Economic Enterprises in Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory

Linda Ellanna, Peter Loveday, Owen Stanley, and Elspeth A. Young, with assistance from Ian White

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PREFACE

The objective of the present study was to identify opportunities for Aboriginal controlled economic enterprise in selected Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

For this the following terms of reference were agreed to:

1. To determine the potential in specific Aboriginal communities and groups for
   (a) expanding any existing economic enterprises, and
   (b) initiating new enterprises.

2. To identify different existing or possible forms for local management and control and to report on their appropriateness and acceptability (e.g. by council, by cooperative, by private firm, by community association).

3. To assess the employment needs of projects and how these might be met.

4. To determine the character and extent of outside assistance that may be needed in respect of
   (a) training
   (b) capital and other resources such as equipment
   (c) managerial and technical expertise
   (d) marketing
   (e) funding, including government program funding

and to identify sources from which this assistance may be obtained.

These terms meant that it was necessary to ascertain the nature of economic systems (market and subsistence sectors) in contemporary Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory in light of potential economic enterprise development; and to determine the influence of Aboriginal demography and social and cultural institutions on the planning, development, and potential success of economic enterprises in selected Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.
Intensive field work was carried out in two areas, Yuendumu and Barunga-Wugularr (also known as Bamyili and Beswick respectively in some of the literature). It was originally the plan to include field work in the community of Bulman, as part of the Barunga-Wugularr case study, at the same level of detail as in the other communities, since the three form a contemporary continuum of social, economic, and political interaction. However, due to a long period of ceremonial activity during the study period, only a brief period of field work was possible at Bulman, allowing only community level insights in this part of the case.

Yuendumu has considered but not yet adopted community government. Barunga and Wugularr have recently adopted community government in an amalgamation of both and Barunga's outstation, Eva Valley. Bulman has not been participating in a community government scheme to date. Community government provides opportunities, not available to local councils which do not have this form of local government, for council-initiated commercial development and this was of special interest in the research project. Although we had a special interest in places with community government, we have looked at enterprises appropriate to communities whether they have this form of local government or not. Many places do not have it, but they do have councils and for all of them the question may arise, possibly in connection with a proposal to take on a community government scheme, whether there are enterprises they could undertake or whether any council functions could be carried out as enterprises.

Yuendumu and Barunga-Wugularr present us with other relevant contrasts. Yuendumu has outstations; Barunga-Wugularr communities have only one, Eva Valley; Yuendumu is about 300 km from Alice Springs; whereas Barunga is only 80 km from Katherine. Rather than confine ourselves to the main community of an area, we considered enterprises for the area as a whole. In the case of Yuendumu this meant working also at Mt Allen and Nyirrpi and considering the outstations dependent on Yuendumu; in the Barunga-Wugularr areas we had hoped to include comparable data on Bulman within the study. However, difficulties in arranging access at times agreeable to all concerned permitted the development of only a partial data base on this community. Last minute attempts to obtain replacement data from other communities, such as Yirrkala, were also unsuccessful even though we delayed work for some time in the hope that more data on outstations and subsistence enterprise could be obtained.
The Territory administration and the Commonwealth have both undergone a number of departmental changes during work on this report. In particular the Department of Community Development which commissioned the report has been abolished and elements of its structure relocated. The local government functions have gone with the Office of Local Government to the Department of Labour and Administrative Services and the Aboriginal Policy Coordination Unit to the Chief Minister's Department.

We have not undertaken the detailed assessments of individual projects which a consultant might make. Instead, we concerned ourselves with general factors which must be taken into account in assessing enterprise proposals. These are exemplified by reference to particular proposals in the study communities.

