or when school breaks occur, and therefore many people shop half way through the morning or in the later part of the afternoon. Women without wage jobs often meet their children and husbands at the shop during those periods, and spend as much time socialising as they do purchasing goods. Apart from daily shopping, purchasing is also concentrated on those days when wage earners are paid, or when unemployment or pension and benefit cheques are distributed. On those occasions far larger amounts of food, and other goods such as clothing or bedding are bought, and very large sums of money are taken by the store. In one two hour trading period on a Friday pension day afternoon in June 1982 the store's takings exceeded \$17000. Altogether the store is a major focus for intra-community movement, and a place where one always goes if one wants to find anyone.

Centralised stores like that at Yuendumu also provide services for smaller groups of people living in adjacent outstations or perhaps in other Aboriginal communities. When Yuendumu outstations were in an early stage of development the store attempted to provide them with a periodic mobile service, but, because of the instability of the outstation populations at that time, found that approach not feasible. Since that early attempt in 1978 most outstation groups have depended directly on the central store, with people coming in to do their shopping at the same time as they collect their social security benefits. Various comments have been made about the possibility of establishing small independent outstation stores but, with the improvement in transport facilities to and from Yuendumu and a better understanding of the economic difficulties often affecting small stores, most of these have gone no further. Small outstation stores, as Bagshaw (1982) has described for the Top End outstation of Jimarda, tend to be dominated by one family group and to be a divisive influence. And financial management, in a group where only a few individuals have any experience of this type, presents problems. At present, therefore, only Nyirrpi has its own store. This was started in 1984 with encouragement and assistance from two resident missionaries who provided transport to carry stock from Yuendumu, wrote out orders and kept the books. In 1985 the Nyirrpi residents indicated that they wished to control the store themselves and asked for ADC assistance. The grant which they received covered the improvements to the building and the purchase of a small generator, a caravan for the manager and his family, and basic stock with which to start trading. The manager's salary came from store takings. By the end of 1986 it employed two Aboriginal women who had gained considerable management skills and were able to carry out most of the

daily tasks without close supervision. Its ties with the Yuendumu store had largely been broken as stock was being purchased directly from Alice Springs. With the upgrading of Nyirrpi to full community status, and consequent increase in investment in the infrastructure, this store becomes even more important and ADC have recently agreed to allocate funds for a new building. This decentralisation of retail services has undoubtedly helped to provide for people's needs in a way which they feel to be much more appropriate.

People's use of specific shops depends not only on physical access to them, but also on their experiences of the service with which they are provided. Where the service is poor and other facilities are within reach, people may well ignore the local store and go elsewhere; in contrast, when people have established a lasting and beneficial contact with the store keeper, they may continue to use that store even though they no longer live nearby. These characteristics are not peculiar to Aboriginal shopping patterns, but common in all sectors of society. One difference, however, is that Aborigines in Central Australian rural communities are often so far from other places that they are forced to accept a poor service, and high prices. Their need for constant access to purchased foods plus their preference for direct contact means that, unlike their non-Aboriginal counterparts in isolated pastoral properties, they rarely use mail order firms.

Examples of store-related mobility which is not a direct result of physical access include Mt Allen and Ti-Tree/Aileron. Mt Allen community, like others on Aboriginal-owned pastoral properties, owns the local store but has so far relied on non-Aboriginal managers to cope with its operation. While these managers have generally been efficient from the commercial point of view, they have not always operated the store in ways appropriate or congenial to the community. One manager was notorious for refusing entry to the store to children in general and to anyone else she felt to be dirty and dishevelled; she also treated most people as if they were recalcitrant children, remonstrating with them about how they spent their own money, and taking little notice when they tentatively suggested that she should stock certain types of goods. Although, because of the convenience of the store and lack of opportunity to go elsewhere, many people continued to shop there, there was a noticeable move of Mt Allen families on periodic shopping expeditions to Yuendumu, 45kms away. This partly reflected the much greater choice available in this big store, but it was also acknowledged, both by the Mt Allen people themselves and by their friends in Yuendumu, to be due to the tension and unpleasantness which often arose when one shopped at Mt Allen. While it was theoretically possible for

the Mt Allen community to sack their store manager, as eventually they did, such a step was very difficult in practice because people were concerned about finding a replacement, knew they could not run the business themselves, and, in typical Aboriginal way, had developed a social relationship and therefore a sense of responsibility for that person.

Past movement to and fro between Pmara Jutunta (Ti-Tree) and the Aileron store represents the opposite situation. During their long period of residence at Aileron families now living at Pmara Jutunta became accustomed to using the local store, and developed a friendly and mutually respectful relationship with the pastoralists who operated it. Although they had moved over 60 kms away, and had much better physical access to the stores at Ti-Tree Well and Ti-Tree Station, they continued to shop at Aileron, making major purchases there on pension days. This pattern was so well established that it was recognised that few Pmara Jutunta people would be at home every second Thursday; they would all be off to Aileron in the community truck. Although this pattern changed when Pmara Jutunta received ADC funding to start their own store the continuation of this movement pattern is a good example of how a strong social relationship can influence behaviour in ways which might not otherwise be anticipated.

These examples all represent shopping-related movement in places with large, centralised stores, generally owned by the Aboriginal group. In many other Aboriginal communities no such stores exist, and people have had to depend either on the services of shops owned and operated by the local pastoralist or other non-Aborigines, or on buying their goods from hawkers. Harts Range provides an example of the first type of situation. The Atitgere community at Harts Range have for many years used a shop situated within easy walking distance, and owned and operated by a non-Aboriginal woman. About 30 years ago she came to the area prospecting for precious and semi-precious stones and has been running the store for at least the last 18 years. Many Atitgere families have known her throughout that time, and have developed a strong positive relationship with her. Recent discussions on the takeover of the store by the community have given rise to comments such as ...'we got rations from Pat, she can't leave here'..., ...'we were lucky she found us you know, no one else fed us and she's the one that is still feeding us now and giving us cheque money'. In 1985 it seemed likely that, under the new arrangements being negotiated through ADC, who had been asked for a grant to purchase the business for the Atitgere community, the former owner might be asked to stay on as manager, at least for an initial period. The ADC funded Aboriginal purchase of the store in 1986. The Atitgere people are fortunate in that

they are in a position to negotiate the purchase of the store to gain control, and that they feel they have received a reasonable service. This is by no means the case for other communities on non-Aboriginal owned cattle stations. At Napperby, for example, people from the Laramba community continued to use the pastoralist's store at the station homestead, although they themselves had moved to a block of land several kilometres away. Not only did they have to put up with paternalistic attitudes from the store staff, but the shop was now in a highly inconvenient position. They could not purchase this business, and their only option was to obtain a grant to set up their own shop. This occurred in 1986 and the Laramba people now operate their own shop with Aboriginal management.

Communities which have had to rely on hawking services, because of the lack of local shops, include Utopia and many of the smaller groups on non-Aboriginal pastoral properties in eastern Arrernte country. The Urupuntja community at Utopia, prior to 1985, had no central shop although there was a small privately-owned business located near the community centre. Many people relied on the periodic visits of Alice Springs-based hawkers, who would visit not only the central settlement at Three Bores, but also several of the outstation groups on the former pastoral property. Although people realised that hawkers had a very limited range of goods, and that they were generally expensive, the convenience of being able to shop at home outweighed this. Moreover, excluding the small private shop at Three Bores, there were no large stores closer than Alice Springs, over 200 kms away. The hawkers therefore were able to operate a fairly lucrative business, without a great deal of competition. Urupuntja's new store, funded by ADC and located on the Sandover Highway at a point more convenient to most of the outstations than Three Bores, opened in 1985.

The discussion so far has focussed on mobility when there are shopping facilities within a community, or when these are periodically provided in the location where people live. A common factor is that, other things being equal, people generally prefer not to have to move too extensively for shopping, and that decentralisation of this service, like others already discussed, is viewed favourably. Situations do arise, however, where it is necessary to travel to shop, or where, because one is travelling for extended periods, it is necessary to buy goods elsewhere. In these cases there may be extensive use of community retail facilities, or other road-side stores, by parties of people from outside the area; and, in the case of Alice Springs, where there is a wide selection of specialised shops, expeditions for specific types of purchasing occurs.

Because most rural communities are located away from main highways, use of local stores by outsiders is fairly limited. It does occur to some extent at Yuendumu, because passing tourists and Aboriginal travellers on their way through to Halls Creek on the Tanami Road stop to purchase fuel. But it is of much greater importance in the Pitjantjatjara Lands, particularly in places such as Amata and Pipalyatjara. These two communities are situated on the main highway through from the Stuart Highway to Warburton, in a region where the Aborigines themselves are profoundly mobile. Different Pitjantjatjara groups come together for many reasons - ceremonies, official meetings, recreation such as football matches, visits to friends living elsewhere - and travel extensively in the process. This can have a marked effect on these conveniently placed shops. Amata, for example, has often experienced a sudden influx of people on their way to Pipalyatjara or Ernabella, requiring large amounts of food and fuel. On some occasions the demand has been so great that new stocks just received on the regular fortnightly order have been so heavily depleted that not enough remains to meet the needs of the Amata population. Similar things have occurred at Pipalyatjara. These events cause problems for the store keepers, particularly when replacements of bulky goods have to be made. It is not uncommon for stores in this area to suddenly have to order additional plane loads of fresh foods, fruit and vegetables from Alice Springs.

Alice Springs is an obvious attraction for shopping trips from outlying communities. However movement specifically for such reasons is perhaps less marked than one might expect, particularly as most non-Aborigines in Central Australia see such trips as absolutely essential. In a survey of prime reasons for movement to Alice Springs from Yuendumu and Willowra in 1978/79 shopping was hardly mentioned, although undoubtedly many people who went to town for other purposes such as attending meetings, visiting relatives or going to the hospital, also shopped before returning home. More recently shopping trips to Alice Springs have probably become more common. This has occurred for several reasons - improvements in transport, increased availability of vehicles, and the establishment of some new chain stores in Alice Springs. Yuendumu, with the sealing of the first 120 kms of the Tanami Road, is now only three and a half hours from town, compared to about five or six previously, and daily round trips are quite possible. And the opening first of Coles, and now of K-Mart, has provided people with a source for buying relatively cheap clothing, tools, bedding and other equipment. Problems with some of the outlying stores have also at times forced people to move to Alice Springs to shop. Following the collapse and threatened liquidation of the Yuendumu store in 1981, many families who had vehicles joined together to make shopping trips to town.

Although this pattern did not really persist with the restocking of the Yuendumu store, it did make people more aware of that alternative, and possibly increased the tendency to this type of movement at later times.

CHAPTER 9

THE MEANING OF MEETINGS

The introduction of administration, whether by government, by mission, or under other auspices, inevitably meant that official meetings became part of daily life. These meetings concerned many issues, such as education, health, social problems, financial arrangements and other aspects about which decisions had to be made. In the earlier stages of the establishment and growth of large centralised Aboriginal communities in Central Australia these meetings almost invariably involved only non-Aborigines, the teachers, nurses and advisers, and decisions were taken on behalf of Aboriginal residents without asking for their views. During the 1960s, as the numbers of younger Aborigines with proficiency in English increased and as their presence at official meetings began to be seen as a valuable tool in the process of assimilation, some organisations with Aboriginal membership were set up. These included bodies such as Mission Councils, which incorporated one or two devout Aboriginal church-goers, and Village Councils, usually consultative bodies designed for liaison between the settlement administrators and the majority of the population. Because these bodies were still controlled by non-Aborigines, and were run along conventional non-Aboriginal lines, Aboriginal input was generally minimal. Meetings held outside communities were infrequent, and would rarely have required Aboriginal participants to go further than Alice Springs. It is hardly surprising that, under those circumstances, Aborigines viewed such official meetings as primarily 'whitefella business', in which participation was involuntary rather than voluntary.