Although there are exceptions, all too often commercial consultants and administrators think only of market oriented enterprises. This is one shortcoming because, as we shall argue, there are other possibilities. In the economic development process, economic enterprises are generally viewed solely as existing in the realm of market economics. There are non market (i.e. subsistence) sectors to local Aboriginal economic systems and even market enterprises may entail non-market components. Other shortcomings include the assessment of enterprise proposals principally in terms of resources, management, and markets. The Aboriginal social, political, and cultural contexts are frequently neglected, much as if the proposal was for setting up a small business in a non-Aboriginal town. For Aboriginal communities a wider range of factors has to be taken into account and our report is designed to show what these are in connection with problems of enterprise development.

Our approach, to look at the whole context in a community and its area, leads to a greater emphasis on the historical, social and political elements in enterprise development. For economic enterprises to be successful and controlled by Aboriginal leaders, they must be supported by those who hold locally perceived leadership roles within the communities of concern. Such leaders must be able to convince residents of the community of the value and worth of the enterprise to personal, family, and wider community well-being. They must be able to relate the enterprise in question to local sociocultural and sociopolitical conditions. Lastly, they must be able to deal with the administrative staff of outside, usually governmental, organisations who will be offering advice, funds and help.
They must therefore have a competence in both community politics, including dealing with traditional leaders, and administrative matters and the politics which arise there.

The report therefore includes recommendations which relate both to particular enterprises in the study communities and to considerations for assessing any enterprise proposal. It is intended that these would be generally applicable and would help Aboriginal leaders, administrators and consultants in their work.

The first chapter introduces the subject of enterprise development generally, and after arguing for a broader definition of enterprise than is customary, one which encompasses subsistence production, we develop a model for analysis of enterprise by reference to resources and sectors.

The second chapter deals with community councils, especially community government and the politics of communities.

The third deals with the sources of funding for enterprise development and to some general comments about the difficulties which funding presents. The fourth outlines the problems that arise for economic development in Aboriginal communities.

The two community studies follow, presenting detailed accounts of the communities, their resources, their populations, their past and present enterprises. These two sections then lead to a brief concluding section, in which recommendations are presented.
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SECTION ONE

Chapter One: Economic Enterprises for Aboriginal Communities

Chapter Two: Economic Enterprises and Community Government

Chapter Three: Funding Sources for Aboriginal Communities in the NT

Chapter Four: Problems Affecting Enterprise Development in Aboriginal Communities in the NT
CHAPTER ONE

ECONOMIC ENTERPRISES FOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

As with modern foragers in northern North America, an analysis of economic life in contemporary Aboriginal communities reveals integrated subsistence and market or cash sectors. Within and between these two sectors of the socioeconomic system, processes of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services are conducted. Goods and services may be strictly conceived of as economic in nature (such as food and raw material production and distribution) or more peripheral, such as the provision of social services (for example, health care delivery or education). In this context, a brief characterisation of the two mutually supportive economic sectors in Aboriginal communities is provided.

From a market perspective, Australia, like the United States and Canada, has minimally two very distinct economies. There is the prosperous and dominant European economy on the one hand and the poorer and underdeveloped, from a Western point of reference, Aboriginal economy on the other. We are concerned with enterprise development in the remote Aboriginal communities of the NT, which constitute part of that Aboriginal economy. We are especially concerned with social, cultural, and political factors which affect the ability of Aboriginal communities to develop market-oriented enterprises with minimal support from outside funding sources. By enterprises, we mean both those productive activities requiring cash resources and those producing cash income. In addition, we are interested in how productive and distributive activities conducted in the subsistence or non-market sector can be seen as 'enterprise development' or integrated into the overall economy to the benefit of Aboriginal residents of such communities. Lastly, we are interested in how market production and distribution conflict with or are supported by the subsistence sector of the economy. As it is beyond the scope of this research to develop and present a comprehensive description of the subsistence sectors of the economies of the study communities, the discussion of the Aboriginal subsistence-cash socio-economic continuum is general and theoretical in tenor.

Subsistence Economy vs Market Economy

A subsistence economy is typical of hunter-gatherer societies. It is what Mauss (1967) and Gregory (1982) have also termed a 'gift economy' as opposed to a 'commodity
economy' when emphasising distribution as opposed to production. In this type of analysis, a gift or subsistence economy differs from a commodity or market economy in several respects.

A subsistence economy, or subsistence-based socio-economic system (Wolfe and Ellanna 1983), is characterised by what Sahlins (1972) terms a 'domestic mode of production'. This concept describes the social organisational relationships which exist in hunting-gathering economies. In Sahlins' typology, there are several characteristics of the domestic mode of production:

1. relations of production derive from socially defined kinship categories;
2. surplus value in production is collectively appropriated within the kinship-based domestic units; and
3. production is overwhelmingly directed towards use within what is defined as the social community.

In the domestic mode, production is instituted by domestic groups - usually families comprising more than a single household - and the division of labor is commonly ordered upon the criteria of age and sex. The technology of production is commonly held by the productive group, not individuals or non-kinship based corporations. Decisions regarding production are primarily at the discretion of the producers rather than outside factors or agents. Technology is small-scale and processes of production are unitary rather than segmented - that is, the domestic unit sees production through from beginning to end. Productive groups - usually extended families - enjoy usufruct rights to traditional lands and resources and there is no class of landless paupers or groups having no control over the means of production. The domestic mode of production leads to some degree of self-limitation - a phenomenon which could be termed 'underproduction' by European observers. That is, productive outputs and demands are generally substantially less than potentially achievable from the land, technology, resources, and the work force.

In a subsistence economy or gift economy, there is little or no private property and people do not have alienable rights over things (Gregory 1982, 19). As Mauss (1967) astutely observed, in such an economy, objects are never really completely separated from the people who have exchanged them. Goods and services are exchanged in a systematic and patterned fashion between individuals, families, larger kinship groups, or communities. Accumulation of goods can occur, but stockpiling benefits the group, not the individual. Reciprocity, either balanced or generalised, dominates distribution and exchange.
Distribution or exchange of a good or service establishes a relationship between the giver and receiver, rather than between 'things' as in the case of a market or commodity economy. Since objects are not alienable, what is given away must always be reciprocated. Thus, a gift creates a debt that has to be repaid and the aim of a gift giver may be to acquire as many gift debtors as possible (Gregory 1982, 19). Land, a principal concern in commodity or market economies, is not held in personal or non-kinship based corporate ownership. Land and the technology of production are based on traditional sociopolitical relationships and can not be bought or sold via the mechanism of the market. Such economies are typical of social systems in which clans play an important role, such as in the case of Australian Aborigines.

The market economy is typical of societies based on intensive agriculture and/or industrialisation. Production units are based on criteria related to specialised skills, training, or education. Production groups are generally composed of unrelated people, and land and technology are owned by individuals or non-kinship based corporations. Goods are produced primarily for market exchange rather than for domestic consumption by the producers. Producers are generally distinct from those who conduct distribution — that is, there exists a special class of merchants. Since production is not for local consumption, market factors determine demand for what is produced. Therefore, self-regulation is not common in market production. Cash is the medium of exchange and price is determined by laws of supply and demand.

In market or commodity economies, there is a fundamental distinction between things and persons — property is held by individuals and is alienable and exchangeable, particularly through the mechanism of the market. There is a sharp distinction between a thing and its owner, and concepts of private property predominate in describing the relationships between the two. Services, like materials goods, are provided through the market. Wealth is accumulated for the benefit of individual or non-kinship based corporations.

Impact of Market on Subsistence

The orthodox view is that the original precapitalist indigenous economies are doomed, have already been mostly destroyed or disrupted and are bound to be replaced by market based economies. This will happen both generally and at the community level. This, in the conventional wisdom, would be a 'good thing' anyway, as well as being inevitable. It would increase the productivity of the indigenes and lead
to their betterment and social advancement. They would
become the same as other citizens, assimilated, enjoying
equal rights and opportunities to participate competitively
in economic life. To protect and 'molly coddle' them with
special programs is merely to delay the day, making them
dependent and apathetic; it is to prolong the misery before
they are fully integrated. The sooner indigenes are trained
to work in the modern, market economy the better for
everyone.