The change to the era of self-management has, to a large extent, brought about a transformation in the involvement of Aborigines in such meetings, and has had a marked effect on associated mobility. From the early 1970s official bodies, such as community councils, school committees, social clubs and housing associations have all come at least nominally under Aboriginal control. Regardless of whether or not Aborigines actually exert the control which, theoretically, they exercise, the existence of these bodies means that Aboriginal leaders are now in constant demand as meeting-goers. Visits by government officials also lead to many local meetings which Aborigines are required to attend. People from both Northern Territory, State and Federal government departments frequently visit Aboriginal communities to discuss anything from the drilling of water bores in outstations to the financial problems of the local store or the possibilities of alleviating youth

unemployment. Moreover the establishment of centralised Aboriginal organisations, such as the Central Land Council, the Pitjantjatjara Council, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, has also affected Aboriginal involvement in such activities. Most of these bodies are Alice Springs based, and membership of their councils involves a considerable amount of travelling, not only to and fro between the home community and Alice Springs but also further afield to places such as Darwin, Fitzroy Crossing, Broome or Perth. In addition to these groups private organisations, such as mission and church groups, mining and exploration companies and other agencies frequently assemble people for discussion and decisions. All these bodies make heavy demands on both individuals and groups in rural communities. This not only results in high mobility for some people but can also lead to a severe problem in co-ordination.

Sporting and recreational activities also lead to meetings, and have enhanced Aboriginal mobility. As with administrative and service delivery meetings, these activities have increased greatly since the early 1970s, and people from rural communities now come together for football matches, extensive sports carnivals, rock concerts and other attractions.

Both official meetings and recreational meetings take place in a variety of locations. Many occur within the rural communities, both in the centralised settlements and in outstations; or in Alice Springs. But some take place in towns and cities much further afield. In other cases people decide to hold their meetings in isolated places, where there is no resident community, and where they feel free of most of the constraints present in larger settlements. The choice of location type is related to the purpose and format of meeting. Meetings called by administrative authorities almost always take place in the rural communities, or, if outstations are concerned, perhaps at outstations. But meetings of members of Aboriginal organisations may purposely be held in an unsettled 'bush' location, where participants can camp together in a more relaxed environment and socialise in ways appropriate to Aboriginal life-styles.

An important characteristic of meetings and recreational get togethers are that they are multi-purpose. People who go to football matches use the opportunity to see friends and family from other communities; the same occurs when people attend meetings of the Central Land Council in Alice Springs. Hence, although only specific community representatives may actually be participating in the meeting, other people may accompany them on the journey. Commonly a meeting which is only scheduled to take a couple

of days may result in an absence from home of a week or more, simply because people have extended their visits for other reasons. These extended meetings, where participants are accompanied by a crowd of kin and friends, are usually confined to the Central Australian region. However, when meetings are in more distant locations and when participants travel by plane or by pre-arranged official car only the actual representatives go. In most Aboriginal communities one quickly becomes aware of the fact that such long distance moves are often made by the same individuals, people who have the ambition to apply for membership of regional and national bodies, are elected because others know that they can cope with the problems involved, and who are generally trusted to act as 'front people'. The pressure on such individuals is considerable.

Mobility and official meetings within Central Australia

Characteristics affecting mobility and meetings include the main purpose of the gathering, where it occurs, who attends and how long an absence takes place. As implied earlier, these characteristics show great diversity.

For the most part 'official' or 'formal' meetings occur in larger communities or in Alice Springs rather than in outstations or uninhabited isolated locations. This reflects both the need for access to facilities, such as shelter or public amenities, the existence of better communications in central places, and the fact that outstations identify strongly with particular small groups, and may not be suitable places for large numbers of people to assemble. Exceptions to these rules are meetings which are designed to deal particularly with outstation issues, or those where an isolated location has been deliberately chosen for logistical or political reasons. Examples of official outstation meetings include visits by administrators to determine priorities for the provision of facilities. In some cases people from several outstations might gather at one outstation to discuss such needs, and might then accompany the visitors to other locations to look at requirements in greater detail. These kinds of meetings mostly involve men, and, because the visiting officials have a timetable to adhere to, rarely mean protracted absences from home.

Other meetings in isolated locations include meetings arranged by church organisations, and those held by some Aboriginal organisations. During the last decade the Baptist church, for example, has often held meetings at Tanami, approximately half way between the residential communities of the two main congregations at Yuendumu and Lajamanu. This location is relatively accessible to both groups and people also feel that the isolation allows them

to engage in church activities without distraction, or even disruption from others who are not interested. These meetings, which rarely last for more than two or three days, are often attended by a wide cross-section of both Yuendumu and Lajamanu residents, including men, women and children of all ages. In addition to prayer meetings and hymn singing they also involve performances of the various Christian 'purlapas' (ceremonies) developed by these groups in recent times. Like government meetings, these events are to a large extent externally controlled, and usually keep to a well-defined timetable. In this they contrast with Aboriginal controlled meetings, where timing is much more flexible.

The Pitjantjatjara Council and its associated bodies (Anangu Pitjantjatjaraku, Anangu Winkiku Stores, Ngaanyatjara Council, Pitjantjatjara Women's Council, Yankunytjatjara Council), also often prefer to hold their official meetings in isolated locations. This distinguishes these groups from other Alice Springs-based Aboriginal organisations, most of which tend to use either the town itself or a large outlying community. Reasons for this difference probably reflect the scattered nature of the Pitjantjatjara people, a high proportion of whom are in outstations and the fact that Alice Springs is not a highly significant central place for Pitjantjatjara groups. 'Bush' locations have also at times been selected for overtly political reasons, such as demonstrating traditional ownership and occupational rights to areas where people have not been able to live for some time. The decentralised nature of Pitjantjatjara Council organisation, dominated by the interests and priorities set by people in the scattered member communities rather than by those of central office in Alice Springs, probably also makes the choice of isolated meeting places more attractive. Because meetings are held in such places they may be more attractive to the families of council representatives than if they were held in Alice Springs. There are no accommodation problems, little risk of strife arising through alcohol induced fights, and generally an atmosphere suitable for congenial meetings with one's friends and relations. The range of people attending therefore tends to be very broad. Although the timing of the actual meetings are well-defined, the opportunities offered for less formal discussions often extend the length of the gathering so that absences from home may last for periods of a week or more. In the course of these absences people may travel to other communities to see other kin before eventually returning home.

Meetings in centralised communities commonly occur for administrative reasons concerning local bodies such as Community Councils, Social Clubs or School Councils, or involve consultation over government service delivery.

Gatherings organised by regional Aboriginal organisations are also common. Other more unusual meetings concern unique events such as the Handover of the Title to Uluru in October 1985, National Land Rights issues, the Royal Commission into the Maralinga Lands, or hearings of Aboriginal Land Claims. Some of these meetings may be restricted to people from a single community, and others may pull together people from different outstations, or from other communities altogether.

The level of attendance at internal community meetings varies according to how people view the importance of the issue. When the main topics are not seen to be directly relevant to people's daily lives, few people come. But when discussions centre on aspects such as social security problems the organisation of the school or decisions over the regulation of alcohol in the community, attendance can be large, and it may even be necessary to close down all other community organisations during the meeting. For example, when the Willowra people were discussing the possibility of entering into a bulk cheque agreement with the Department of Social Security in 1979, meetings were heavily attended, and final meetings with government people from Alice Springs involved every family, men, women and children. Community vehicles spent the hour before these meetings touring all the camps and picking up anyone who was still there. These meetings lasted a whole day, and no other business occurred. Even normal communications to the outside world were interrupted because there was nobody to answer the telephone. School meetings at Yuendumu have similarly attracted a large number of interested parents, and there have been occasions when people have been sufficiently concerned about issues, such as the failure of the Department of Education to fill vacant positions for teachers for the post primary classes, that they have later decided to travel to Alice Springs to interview government people on their own ground. Council meetings at Utopia also illustrate how this type of mobility can affect an entire community. On alternate Saturdays residents of the 13 or so outstations which are members of the Utopia-based Urupuntja Council gather at Three Bores, the centre which houses the council and health service office, because the mail plane arrives at that time. In addition to collecting social security cheques they hold a council meeting and, at the same time, organise marketing and raw material supplies for the batik-making enterprise run by the women. On those Saturday mornings it would be futile for people to attempt to carry on other business at the Utopia outstations because few people would be there. Such mobility has obvious implications for visitors attempting to organise other activities.

Although residents of Utopia's outstations are enthusiastic about attending these Saturday meetings, such gatherings of

outstation people do not appear to be common in other larger communities. This can be attributed to the fact that in many Aboriginal towns like Yuendumu or Papunya, outstation people do not feel that the decisions taken by people at the centre of power have much to do with them. In Yuendumu the council is concerned mostly with the provision of services within the town, and the various problems arising from the distribution of scarce funds for these purposes. They spend little time on outstation needs, anticipating that these will be met through other funding sources such as DAA. In some ways people perceive that the gap in interests between outstation groups and Yuendumu is widening and that outstation people are becoming increasingly marginalised. In Utopia, in contrast, the main role of the central community is to provide services to scattered groups, of which that at Three Bores is only one, and therefore outstation people are essentially in control. This potential split between outstation people and those in the Aboriginal 'towns' can obviously have serious consequences. However the improvement in outback communications has gone some way towards bridging the gap. With the advent of two-way radios it is now possible for outstation people to be easily informed about meetings, and to attend if they wish. In Utopia, where the Urupuntja Health Service has access to its own frequency, this facility is particularly heavily used, and in the outstations people often leave the receiver on almost continuously so that they know what is going on. This type of contact contrasts markedly with what occurred previously, when people in the isolated communities only heard news when someone happened to come and visit them. The introduction of satellite transmission, and extension of communications into TV, will improve the information base for outstation people even further.

Meetings in centralised communities can also involve people from other main centres. One location frequently used for such regional gatherings is the Mutitjulu community, adjacent to Uluru. Although this place is a considerable distance from the central parts of the Pitjantjatjara Homelands, it is perceived to be relatively accessible to the larger Pitjantjatjara communities, and is also a centre of enormous cultural and political significance to Pitjantjatjara people. Meetings held at Mutitjulu not only concern Pitjantjatjara Council and its related organisations, but also centre on important general issues. A meeting held in late 1982 to discuss the establishment of Anangu Winkiku Stores as a Pitjantjatjara co-operative venture to provide support for community shops, drew representatives from Indulkana, Mimili, Fregon, Ernabella, Amata, Pipalyatjara, Blackstone, Docker River and some outstations. It was also attended by people from Alice Springs-based Aboriginal organisations and government groups like ADC and

Commonwealth Department of Education, from which funding was to be sought.

Other meetings which have, in recent times, attracted many people from many different communities, are those called for the purpose of documenting the information needed to present a Land Claim. During the period when evidence is assembled these meetings usually only involve small numbers of people, specific individuals who are identified as people with prime responsibility and detailed knowledge of the country and its significance. But, as the time for presentation of evidence approaches, activity often increases to a point where large numbers of visitors come to stay in the central community. They may remain there for several weeks. While many of these visitors attend because of their traditional land-owning status, not all would be directly involved. Others come merely to provide support or out of curiosity. Everyone is extremely enthusiastic about such meetings, a response which highlights the vital significance of these activities in the fight to achieve autonomy. Ironically meetings to discuss important financial issues, such as funding problems affecting councils, would usually be much less popular. Yet the ultimate effect of decisions taken at these gatherings may be wide-reaching - people may lose their jobs and community projects may be cut. In general many Aborigines still have only limited understanding of or interest in the role of public funding in providing support for their group.

All regional Aboriginal organisations, except for the Pitjantjatjara Council, usually hold their meetings in Alice Springs. In many cases only official representatives go to such meetings, but if the community itself is responsible for providing transport then friends and family may accompany them. Such a practice is particularly likely if people know that there is somewhere congenial where they can camp when in town. Central Land Council meetings, for example, explain a significant proportion of journeys made by adult men to Alice Springs (Young 1981b, 328). As described above, a trip from Yuendumu to a Central Land Council meeting can, for some individuals, last a week or more and provides people with opportunities to carry out other official business as well as getting together purely for social or recreational reasons. The length of time spent away from the home community on such occasions depends not so much on the length of the actual meeting but more on the availability of transport to return, whether one has enough cash and other resources to survive in town and whether there is appropriate accommodation. It is only when people are attending courses at the Institute for Aboriginal Development, or are in town for health related reasons, that they may have accommodation provided for them. Otherwise they camp in one of the town camps, or with a friend in

another part of town. Where town camps are used by 'drinkers' many of the men and almost all of the women and children refuse to stay there. The Warlpiri camp at Ilpilye Tyathe falls into this category. As a result many people who otherwise would be happy to go to Alice Springs decide to stay at home.

Mobility and recreational activities

Central Australian Aborigines now participate in a wide range of recreational activities introduced by non-Aborigines. These include football, sports carnivals, rock and country music festivals and rodeos. These have become so popular that hundreds of people attend, and the associated mobility makes a significant impact on both host and visitor communities.

Football is the most important sport in the Pitjantjatjara area, where it now causes marked mobility. Football games, which take place during the winter months, are arranged into grades and held at different communities each week. Since the host community is always that from which the winner of the previous weeks matches comes, there is no prior warning of where matches will be held, and community stores, health clinics and fuel outlets have little opportunity to arrange for extra supplies to cater for the influx of spectators and players. For example, during matches at Pipalyatjara in May 1985 the shop was devoid of all stock except for a few potatoes and some canned food. Camping facilities can also be taxed. During another round of matches at Fregon, attended by at least 150 people from other communities, visitors camped on the western side of the community in an area where there was no water and no ablution or toilet facilities.

Although such mobility is ostensibly related to football matches, not all of those who go are actually interested in the sport. People tend to travel in family groups, many of whose members use the trip to catch up with family and friends. The coming together of large numbers of people from different communities provides a wealth of material for speculation and gossip. For example, women spectators at the Fregon matches were busily engaged in identifying all the players, their countries, their wives and their relatives, and their communities. Even although some had originally come from as far away as Arnhem Land or from distant Central Australian communities like Willowra, and had moved to the Pitjantjatjara Lands on marriage, all were known. People also introduced new born babies to their relatives, speculated about future initiation ceremonies and the negotiations between Anangu Pitjantjatjaraku and Amoco Exploration, and women talked about issues concerning the women's council.

Football has, for the Pitjantjatjara, become 'Aboriginal business', and, as one woman commented 'In the hot weather everyone travels for 'Law' and in the cool weather everyone travels for football'. Although somewhat in jest there is an element of truth in her words. People draw on their private funds to attend matches, often in vehicles which do not appear to be capable of completing the journey. While the matches themselves only occur during the weekend, or on long weekends into Monday, travellers do not necessarily return immediately to their communities and may be absent for considerably longer. An example of such an extended journey was given by a woman from Kalka, attending matches in which her son was participating at Fregon. She and her family, consisting of herself, her husband, son, daughter-in-law, grandchild and large dog, left Kalka early on Wednesday morning and arrived in Amata later that day. The afternoon was spent in Amata, where she wrote an article for the community newsletter about the recent women's meeting at Malan and then the party travelled along the short cut towards Ernabella. After camping out that night they reached Ernabella on Thursday where, since they had lived in that community for many years, they had many friends and relatives to visit. Late on Thursday night they reached Fregon, where, as people from the western Pitjantjatjara Lands, they camped on the western side of the town for the next three nights. Following the matches the woman's husband travelled through to Mimili to visit his family, and the rest of the party set out to return to Kalka. Although they left Fregon late on Monday afternoon, they travelled slowly, hunting for kangaroo along the road, and did not reach Kalka until late on Tuesday night. Their attendance at a weekend football match had led to an absence of approximately a week, perhaps a longer trip than normal, but not an unusual one. Altogether football provides a wonderful opportunity for people to engage in a variety of activities, hunting and gathering, camping in one's own country, catching up on the local and more extended gossip and important social events.

Sports Carnivals also attract large numbers of people from throughout the region, although, since they are only held occasionally, their influence on mobility is periodic. Yuendumu Sports Weekend, always held during the first weekend in August and sometimes referred to as the 'Black Olympics of Central Australia' is the best known of these meetings. The meeting was initially organised by non-Aborigines working as community administrators under government and mission auspices, and was perceived as a useful way of fostering healthy inter-community rivalry, promoting community solidarity and instilling a competitive approach. These ideals are not necessarily in accord with conventional Aboriginal attitudes, and could be interpreted as assimilationist. However, in recent years the Sports

Weekend organisation has come to rely more and more strongly on the efforts of Yuendumu's Aboriginal leaders, and today they take responsibility for the whole event, only using non-Aborigines if and when they wish to. At the same time the carnival, like Pitjantjatjara football, has become Aboriginal business, and is viewed with great pride by members of the community.

Yuendumu Sports Weekend includes many different types of activity, and draws people from a wide area. While sporting events, such as football, basketball, softball and athletics, occupy much of the time other activities and contests have been introduced. These include some traditional Aboriginal skills, such as spear-throwing, and displays of dancing and singing carried out by the women. In the evenings rock bands from different places usually combine to provide entertainment. Communities and organisations which have regularly sent teams and representatives to the Sports Weekend include Papunya, Areyonga, Lajamanu, Alice Springs, Ernabella, Amata, Hermannsburg, Ali-Curung, Fregon, Willowra and, from outside Central Australia, Halls Creek, Noonkanbah and Galiwinku. In recent years some of the smaller communities, such as Mt Allen and Kintore, have also joined in. In addition Sports Weekend usually means an influx of non-Aborigines, both from other communities and from Alice Springs. Some of these people are former Yuendumu residents, returning to see old friends and generally taking advantage of the opportunity to visit casually without going through the normal formalities of applying for permits. During the weekend the population of the town can reach two or three thousand and resources are stretched to the limit. Although most visitors camp independently in the surrounding bush they still require food and perhaps other services such as health care. Managers of Yuendumu store have plenty warning of the invasion, and are usually able to ensure that their stocks of basic necessities will be sufficient. Similarly other service agencies can ensure that they have supplies to cover most emergencies. Thus, despite the fact that Sports Weekend usually attracts far more people than do the football weekends in Pitjantjatjara communities, the disruption of services is usually less severe because planning is possible.

A combination of meetings for official reasons and meetings for recreational purposes can make considerable inroads into people's time. The following list illustrates this situation for Pitjantjatjara people during May/June 1985.

May 4- 6th	Football at Pipalyatjara
	Women leave for meeting at Malan (Near Balgo)
May 10-12th	Football at Blackstone
	Women return

May 18-20th	Football at Fregon (long weekend)
May 20-21st	Yankanyatjara Council Meeting, Mimili
May 24-27th	Ernabella races
May 27-29th	Anangu Pitjantjatjaraku meeting
June 1-2nd	Football at Amata
June 3-5th	Pitjantjatjara Council meeting, Kenmore
June 6-7th	Anangu Pitjantjatjaraku executive meeting, Alice Springs

During the same period Aboriginal ceremonies were being prepared at Coffin Hill (May 18th onwards) and Papunya (May 5th onwards), and several executive members of Anangu Pitjantjatjaraku flew to Canberra for the National Land Rights demonstration. When one considers that, from the examples given earlier, these meetings may often extend well beyond the times shown it is clear that the impact of these activities on overall mobility can be highly significant.

Concerts, either involving locally based rock or country and western groups or travelling groups from elsewhere, also attract large crowds. Large communities such as Yuendumu, Papunya and Areyonga have for some years had their own local rock bands which draw large crowds not only at home, but which also travel to perform in other locations. For example the 'Poor Boys' band from Yuendumu attended a music festival at Areyonga in 1979, where they played along with bands from Docker River, Finke, Papunya, Areyonga and Yirara College. In 1983 the 'Red Sands' Band (the successor to the 'Poor Boys') planned a tour which included concerts at Utopia, Ali-Curung, Lajamanu, Kalkaringi, Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing. Although the actual number of individuals moving from Yuendumu on these trips was not large, visits to such distant and different communities certainly extended their experience of other places. Moreover they would usually attract large numbers of spectators, particularly in smaller places where young people had very limited opportunities for entertainment.

Professional entertainers, especially country and western singers, also visit Aboriginal communities and attract big audiences. As these events only last for a single night the immediate impact is of short duration. However, if groups are particularly popular, people will go to considerable lengths to travel to the concert and, as with other journeys, may extend their visits over a day or two.

Another recreational activity which causes mobility is drinking. Liquor outlets in Central Australia occur in only a few locations and that, combined with a variety of different rules and regulations governing alcohol consumption and distribution in communities, causes drinkers to move to obtain supplies. The effects of this have changed over time, as different legislation has been

introduced. In 1978/79 Yuendumu had a system whereby those who wished to bring liquor into the community had to be issued with a permit. However these rules were not enforced and in effect most people who wanted to drink in Yuendumu could do so. Alcohol was brought in either from Alice Springs or Rabbit Flat roadhouse, both about four or five hours drive away, and was often resold after arrival, at considerable profit. Drinking had two effects on mobility. Within Yuendumu itself it caused temporary movement of women and children from camps where a binge was in progress, mainly because they feared that fights would break out and because they found the noise disturbing. Relatively few women were regular drinkers. The other type of movement related to bringing in alcohol supplies. Vehicles would often journey to Alice Springs or Rabbit Flat specifically for this purpose, with the occupants spending some hours drinking at their destinations and then loading up the car with additional bottles. Drink-driving accidents occurred fairly frequently on the Tanami road, and were an important cause of death among younger Yuendumu men. Brady and Palmer (1984, 62-3), in their study of drinking in an outback community, also record that motor accidents accounted for a high proportion of alcohol related deaths (17 per cent).