The Orthodox View of Hunter-Gatherer Economic Development

There is considerable and incontrovertible evidence
from Australia and North America that, although there are
complex responses to the disruption of traditional
subsistence economies, indigenous minorities variably resist
assimilation to the dominant economy and culture (Brody
1982; Wolfe and Ellanna 1983; Altman 1987; Usher 1976;
Bodley 1983). This is in direct opposition to the orthodox
view that, given the opportunity, hunter-gatherers
unquestionably take advantage of opportunities to
participate in market economies and western culture — that
is, that they willingly abandon their traditional way of
life and adopt the 'superior' model provided by industrial
nation-states. This is particularly thought to be the case
when traditional subsistence-based economic systems are
seriously disrupted or destroyed by factors of cultural and
related economic change. This is a simplistic and naive view
of processes of change founded in the unilineal
evolutionary views of nineteenth century European and
American 'armchair' scholars. That is not to say that
individual indigenous people have not been involved success-
fully in market enterprises, but this is not the typical
community response.

The most common reaction to a disruption of a sub-
sistence economy is the integration of cash and subsistence
sectors of the overall economy and the necessary adaptation
of related sociocultural systems (see Altman 1987; Asch
1977, 1982; Berger 1985; Dacks 1981; Feit 1982; Lonner
1986; Rushforth 1977; Usher 1978; Watkins 1977; Wolfe and
Ellanna 1983; Young 1981; Young and Fisk 1982).

The production component of the market economy is
generally more difficult to integrate into a mixed
subsistence/cash socioeconomic system than are the
distribution and consumption sectors. That is, while hunters
and gatherers historically and worldwide have demonstrated a
desire for nontraditional goods obtainable through newly
developed or established markets and have become familiar
with the use of all-purpose money for acquiring such
commodities, they have been reluctant to participate in the
productive sectors of market economies. Based on the northern North American experience, such integration of a market productive sector has been most successfully achieved when the cash productive activity involves simple commodity production similar in nature to subsistence production. For example, during the fur trade era in North America, hunters and gatherers harvested the same resource for both subsistence and market exchange. The social composition of the productive unit remained essentially unchanged whether the product was destined for market or for domestic consumption. Although new technology was introduced and accepted (such as guns, commercially constructed boats with outboard motors, steel traps, and, in recent years, snow machines and all-terrain vehicles) and there was a greater temporal commitment to trapping than to other activities, the underlying principles of production remained intact. Access to land used for trapping continued to be based on principles of usufruct rights rather than individual 'ownership'. The same phenomena has been observed in the participation of Alaska Natives in commercial fishing (Wolfe et al. 1984) and in Canada (Feit 1982; Quigley and McBride 1987). As Usher (1978, 155) says, the 'issue is not jobs or hunting; it is jobs and hunting...'.

Here in Australia the integration of cash and subsistence sectors of Aboriginal economies is found, typically, in outstation settings (Altman 1982; 1985, 163-174; Cane and Stanley 1985; Young 1981). They are also found in some other remote area settings as well, as on cattle stations or in larger settlements where people have access to marine or bush resources which have never been degraded or which have since been regenerated.

Options for Enterprise Development

It was established in the preceding section that the socioeconomic systems of NT Aboriginal communities include both market and subsistence sectors. Governmentally provided cash, goods, or services are problematic in an economic framework, as they do not represent a productive element of the local economy and are not necessarily subject to rules of distribution or consumption typical of either the subsistence or market sectors of the economy. We will discuss them in more detail below. Here we wish to emphasise that two productive sectors exist in Aboriginal economic systems—subsistence and market—and two avenues within which economic enterprise can either be created or enhanced.