Following changes in liquor legislation, which gave communities the right to object to the granting of take-away licences at liquor outlets as well as the right to declare themselves legally as 'dry' areas, the number of places where take-away alcohol can be purchased outside Alice Springs has fallen. Most roadhouses on the Stuart Highway, once major suppliers, no longer have such facilities because Aboriginal community groups have successfully applied for their closure. And many Aboriginal communities have restricted or forbidden the import of alcohol. As a result dedicated drinkers either have to drink at the roadhouses during opening hours, go to Alice Springs and bring back supplies, either legally or illegally, or go to Alice Springs and spend most of their time there. Most seem to adopt either the first or second alternative. Venues such as the Ti-Tree roadhouse are meeting places for people from the Ti-Tree communities and other nearby groups such as Willowra but, without a take-away licence, do not supply liquor for people to take home after hours. Other roadhouses on the highway perform similar roles, although some, because of long-standing problems between the management and Aboriginal groups are not heavily used. In the late 1970s, for example, Barrow Creek was not popular with Aboriginal travellers because people felt that they were being discriminated against and, following a shooting incident in the early 1980s when a Willowra man was killed, people have been even more reluctant to stop there. Movement associated with the use of the facilities at these roadhouses is

essentially short-term, often of only a few hours or at the most one or two days' duration.

When people do not have easy access to a roadhouse but are able to take liquor home, they visit Alice Springs to buy supplies. Also, if they have the cash, they often spend some time drinking with friends in town before returning and therefore these journeys sometimes extend over several days. While in town they normally camp with friends and commonly in one of the 'town camps'. This procedure has now become necessary even for casual visits because the two kilometre drinking law, which prohibits the consumption of alcohol in a public place less than two kilometres from a liquor outlet, has made casual camping in the Todd and Charles River beds much less attractive.

Liquor restrictions in rural communities have undoubtedly caused some movement into Alice Springs on a fairly permanent basis. However it is not possible to assess the scale of this. From observation of the situation in rural communities like Mt Allan, Willowra and Yuendumu and of the households of people from those places who live in Alice Springs it seems that the numbers of people involved are not large. Those who have 'settled' in Alice Springs as a result of changes in liquor laws are few, and are mostly men. Moreover, although they may spend much of their time in the town, they do still go back to their home communities and may stay away from Alice Springs for several months.

Mobility and meetings beyond Central Australia

The discussion so far has centred on meetings which take place within Central Australia, and to most of which people travel overland. They clearly are the occasions which can be attended by large groups of people. As far as most people are concerned this is the only kind of meeting-related mobility in which they participate. However meetings of a regional or national scope now also involve Aborigines from remote areas, and some individuals are increasingly being caught up in journeys far beyond the local area. These range from meetings of national organisations such as the Aboriginal Development Commission or until its disbandment, the National Aboriginal Conference in Canberra to cultural displays supported by museums in capital cities, meetings of research bodies such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and meetings called by Northern Territory government organisations in Darwin. Apart from the fact that movement to these types of meetings usually involves air transport, sponsored by some outside body, and that periods of absence are more strictly defined than in local meetings, the other main feature is that the individuals involved are very few in number. Moreover some people represent several different bodies, and may find

themselves in very heavy demand to attend all sorts of occasions. Leaders like Yami Lester, now administrator with the Pitjantjatjara Council and until recently director of the Institute for Aboriginal Development, travel very extensively to Adelaide, for discussions concerning Pitjantjatjara land issues; to Sydney to discuss the production of films for the Pitjantjatjara community at Uluru; and even to London, to present the case for the Maralinga people in the enquiry into atomic testing carried out by the British government. During the last decade a recently deceased leader of the Willowra community was a member of the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission and its successor the Aboriginal Development Commission, and also a member of the National Aboriginal Council. He had to travel frequently to Canberra, and sometimes to places scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country in order to examine proposals for the use of ADC funds.

Others who, in recent years, have travelled widely include women's groups who attend national meetings, or in some cases perform at dance festivals in centres such as Sydney and Adelaide. Frequent journeys of this type are obviously very wearing for those concerned. On the other hand the experiences which they gain can be of great value, not only to themselves but also, indirectly, to their friends who have stayed at home. Discussions after their return can last for months, and can provide people with many interesting insights into what goes on in the world beyond Central Australia.

CHAPTER 10

MOBILITY AND SERVICE DELIVERY - AN ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE

For Central Australian Aborigines, mobility has always been and remains an essential mechanism for survival. Before the intrusion of non-Aborigines into their country, Central Australian groups had to be able to move in order to survive in the harsh environment of the desert. Such movement was not, as has frequently been assumed in former times, merely a means of gaining access to a variety of essential economic resources - water, the materials for making hunting weapons, shelters and tools, and a wide range of foodstuffs available in different seasons and different physical environments. It was also the means by which small scattered groups of people maintained their social structure and their religious life. These economic, social, religious and political elements of mobility were interwoven in many complex ways. They still play a vital part in contemporary Aboriginal population movements.

Although the essence of these elements has been preserved, they now operate in a setting largely different from that which existed before non-Aboriginal settlement. That setting, incorporating the seizure and alienation of much of the land and the deliberate creation of settlements with a permanent infrastructure of houses, schools, shops and offices, has created an environment geared primarily to a sedentary lifestyle. If these settlements had provided all the economic and social resources which Aborigines needed, mobility might well have been insignificant and the problems posed to service delivery agencies less severe. But that is not the case. The range and quality of essential services is necessarily limited by factors such as low population threshold and high costs to overcome distance and hence people must move to satisfy many basic needs. Moreover the disruption of Aboriginal tribal groups and families has enhanced the role of population movement as a means of maintaining social contact and carrying out spiritual responsibility to country. Altogether mobility probably plays an even greater part in contemporary Aboriginal society in Central Australia than in the past. However administrative authorities and policy-makers have consistently failed to recognise this. The development of an acceptable compromise, between those in service delivery who favour the enforcement of sedentary ways and Aborigines for whom mobility is a vital component of cultural and economic survival, is the challenge to be faced. It will demand adjustments in understanding on both sides.

Aborigines, in both small and large communities, have to be aware of the fact that many of the services which they desire cannot be indefinitely relocated, and in fact cannot

function efficiently either on a small scale or in extreme isolation from central organisations. For example, there are fairly well defined economic limits on the provision of isolated one teacher schools, or on the provision of funds to purchase fuel for small generators; dispersed health services need efficient communications with base hospitals and clinics; and the running costs of mobile shops in areas such as Central Australia are so astronomical that, unless custom is assured, they cannot possibly function. As a consequence, if people want access to services there is a limit to the proliferation of small isolated settlements.

Conversely service delivery agencies need to be much more aware of the factors which affect Aboriginal population movement, and particularly of how these differ from those which conventionally operate in non-Aboriginal society. This means developing a more realistic and sympathetic understanding of Aboriginal cultural and social attributes and of human/land relationships. Awareness of the historical impact of non-Aboriginal settlement on Aboriginal groups must also be greatly extended. And, in addition, recognition of how these factors differ between different types of Aboriginal community would increase the chance of reaching solutions acceptable both to administrators and their clients.

Aboriginal mobility in Central Australia: Cause and effect

As this study demonstrates, contemporary Aboriginal population mobility in Central Australia is an expression of an array of elements which impact on people's lives. These elements spring both from the social, economic and political history of the region during the last century and from preceding centuries of Aboriginal history, in the course of which extremely intimate and complex relationships between people and country were established. Moreover the interaction between these elements is highly dynamic, continually changing as people experience new pressures and avail themselves of new opportunities essential to a society undergoing rapid transformation. Nevertheless, although the resultant mixture is extremely confusing, some common themes emerge and it is possible to highlight these to present a typology which assists in understanding both the causes and effects of contemporary mobility. Such a typology, based on a simple division of Aboriginal communities into categories used as the case-studies in this project, is presented below (Table 10.1).

Non-Aboriginal towns

Although the Alice Springs Aboriginal population did not form one of the detailed case-studies in this project sufficient information is available to draw some conclusions

Table 10.1
Characteristics affecting mobility in Aboriginal communities

Characteristic	Non-Aboriginal Town (eg Alice Springs)	Aboriginal Town (eg Yuendumu, Fregon, Finke)	Aboriginal Cattle Station (eg Mt Allen, T-Tree)
Population:	High proportion of young adults, especially in town camps	Youthful, recent decline through outstation movement	Youthful, some recent expansion
Land tenure:	Leasehold: spatial displacement from traditional land	Aboriginal Freehold in most cases: spatial displacement for some groups	Aboriginal Freehold or Pastoral Lease: separation from traditional land of major significance
Social structure:	Mixture of linguistic/ social groups, including high proportion of part European descent	Mixture of linguistic/ social groups, primarily of Aboriginal descent	Fairly homogenous linguistic/social groups
Traditional activities: (ceremonial, subsistence etc)	Interest profound although knowledge/ level of involvement may be limited	Knowledge/level of involvement high, but restricted by spatial conditions	Knowledge/level of involvement generally high
Wage employment and sources of income	Limited by qualifications, racial discrimination: Government/Aboriginal organisations important Social security and wages sole support: non-monetary income insignificant	Limited by opportunity and qualifications. Largely service jobs Social security prime cash income for many families. Some non- monetary income	Limited by opportunity: service and pastoral jobs Social security prime cash income for many families. Non-monetary income may be substantial
Services: (education, health, etc)	Complete range available, although access may be restricted by cultural considerations	Limited range, except in lower levels of service hierarchy	Limited range, some services (eg health) only periodic

Table 10.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Non-Aboriginal Cattle Station (eg Harts Range)	Outstation (eg Warlpiri [Yuendumu] Pitjantjatjara [Ernabella])
Population:	Variable - may be low proportion of children if services limited	Variable - established communities youthful; new communities may be elderly. Masculinity ratio may show bias
Land tenure:	No recognised tenure/ some excisions for special purpose leases: access to traditional lands may be limited both by distance and other restrictions	Aboriginal Freehold: access to traditional country largely unrestricted provided transport available
Social structure:	Fairly homogenous linguistic/social groups	Homogenous groups, often extended families
Traditional activities: (ceremonial, subsistence etc)	Interest high, level of involvement may have been restricted through settlement history	Knowledge/level of involvement high
Wage employment and sources of income	Wage jobs may be non-existent. Social security of prime importance. Non-monetary income sources may be restricted	No wage jobs (except CDEP) Social security of prime importance. Non-monetary income can be highly significant
Services: (education, health etc)	Few services	Few on-site services

on the characteristics of people in non-Aboriginal towns and how their mobility affects the delivery of services to them. As Table 10.1 indicates such groups are much more mixed, both in terms of language and in terms of affiliation to traditional country, than any others; they have also inter-mixed with non-Aborigines to a significant extent. Long residence in town, combined with insecurities in land tenure and displacement from their ancestral country have undermined their knowledge and practice of both ceremonial and subsistence activities and they can no longer rely on supplies of bush tucker to supplement foods purchased with cash. Wage employment is obviously important but, because of low levels of formal education and employer discrimination, their work-force participation rates are low and level of unemployment high. While the full range of services is available many people do not benefit from all facilities because methods of delivery do not accord with Aboriginal customs or social norms. These characteristics affect the mobility of people in towns like Alice Springs in a number of ways. First, as studies conducted by Tangentyere Council have emphasised, a high proportion of Aboriginal townspeople are relatively permanent residents, forming a core of families long committed to that settlement and with children born and brought up within its boundaries. Although many of these families rarely change residence, and may live for many years in the same town camp along with their relatives and friends, others oscillate between camps and more conventional urban housing environments. Secondly, these and other families whose period of residence has been of shorter duration also retain linkages to other Aboriginal communities, towns outside Central Australia as well as cattle stations, outstations and town groups within the adjacent region. They often visit these places and in return receive visits from kin and friends living elsewhere. Service delivery agencies must be able to cope with all these types of mobility.

It is obvious that the permanent Aboriginal population of a town like Alice Springs requires conventional urban services - adequate housing and essential services, appropriate schooling and health care, and many other forms of support such as old people's or home-makers services. In Alice Springs, through years of effort by various Aboriginal organisations, such services are now generally available to most campers, as well as to residents in the town in general. However the problem of providing services for temporary visitors, the transients remains unsolved.

As the rural studies have shown, people do often have to visit Alice Springs. If they come for specific reasons, such as accompanying a child to the hospital, accommodation may be arranged for them and they will not be left to find their own place to sleep, possibly in a camp environment where

disturbances from drinking sprees are all too common. But if people come for any other purpose they must find their own accommodation, and usually camp with family or friends. This can place a huge burden on these families, who not only have to find sleeping places for the visitors but may also have to feed them and entertain them once they run out of money. It also causes pressure on the services available in the houses or camps. Water supplies and sewerage systems were not constructed to take account of these population increases, and the costs of maintenance may rise dramatically. Inevitably these costs are borne by the town dwellers, not the visitors. Factors such as these have made many urban Aboriginal families question the unchecked continuation of this system, and have led Tangentyere Council to propose that separate accommodation should be provided for transients. Such accommodation would include basic shelter, cooking and washing facilities, and would also have to be located in places appropriate to the groups involved. Not everyone would use it because many people would continue to stay with their families. But it would remove the part of the burden which at present town people find least acceptable - the arrival of a large number of out of town visitors some of whom have only a tenuous connection with them and their families.

Movement of Aboriginal urban families to other settlements must also be taken into account. Even those identifying strongly with the town, and knowing that they are unlikely to leave permanently, have affiliations elsewhere. Visiting kin, seeing ancestral country and periodically foraging or hunting for game are all activities which contribute significantly to the social well-being of town dwellers and the growth of interest in 'country camps', documented in detail by Nathan and Leichleitner (1983b) reflects those needs. Unfortunately the motivation for the establishment of such outlying settlements by town groups has been largely misinterpreted by administrative authorities who fail to recognise the linkages between town and country living and endeavour to force people to commit themselves one way or the other. The implications of such a misunderstanding for the delivery of services both within the town and elsewhere are obvious.

Aboriginal towns

The population of Aboriginal towns, such as Fregon or Yuendumu, retain their typically youthful structure but, through the outstation movement, have experienced overall decline during the last decade (Table 10.1). While being generally of mixed linguistic and regional origin they differ from groups in non-Aboriginal towns in that the proportions of people of part-European descent are small. This reflects the practical application of previous

assimilationist policies whereby part-European children were deliberately resettled in non-Aboriginal centres, out of direct contact with their Aboriginal heritage. The granting of freehold tenure to reserve land surrounding Aboriginal towns, coupled with relatively strong Aboriginal control through community councils and the fact that many residents have easy access to their ancestral lands has encouraged the retention of knowledge and interest in traditional ceremonial and subsistence life. However the level of involvement is not the same for all groups. Some cannot easily participate in such activities because they are too far from their traditional lands and lack the means to travel; moreover the large population concentrations in the Aboriginal towns themselves have led to a depletion of bush tucker in nearby areas. Thus the levels of mobility arising from traditional Aboriginal characteristics tend to vary.

In the non-traditional sphere wage-earning opportunities, access to other sources of cash income and services all affect population movement. Job opportunities are limited but wages earned in such positions, coupled with cash obtained through welfare pensions and benefits, are now essential for survival. Limited subsistence opportunities make this particularly important. Although the range of services provided is fairly broad more specialised components are lacking and Aborigines in such communities have to be prepared to travel to larger non-Aboriginal towns if they require such assistance.

Types of mobility associated with these characteristics include internal residential relocation, movement to and from outstations associated with the town, movement to other Aboriginal towns and, particularly for service needs, movement to and from non-Aboriginal towns like Alice Springs.

Residential relocation has always been an important type of population movement in Aboriginal towns. In the past it reflected the problems of providing permanent non-relocatable houses for families which, following the dictates of Aboriginal customary behaviour, had to move after bereavements or other disruptions to the social network. However, the rows of vacant concrete 'dog-boxes', which were a marked feature of the Yuendumu scene in the late 1970s, are virtually a thing of the past and people now value the improved dwellings, with conventional essential services, sufficiently highly to invent mechanisms whereby the use of shelters is compatible with customary behaviour. Housing provision has thus come closer to needs, the temporary humpy camps have shrunk in size, and discussions about relocatable facilities in the town are of lower priority. This does not mean that everyone who belongs to the town now has a house. But it does indicate that the gap

between housing provision and needs is now smaller. This can be attributed not only to improvements in the service, but also to the effects of the establishment of outstations.

Since 1978 Yuendumu's population has dwindled as families have moved to outstations on or near their own country. Similar movements have caused marked decreases in the populations of Ali-Curung, Papunya, Areyonga, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), and South Australian towns such as Ernabella and Fregon. These movements have lessened the demand for housing and essential services within the town, and certainly go a long way towards explaining the decreasing size of Yuendumu's humpy camps. But, although the impact on housing services is apparent, the impact on other types of services is much less clear. Many people have moved to the outstations in the knowledge that they would not have local provision of health, education, social security delivery and other facilities. Improvements in transport, stemming largely from the use of ABTA funds to provide resources for the purchase of community vehicles, has allowed outstation people to continue using their towns as resource centres. They regularly come back to shop, to cash cheques, to see the doctor and to check up on their children whom they have left behind in school. These town-based services therefore have to continue to function as if they were serving a population bigger than that normally in residence. This obviously presents problems, particularly since outstation use of these services is often spasmodic and unpredictable. But such unpredictability will have to be accepted to some extent. Unfortunately government agencies providing services such as education and health seem to act far more quickly when they think there is a drop in number of clients, than when they are asked to open a new facility in a different location. The 12 year delay over the opening of Nyrrpi school is a good example of this. While an early delay might have been acceptable, to avoid unnecessary wastage of resources, the delay between 1979 and 1985 as inexcusable, and shows the results of the serious time-lag affecting the practical implementation of bureaucratic decisions. For some other outstations such a delay might well have prevented the development of a demographically and socially balanced community altogether.

It seems likely that the Aboriginal towns will, in many cases, also continue to function as outstation resource centres and will need an appropriate level of services. While most may be of the type cited above, housing will also need to be considered in this way. The predominance of a bilocality or multilocality element in Aboriginal mobility means that town houses will have to be able to cope with visitors and there will be a need for camping areas where outstation dwellers without acceptable town bases can go. In some cases families will preserve a definite interest in

being both town and outstation residents, and may well retain houses in both places.

The importance of the role of outstation resource centre was recognised in the parliamentary enquiry into outstations (Report of House of Representatives Standing Committee into Aboriginal Affairs, 1987) as a major function of Aboriginal towns in the future. That, coupled with the fact that all Aboriginal towns now have significant numbers of residents who have lived there all their lives, means that Aboriginal towns, despite their population decline, are not likely to disappear. Their future development, however, does contain some important uncertainties. In the first place, their populations are young, increasingly well-educated and possibly increasingly divorced from the more traditional elements in Aboriginal life. Whether today's teenagers will be content with growing up in places such as Yuendumu or Papunya, where employment opportunities are extremely scarce, recreational opportunities limited, and physical isolation a disadvantage remains to be seen. For the foreseeable future it seems that although people frequently visit non-Aboriginal towns like Alice Springs no marked permanent out-migration to such centres is likely. However if the urban environment elsewhere became more attractive such a change could occur. At present the residents of the Aboriginal towns are likely to continue the types of mobility mentioned here - to travel widely to communities where their relatives and friends live, to attend ceremonies both near and far from home, to go hunting and gathering in the vicinity and further afield in their own country, to seek recreation in Alice Springs, and to find a means of obtaining the various forms of economic support necessary for their survival. As with their compatriots in the town camps of Alice Springs they are not isolated but part of a broader Aboriginal community of highly dynamic character.

Aboriginal-owned cattle stations

Although the social and economic priorities perceived by Aboriginal pastoralists vary, communities on Aboriginal cattle stations share some important characteristics. Their youthful populations have been significantly augmented by the in-migration of kin who have decided to settle on Aboriginal land and, in many cases, resume responsibility for the spiritual welfare of its sacred places. Because of close direct association with the land and smaller populations than commonly occur in Aboriginal towns, families are interlinked and language diversity less marked. Traditional activities associated with the land, both spiritual and economic, play a large part in people's lives and the granting of Aboriginal freehold title following successful land claims has encouraged an expansion of such interests. As a result non-monetary contributions to income

can be significant particularly when one remembers that they also include free killer beasts from the herd. This component helps to offset generally low cash incomes, an outcome of limited employment opportunities both on the station itself and on surrounding properties. The services available on Aboriginal cattle stations vary in range and quality and, until recently, have been deficient compared to those offered in Aboriginal towns. This stems from earlier government reluctance to acknowledge that the basic needs of a group of over 100 permanently resident people differed from those of a transient stockcamp consisting of 10 families and their dependents. Moreover services were often virtually non-existent at the time Aboriginal ownership occurred and provision had to start from scratch. Because of the delay in providing services some Aboriginal pastoral groups have been able to exert a relatively strong influence over the process and maintain some control over their management.

Mobility of members of Aboriginal cattle station communities represents these characteristics. Traditional forms of movement, related to subsistence and caring for the land are common but people may also have to travel to gain access to services which they lack at home. Within their camps residential relocation has been a major feature but with improvements in the provision of permanent housing, power and water supplies this is likely to be less common and the adjustments already described for the Aboriginal towns will occur. Two additional types of population movement - in-migration and the growth of outstations - have recently affected the planning of services for Aboriginal pastoral groups.

During the last decade the populations of all the Aboriginal-owned cattle stations have grown through in-migration, a direct result of the acquisition of control over an area of land which was of ritual significance to a group much larger than that currently in residence. Increases have been large with some groups doubling in size in only five or six years. While generally in-coming families have been welcomed by existing residents, the strain on service provision has been considerable. Moreover, because adjustments in both the size and composition of different groups are still occurring, planning for future needs is still hampered by uncertainty. This is compounded by the growth of outstations located on the Aboriginal cattle stations. The acquisition of more land, as when the Willowra people purchased neighbouring Mt Barkly in 1981, has led to the division of existing centralised settlements into smaller units. New services, such as Mt Barkly school, opened in 1986, eventually followed but their growth was accompanied by a decline in need at the existing larger centre, Willowra. The latter

was then over-serviced for its population size. Future predictions about the size of these two groups remain highly uncertain.