It is germane in the context of this study to consider enterprise as being any productive economic activity—subsistence or market—whether the product of the activity is for personal or kin group (domestic) distribution or
consumption or for market exchange. The definition of economic enterprise is more inclusive in this context than that which is applied solely to market commodity production as is the conventional practice. That is, we see no reason to restrict the use of the term enterprise, or more importantly the concept, to the realm of the market economy.

In identifying options for Aboriginal enterprise development, both subsistence and market sectors of the economy must be considered, in addition to resources from the problematic service sector. The complexity of an economic analysis in a mixed subsistence-market system relates to several factors. For example, it is difficult to segregate the subsistence from the market sector of a particular economy. Individual or group initiative (enterprise) among Aborigines is requisite in production for contemporary subsistence purposes, particularly if such production entails the setting up of an outstation and the regeneration of land. Additionally, not only have market commodities (such as firearms, blankets, cookware) been incorporated into the production, distribution, and consumption components of mixed subsistence-cash economic systems, but some traditional productive activities now yield both goods for the domestic consumption, and commodities for market exchange. Cattle and fishing activities, for example, may require considerable planning and effort and provide either food and raw material for local distribution and consumption or a commodity for sale or trade (see Young 1988). Of course, harvesting and management practices may differ according to the intended use of the product, but this does not affect the use of the concept embodied in the phrase 'economic enterprise' in such a context.

Although separately identified for analytic purposes, the sectors of the economies of each community are related to one another and to elements of the social and political subsystems – that is, there is a community economic configuration and it is linked with other aspects of the overall social and cultural system. The economic connections can be illustrated by the following example. To insist on cattle production for a market may result in changes to the use of land which reduce or destroy subsistence activity on that land. It may be that the promotion of a subsistence activity is preferable in cost-benefit terms and in terms of its effects on the morale of a community to a marginal cattle operation. The disposable funds in private hands, always meagre, which community councils might tap for enterprise development, by using their power to levy rates and charges (none have yet done so), are now being reduced by governmental charges, justified on 'user pays' grounds, for services such as electricity, hitherto provided free.
The political connections are not difficult to imagine. Traditional owners of land, interested in maintenance of subsistence living, may well oppose the use of land for market oriented activities; those who favour enterprise development must win them over if they are to succeed. A successful market-oriented enterprise will result in an increase in the local political power of those involved in it, possibly with increase in tension in the community as a result. For some enterprises, white advisors are indispensable and they introduce a complicating dimension to the politics of a local community. And it may be necessary for a local council to take special measures to ensure that a new enterprise does not have unwanted effects on other economic activities in the community. For these reasons then, it is necessary to consider the implications for the community micro-economy as a whole when a new enterprise is being considered.

There is another aspect to the matter. The micro-economy of an Aboriginal community is fragile by comparison with the economy of most other places, even small rural towns. An Aboriginal community is normally poor in resources and it is 'open' and subject to economic pressures from the larger society which it has little power to control. And politically it is subject to controls and rules imposed on it by outside government funding agencies and other authorities which will provide essential services and other goods only on conditions which they determine. A community government council will be confronted by the necessity to make economic and political decisions not only about enterprises in its own community but also about the relations of its own micro-economy with the outside world. In other words, as community government is introduced, an Aboriginal community-based mechanism is being created by means of which the local micro-economy as a whole might be managed, both internally and in its interactions with its external economic environment.

Recent analysis has shown that traditional economies are adaptive and, for the people concerned, that they are rational, economically rational, ways of organising the production and distribution of goods and services for local consumption and, sometimes, for a limited market. For example, a recent analysis of an Inuit micro-economy in Canada shows that a transfer of funds from the cash economy is necessary for the operation of the country food sector and that this transfer mechanism is the key to both the viability of an economic structure in which subsistence and cash economies coexist and the continued capacity of the country food sector to absorb large amounts of labour (Quigley and McBride 1987, 208).
This means that it makes good practical sense, in policy terms, for administrators to assist and promote traditional economic activities instead of taking the old fashioned view, as they once did, that these activities are doomed. Traditional methods of production can be redirected and adapted to supply the market - art and craft production is the prime example - but they can also be left, without the medium of cash transactions and market arrangements, to provide for local consumption. They are then part of a subsistence economy. It is this subsistence economy which, according to earlier analysts and administrators, was doomed to extinction and replacement by a market economy.