Outstations have also developed because land ownership has given people the confidence to re-establish a settlement pattern more appropriate to the maintenance of ritual responsibilities. In the case of the Urupuntja communities associated with Utopia this dispersion occurred soon after purchase in 1976 but in the example of Mt Allen no outstations were firmly established until the land claim hearings had been completed six years after the station came under Aboriginal control. This contrast reflects different degrees of non-Aboriginal input into the properties, with the early emphasis in Mt Allen remaining strongly on commercial activities. Such differences have affected settlement patterns on other Aboriginal-owned stations and, since these properties are still undergoing rapid transformation, the situation is by no means stable. Uncertainties within the pastoral industry as a whole compound the situation.

Non-Aboriginal cattle stations

Like their kin living on Aboriginal-owned pastoral properties, people on the non-Aboriginal stations have a long history of involvement in the cattle industry and frequently a stable association with one narrowly defined area. That area, for many, also includes their ancestral country. But their actual residence within that area has, particularly in recent decades, often been discouraged. While some non-Aboriginal pastoralists accepted the existence of a large Aboriginal camp near the homestead, even when they were employing only a few people as stock-workers, others evicted all non-working families. As discussed earlier, many of these families settled in Alice Springs and came to form the core of the town camp population. Recent growth of interest in 'country camps' has led to a number of these groups requesting that they be granted permission to live on pastoral land, preferably through excisions, so that they can re-establish their interests in the areas where they came from. Thus present day Aboriginal communities on non-Aboriginal stations consist of two groups: those who have been in residence for decades and who often have a strong relationship with the pastoralist; and those who have recently returned, possibly in a conflict situation with the pastoralist continually trying to force eviction. Generally some of the former groups tend to be much larger than the latter, reaching over 200 in the case of Laramba (Napperby).

Characteristics shared by all these communities include a strong attachment to land, demonstrated in heavy

participation in subsistence and ceremonial activities; and low levels of wage employment with a heavy dependence on social security for cash incomes (Table 10.1). However they differ in other aspects. Land tenure in particular has a marked effect on service provision and also on population mobility. Where such groups have obtained leases through excisions they have become eligible to apply for funding for housing, for the establishment of schools and health centres, and for support in setting up their own enterprises such as retail stores. Thus, depending on their population size, their services have generally improved. But where they lack land tenure service provision may depend on the whim of the pastoralist and can be withdrawn altogether. As far as mobility is concerned, the latter groups are obviously in a highly unstable situation and planning to provide for their needs is full of uncertainties.

When services are provided primarily by the non-Aboriginal pastoralists a number of problems emerge. Through exercising a monopoly on retail stores, cheque cashing agencies and communications, including access to private mail, it has been easy for pastoralists to exert authority, possibly in a completely unscrupulous manner. But, during the last three years there have been determined efforts to set up a resource agency for these small groups, and to remove service provision from the control of the pastoralists. The Ingkerreke Outstation Resource Service, based in Alice Springs, was formed in 1984. It has used Tangentyere Council as its town base, and from there has operated basic services, such as the delivery of water supplies to small groups living on stock routes in places where no permanent water is available. Funding for Ingkerreke has been tenuous, and without adequate support its effectiveness will always be limited. But without it many people would never have had the confidence to return to their traditional country.

Arguments and misunderstandings have frequently arisen over the stability of these population groups on the non-Aboriginal properties. There seems little doubt that many groups, like those on Napperby, Alcoota, Bushy Park, Maryvale or Mt Ebenezer are very well established, and as permanent as any other groups. In other cases, such as Yambah, establishment will remain uncertain until the people obtain assured tenure to the land, and service provision will be limited in the interim. Furthermore, although many groups on non-Aboriginal properties can be described as highly permanent, some may contain families who would really rather be living elsewhere, and who may move if the opportunity arises. Such moves led to the expansion of Mt Allen and Utopia populations after these properties were purchased by the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission. It appears that plans to establish communities in the eastern

Arrernte area, on properties such as Boyna or Jervois, may well reduce the population at Harts Range.

Comparison of the mobility of these cattle station groups with that of people in the Aboriginal towns or on the Aboriginal owned properties reveals some differences. Cattle station people have to move more often to reach the services they require. Harts Range people, for example, send their children to school in Alice Springs, and also frequently visit town to shop, but their counterparts in Yuendumu, where such needs can be locally met, are not forced to make such trips. As far as traditional practices, such as ceremonies, are concerned the mobility of cattle station people is similar to that of other Aborigines. However because of problems of access on non-Aboriginal land, their hunting and gathering mobility may be more restricted. And, if they want wage jobs, cattle station people will in most cases have to leave home because there is no local employment.

Outstations

Outstations, usually the smallest Aboriginal population groups in Central Australia, share common characteristics such as assured freehold tenure of the land, linguistic and social homogeneity and a strong commitment to traditional spiritual values and the use of subsistence resources. They also, in the non-traditional sphere, share a lack of wage employment opportunities, low cash incomes and poor on-site services (Table 10.1). But in other ways they vary. Population structures range from youthful to aged, with the latter groups often being the most recently established. Levels of isolation both from other outstations and from outstation resource centres vary. And in all cases variable access to vital assets such as vehicles occurs. All of these factors have a marked effect on the mobility of outstation residents, a major source of concern for service delivery agencies in Central Australia at the present time.

The main reasons for the establishment of outstations are fundamental to an understanding of population mobility and service provision. In Central Australia the prime reason for outstation growth appears to be the return to ancestral land, to enable people to carry out their customary rituals and responsibilities, reinforce their religious identification with the area, educate their children in these basic beliefs, and use the natural resources for sustenance and material survival. Secondary reasons include the desire to avoid the social conflicts inevitable in large population groups such as those now found in Aboriginal towns, the feeling that health and well-being will be better on outstations, and the feeling that outstations provide important means for material and political advancement.

However such advancement is generally related to meeting the cultural/religious and economic obligations involved in 'looking after country' as a group rather than the pursuit of personal or material gain of a few as implied by Gerritsen (1982).

It follows that the mobility of outstation dwellers often occurs for traditional reasons. Ceremonial mobility, recorded by Cane and Stanley (1985, 158) as an important reason why only 45 per cent of the camps visited during their 1984 survey were actually occupied, is certainly important. And, as with people in other types of community, such movement can be both short term and extended, and can involve long or short distance travel. Mobility for foraging and hunting is, for outstation people, likely to involve shorter distance and shorter time absence than for people in Aboriginal towns where resources in the immediate vicinity have been depleted. But, as was commented upon earlier, it can involve considerable travelling, particularly when the groups involved are not actually living in their own country. Mobility for the maintenance of the social network, as elsewhere, can also involve both long absences to distant places, or short term visiting. Perhaps the most common pattern is the visiting of friends and relatives in nearby Aboriginal towns, many of which are also outstation resource centres and provide additional services. Outstation people transport their children to school in these centres on a daily or weekly basis; visit the clinic to collect medicines; go to cash cheques and buy stores; or attend community meetings at the council offices. Some, from outstations which might be described as communter centres, go every day because they have a nine to five job. Outstation stability, as Cane and Stanley (1985, 180) comment, is obviously undermined by poor services and more accesible service centres would help to limit mobility.

Most outstation groups in the Central desert see reliable water supplies, a means of communication, including both two way radio and Toyota if possible and shelter as their basic needs, generally in that order. Requirements within these categories may differ. Cane and Stanley (1985), citing the more complex types of housing requested by Pitjantjatjara people in the vicinity of Ernabella, compared to the Pintupi or western Warlpiri consider that such differences reflect levels of sophistication measured by the length of time since regular contact with non-Aborigines was established. While such a model may have some validity, it tends to ignore dynamic factors within the setting. Outstation dwellers of the mid 1980s may want quite different things from those of the early and mid 1970s.

Water supplies are the most important commodity for outstation dwellers. They range from properly equipped

bores with tanks and windmills to natural surface supplies found in rock holes and clay pans. In general the stabilisation of an outstation group is unlikely to occur until a satisfactory bore has been provided, and one of the main problems faced is that some preferred sites cannot obtain such supplies. Difficulties occur not only because ground water cannot be easily tapped, but also because it is not potable. Despite the obviously high priority of water supplies for these small desert settlements, many have been established before the problems of the water supply had been investigated, and subsequently have had to be moved to new sites. Such problems have occurred, for example, at Wakurlpa, Yarripirlangu and Nyirrpi among the Yuendumu outstations. In the last two of these cases the remainder of the infrastructure was sufficiently undeveloped to make the moves straightforward; but in the case of Wakurlpa houses, chicken pens and other structures developed over a period of five or six years will have to be reassembled elsewhere.

The problem with water supplies lies not only with finding suitable supplies, but also with deciding how to provide them. The provision of tanks and windmills is costly, and entails the introduction of relatively complex equipment into extremely isolated locations, where residents will not have the skills to carry out repairs even if these are possible. Spare parts are a problem. In some cases windmill equipment has been imported from France, and spares cannot be obtained without enormous delays. The development of the hand pump at the Appropriate Technology Unit of the Community College of Central Australia was an attempt to overcome these difficulties. But while it has certainly catered for basic needs in a much simpler and less costly way, it is not the preferred permanent solution as far as Aborigines are concerned. They see it as primarily an interim method, to be replaced by a windmill and tank as soon as possible, regardless of the actual size of the core population of the outstation.

Communications are the second basic need for outstation establishment. Although very different in use and concept two-way radios and Toyotas tend to complement each other. Both aid the overall mobility of outstation people, by making them aware of what is occurring elsewhere, and providing them with the means to get there; and by giving them an insurance against problems such as sudden illness, which might have disastrous consequences in isolated regions. Communications are, unlike water supplies, instantly relocatable services. But the provision of outstation vehicles has been a destabilising influence as well as an asset. Community vehicles enable people to be much more mobile, and undoubtedly lead to more frequent absence from the outstation. On the other hand, as we have

stressed at the beginning, mobility is the means to survival, and continual movement in and out of outstations should not be generally interpreted as a sign of lack of commitment to staying there. Even when such movement is strongly related to easy access to grog, the resultant disruption does not necessarily indicate that people do not want to live there.

Housing, the third basic requirement cited by outstation people, like water supplies, presents problems if the location of the community is still uncertain. For obvious reasons it should always follow water supplies rather than the other way round. Many outstation houses are capable of being moved if necessary, and that would seem to be the best option until strong indications of the need for more substantial dwellings are there. Cane and Stanley (1985, 168) mention the contrast between the types of housing requested by outstation people in the eastern Pitjantjatjara lands around Ernabella, compared to the Pintupi. Besser block houses such as those found around Ernabella obviously cannot be easily moved. However the outstation movement around Ernabella is much more stable than that in which the Pintupi participate. Pintupi movement continues to progress ever westwards, leaving some of their earlier established outstations, such as those in the Luritja Homelands to the west of Papunya as 'ghosts'. Communities which have outgrown outstation status, such as Nyirripi, will probably also decline in population in the future, as resident Pintupi leave to reoccupy their Labbi Labbi homeland near Lake Mackay.

Cane and Stanley (1985, 167) suggest that the problem of providing an appropriate number of houses for outstation groups could be overcome by taking a simple population count and allocating dwellings on a rough basis of five people per house. While we acknowledge that the problems facing planners of outstation housing are serious, we consider such an approach to be fraught with danger because it takes so little account of mobility. The feature of bilocality commented upon earlier is particularly important in outstations. We do not see any practical way that an appropriate housing allocation can be made without detailed knowledge of the family structures of the outstation community, and their relationship to the Aboriginal town from which people moved. The regional approach to population assessment, discussed below, goes some way towards meeting these difficulties.

Mobility clearly affects the provision of these basic services. It poses even greater problems in the provision of other services such as education and health, because these require careful forward planning and a considerable investment in human as well as infrastructural resources.

Health services have been much the more flexible of these two. Basic health care can be provided within the camp situation, with a simple storage box for supplies, and a trained healthworker. The fact that there are now a significant number of trained Aboriginal healthworkers has made it possible for such facilities to be located in a number of outstations. However, even when this has been possible there have been further problems because people tend to use medicines and other supplies very heavily when new stocks have just been received, and the resource often runs out before it can easily be replenished. In addition healthworkers themselves are mobile, and, when they leave the outstation the community once again must depend on periodic visits by personnel from the nearest clinic. Here mobility also plays its part. Nurses who make the effort to travel one or two hundred kilometres into the bush only to find that their patients are not at home soon lose their patience. It is here that the two way radio, allowing health staff to relay the times of their visits in advance, becomes indispensable.

Education has proved to be one of the main bugbears of outstation servicing in Central Australia. As population structures suggest, the lack of primary schooling in outstations has inhibited the movement of younger families to join their parents in these locations. Requests for schools have been subject to years of consideration, during which time the need for these schools has either become overwhelming or it has, in some cases, disappeared altogether. Unlike health services, where it is recognised that a fairly simple infrastructure can be used, schools are assumed to need elaborate buildings, and in most cases a resident non-Aboriginal teacher who will need a house with running water, power, sewerage and other conveniences. Moreover the allocation of such a teacher depends on a certain number of children being present, a requirement which effectively forces people to keep their children away from school altogether if they are to get a school. Inevitably it is only the larger, well-established outstations which have acquired schools. Exceptions in Central Australia were the outstations of Hermannsburg in the mid 1970s where Aboriginal outstation teachers set up schools with the minimum of infrastructure, receiving support from non-Aboriginal staff in the central school. Such a system has been successfully developed in the region around Yirrkala in Arnhem Land.

Other outstation services which people often comment on but rarely have are small retail stores. While this would undoubtedly be convenient for customers, it would be difficult to maintain. Not only does the running of a store put heavy pressure on the person in charge, and lead to continual requests to lend money or to allow people to

purchase goods on tick, but the variations in population would make it very difficult to work out an appropriate system of stocking. Once again access to a Toyota provides the key to this important service, and for many people the best solution is probably moving to centrally placed stores where they can buy goods in bulk.

Defining a mobile population: a suggested approach

While a more profound understanding of Aboriginal mobility processes may assist planners and policy-makers to formulate appropriate ideas on future development in Central Australia, the application of these ideas still requires a workable demographic data base. Typologies such as that described earlier have, until now, formed the framework of that data base for departments such as Aboriginal Affairs and organisations such as the Aboriginal Development Commission. But such typologies impose a rigid structure on what, as this study has emphasised, is an extremely fluid situation. Although people may themselves identify with one location as their main place of residence, their family connections and traditional responsibilities may in fact lead to them spending much of their time elsewhere. Moreover lack of work, or deficiencies in service provision, may encourage people to journey to other places. Thus Aboriginal towns are closely interlinked with the outstations for which they act as resource centres; populations on Aboriginal-owned cattle stations interact continually with their kin and friends living on small excursions on neighbouring non-Aboriginal properties; and almost all groups today are part of a network centering on the non-Aboriginal town of Alice Springs. In addition no one location or section of the Central Australian region can be realistically isolated from the social, economic, religious and historical factors which have played an important part in determining its functioning and composition over and through time. By choosing to isolate a community in space and time service agencies will constantly encounter problems leading to unreliable population figures and inappropriate development plans. Therefore, while the typology used here provides a convenient way of summarising some common characteristics which affect mobility, and highlighting how these affect service delivery, it is not an appropriate channel for dealing with the problem of creating a population data base which is useful for planning purposes. An alternative approach, taking mobility and inter-community linkages into account and also recognising the importance of the social, economic and political setting is required. This will essentially be a regional approach.

Aboriginal society in Central Australia is based on a continuity which reveals itself through identity and through cultural practices. Such a continuity is vested in the land

itself, through the land-based relations of Aboriginal people. The people themselves define regions within the area, referring to them loosely in terms of language - 'country of that Anmatyerre mob'; in terms of subsection names - 'that country belongs to Jangala and Jampijinpa'; and in terms of natural resources - 'that mulga country; plenty honey-ant there.' Such terminology reflects their knowledge of these regions, a knowledge built up through generations of resource use and the transmission of lore concerning spiritual attributes. Although the delineation of boundaries between such regions may be less rigid than the conventional fence-lines which divide one pastoral property from another, the regions themselves undoubtedly exist. Moreover they exist in an Aboriginal rather than a non-Aboriginal sense. Thus for planning purposes they should correspond much more closely to the realities of Aboriginal life than do the existing administrative divisions used by bodies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics. They should also provide a more useful framework for documenting population data than that furnished by place specific typologies.

Determination of these Aboriginal regions could be an exacting task, involving lengthy consultation with a large number of people on many aspects of their society. These could cover genealogies, including location and description of paternal and maternal grandparents' country; areas utilised for subsistence; and areas utilised for various services. Many of these components however are expressed in spatial terms, through visits made between different localities. Thus a straightforward question about the spatial pattern of movement for each group of people produces a distinctive map which delineates the main region within which these people operate collectively. Figures 10.1 and 10.2 present such maps for the residents of Ti-Tree and Finke respectively. It is immediately clear that while each map of this type would be unique the spatial distributions obtained would overlap. Therefore while the Ti-Tree map (Fig. 10.1) shows Stirling, Aileron, Pinehill, Napperby, Anningie and Willowra as rural locations visited by a high proportion of Ti-Tree residents, similar maps for Mt Allen, Willowra and Napperby would also include many of these places. What would be obtained from compiling such maps for all major Aboriginal communities would be a series of intersecting regions (Fig. 10.3a). Places falling within the intersecting areas (for example X_1 , X_2 and Y (Fig. 10.3a) would require further investigation to determine the most appropriate main place with which to link them. Thus X_1 might be clearly affiliated to A because of family linkages, X_2 might have closer connections with C and Y with B. Regional boundaries would then become adjusted to accommodate this (Fig. 10.3b). Problems would clearly arise with places such as Z that fell into a number of regions,

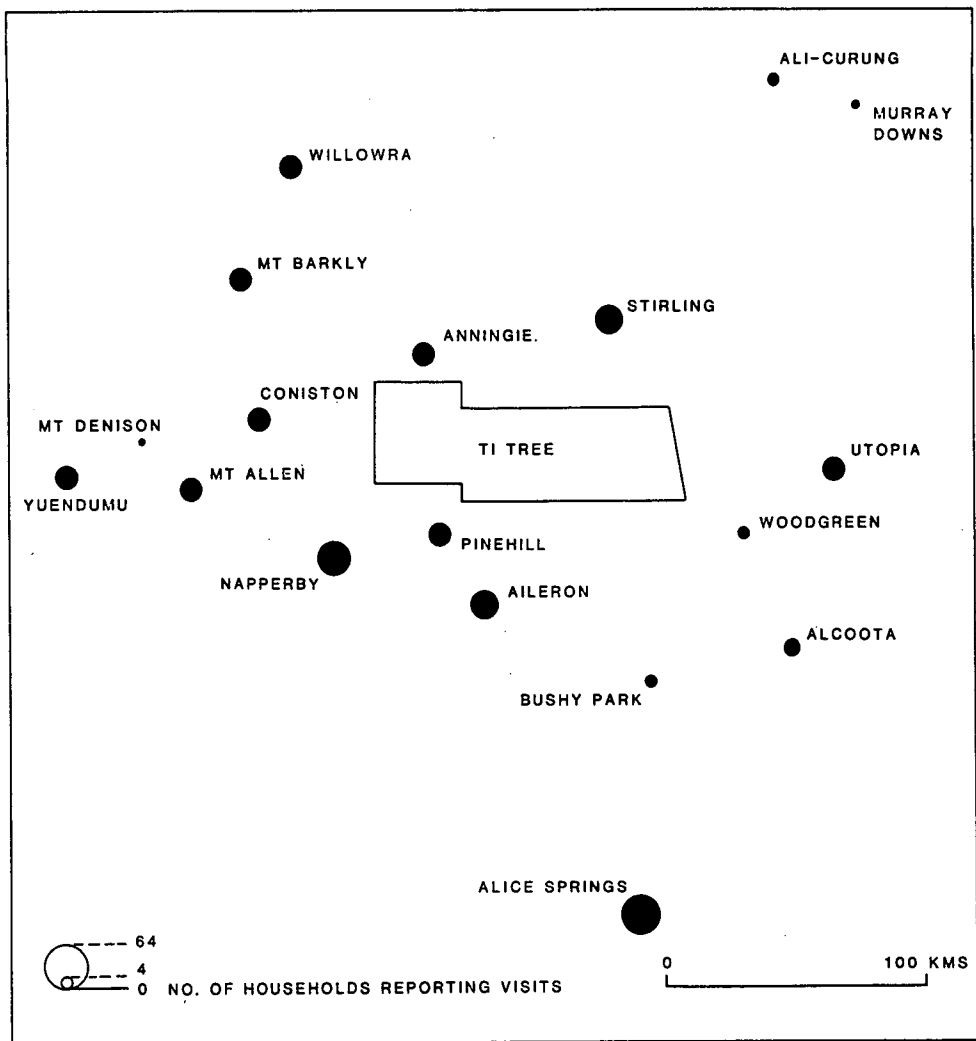


Figure 10.1 Places visited by Ti-Tree families, 1984

and unless clear differences emerged a somewhat arbitrary decision on their appropriate category would have to be made. But such problems arise in any type of boundary definition and must be accepted as part of the process. An additional problem concerns places such as Alice Springs which are used by people from all outlying settlements and whose residents also range very widely when visiting family. Here the only practical solution would be to classify Alice Springs as a separate entity. This does not accord with the argument that people interlink places and that the regional approach is more appropriate than the point specific approach. However it would be difficult to present an acceptable alternative.

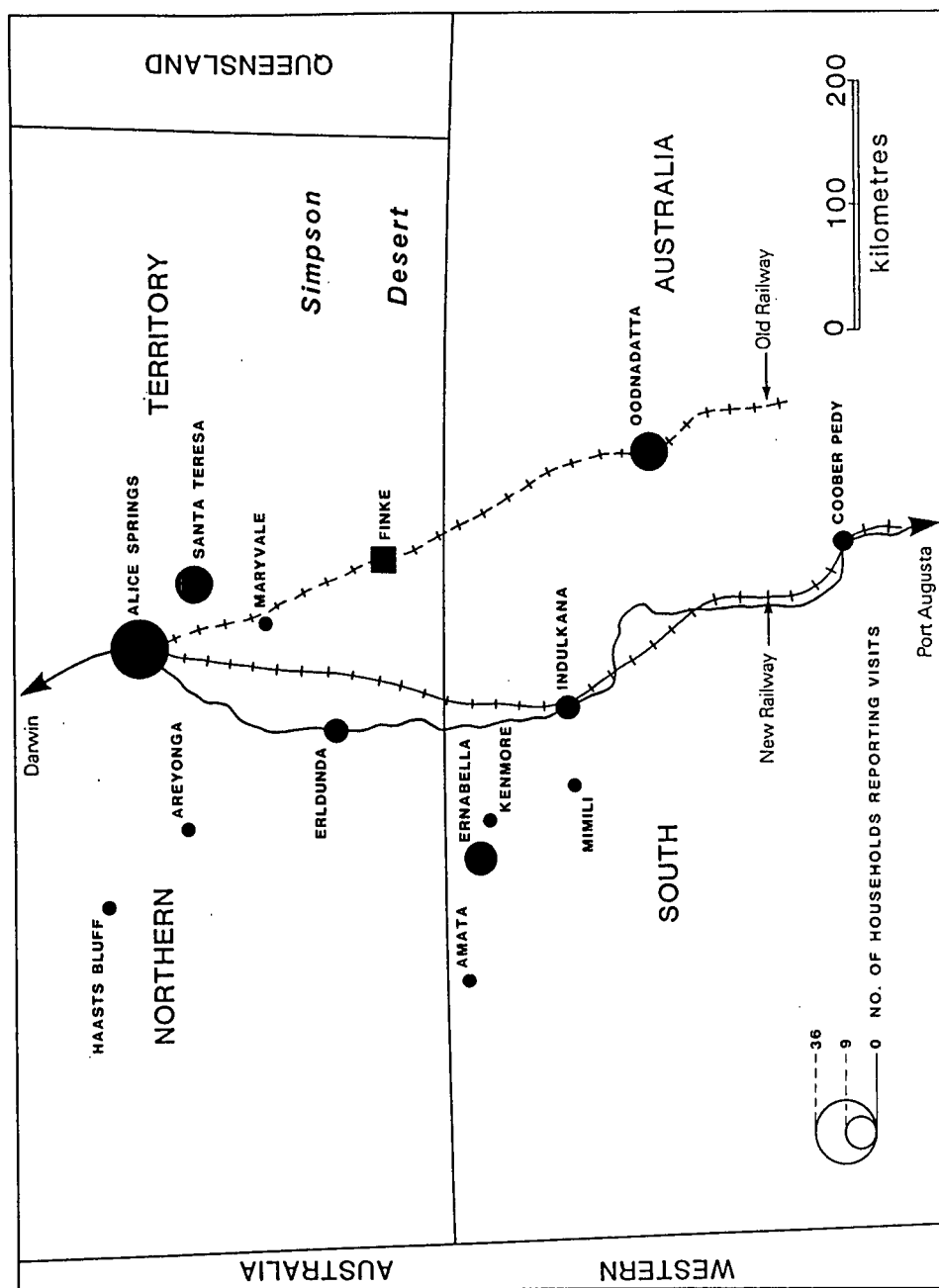


Figure 10.2 Places visited by Finke families, 1985

Although the delineation of regions in this way might at first appear cumbersome, the general stability of Aboriginal land-based relationships means that the process would not have to be frequently revised. Once the regional division is determined the problem of defining populations within each area can be approached. Each Aboriginal population group should be enumerated on a de jure basis. This would allow definition of the core population group, the people who regard that place as home and whom one would generally expect to find there. Many people in this group would have strong traditional reasons for their presence - ritual responsibility for the land and its resources, inherited either through descent, through long-standing residence or through other recognised means. Knowledge of these attributes, although not directly held by outsiders, is common to the group as a whole and some of its details might be considered private. However the bare facts needed for planning purposes - size and demographic characteristics of the group - could surely be relayed without unnecessary intrusion.

Definition of these core groups within the regional structure outlined above should ensure inclusion of most people regularly staying within the area. From the point of view of service delivery the process has to be taken a step further. The core populations can be used to decide on location and type of service to be provided, taking both group size and characteristics into account. Clearly the actual use of these services will be affected by mobility, for all the reasons presented in this study. But the distribution of resources obtained through this type of approach should correspond more closely with population needs than that obtained by the arbitrary de facto counts often employed at present.

Mobility for Survival

Contemporary Aboriginal population mobility in Central Australia is a human response to a setting in which elements drawn from pre-contact times intermingle and interact with others arising from over 100 years of non-Aboriginal settlement. The characteristics of that setting differ both spatially and temporally, and consequently the human response, population mobility, remains highly dynamic. But certain common threads can be traced. In particular, Aborigines move not at random but for specific reasons. These include the maintenance of their social networks; the continual reinforcement of their links to the land; the use of the land's natural resources. They also include access to education and health services; obtaining a cash income either through working or welfare; and purchasing food and other commodities now essential for survival. These reasons together are fundamental to the type of lifestyle to which

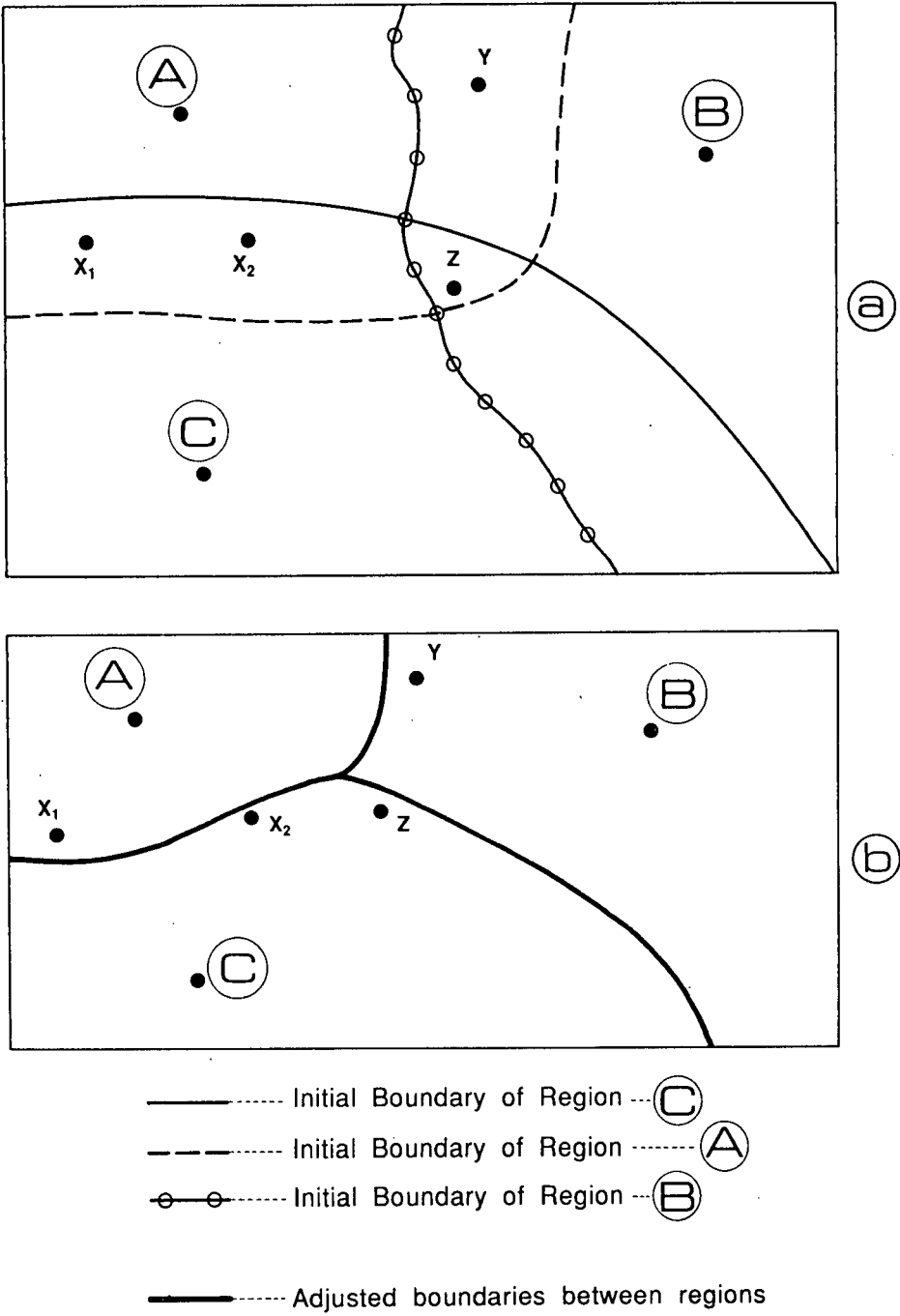


Figure 10.3 A model for delineating Aboriginal regions

Aborigines now aspire. Thus mobility can realistically be described as 'moving for survival'.

Recognition of the significance of mobility is therefore essential to the development of a satisfactory future for the Aborigines of the Centre. Such recognition clearly has significant implications for service provision. The most important of these is that services should as far as possible be made available where people intend to live, whether in outstations, Alice Springs, cattle stations or Aboriginal towns. This would seem to be obvious. But such a policy is still viewed with suspicion by many service organisations. Recent changes in Aboriginal settlement patterns have brought this into focus. A major effect of the Land Rights Act (NT) 1976 has been the reoccupation of country formerly abandoned under pressure. Such pressure was applied partly through using the non-Aboriginal services, such as houses, schools or welfare payments, as carrots to attract Aborigines into government and mission settlements. But that pressure could only be effective because, at the same time, people lacked the means to maintain many of the practices essential to the Aboriginal side of their lives. Today for many people in rural areas those means exist - they hold the land as Aboriginal freehold, unalienable title, recognised under both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal law, and they have the technology, such as vehicles, to enable them to reach those areas. Their response has been to return to their own country and by so doing to demonstrate very clearly that access to their traditional lands may take precedence over access to schools or shops.

Non-Aboriginal towns present a different picture. Here, in large centralised settlements, where a complete range of services is available, the Aboriginal population has also grown. But, both in the past and now, many non-Aborigines assume that they are only temporary town residents and that they should be encouraged to return to the rural communities from which they came. Such assumptions have prevented the provision of effective services for Aboriginal groups who are a vital and permanent part of the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek communities. If it were not for years of effort by poorly funded Aboriginal organisations many Aboriginal families in these towns would still be camping in the river bed or on pieces of waste ground, there would be no bilingual schooling taking account of specific Aboriginal cultural needs, and Aboriginal health and welfare status in the urban areas would be a great deal worse.

Outstations and non-Aboriginal towns essentially form the opposite ends of a spectrum encompassing Aboriginal service provision. Many of the other communities, particularly the ex mission and government settlements which are now the

Aboriginal towns, fall somewhere in between. These communities have been an artefact of administration, a deliberate attempt to push Aborigines to live in particular locations because these fitted the pattern of Central Australian development as perceived by non-Aborigines. The growth of the outstations and of the camps in Alice Springs have reduced their populations. But they have now existed for long enough to have a momentum and role of their own, albeit a role that differs from that of assimilation days. The ultimate challenge for administration is to recognise changes such as these, and to develop attitudes and plans sufficiently flexible to accommodate them both now and the future.

Understanding of all the factors which determine contemporary Aboriginal mobility in Central Australia is not in itself sufficient to ensure a more appropriate provision of services within the region. While, as this study suggests, mobility must be taken into account in service delivery, services, involving as they do considerable capital and human investment, cannot fully adjust to population movement. A compromise is necessary. Changes in methods of population assessment, focusing on Aboriginal rather than non-Aboriginal concepts of regionality, would make such a compromise more possible.

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