The importance of considering the subsistence sector for integrating enterprise development has multiple components. Expenditures by the government are very minimal compared with large scale, market-based alternatives. Use of the subsistence sector may result in a reduction of the dependency of Aboriginal people on welfare payments for food and commodities purchased in stores - that is, a reduction is what we have been calling the 'service sector' of these economies. Nutrition is likely to improve and alcohol consumption decline if the assumptions that locally derived foods are superior in requisite nutrients and that reinforcing Aboriginal ties to the land results in improved self esteem and self sufficiency are proven to be correct. Closely related to the second of these assumptions is the view that a decline in dependency on government through increased subsistence activities provides to those who engage in it a sense of cultural continuity with their past, a reduction of community anomie, and a decreased feeling of alienation and demoralisation in regards to their relationship to the larger nation-state of which they are a part.

Foods and other commodities purchased in western markets have not assumed the function of 'bush' foods in contributing to community solidarity (Altman 1987; Gregory 1982), since, as discussed above, the exchange of goods provides for a relationship between things and not between the giver and recipient. It is via the patterned distribution of subsistence resources and the resultant reciprocal obligations that group solidarity and lines of authority are established and maintained. The role of subsistence distribution in reinforcing community alliances and lines of authority can not be understated if a social group is expected to function as a unit in its interactions with external individuals, agencies, and corporations. Therefore, it is to the benefit of those desiring to introduce community-based market economic productive activities also to support subsistence activities. The benefits of supporting the subsistence sector in Aboriginal communities accrue to the larger society as well. The revival and strengthening of the subsistence sector of
Aboriginal economies within the outstation movement is a case in point. Dollars may well be more profitably spent in support services for outstations than in marginally profitable enterprise such as a cattle operation which perpetuate Aboriginal dependency on the dominant, non-Aboriginal society.

The difficulty with a proposal to promote a subsistence enterprise or activity is that it is asking people to think the conventionally unthinkable. Such a concept is at odds with preconceived ideas about what constitutes 'development'. In addition, those who are not willing to undertake the necessary economic arithmetic are likely to reject such a proposal. For example, from such a perspective, supplying a vehicle to an Aboriginal community to assist with hunting or gathering activities is considered outrageous in light of western common economic sense or as a wasteful indulgence of the whims of blackfellows.

The Two-Sector Analysis Refined

In common with most writers we have spoken so far as though there were only two or only two principal sectors, market and subsistence, to consider in analysing the mixed micro-economies of Aboriginal communities. We did however note that the governmentally provided cash, goods and services are problematic in the conceptual framework for economic analysis and we now turn to a more detailed discussion of the two-sector analysis, arguing that a three sector scheme provides for more accurate and subtle analysis. Economic systems, whether they be market or subsistence, are generally analysed by the concepts of production, distribution (sometimes referred to as exchange), and consumption. These concepts are applicable to any economic system. Virtually all contemporary hunter-gatherer economies including those of Aborigines are mixed market/subsistence economies. We have argued that in discussing enterprise development, a broad definition of the concept 'enterprise' should be employed, which would include production in both market and subsistence sectors of mixed economies. Further, we have argued that the concept of enterprise development is at its most insightful and suggestive in relation to mixed economies, if it leads to support, in a mutually integrative fashion, for both the market and subsistence sectors of Aboriginal economies.

Within the market sector, one can further subdivide the private (business) from public sectors. The public sector is sometimes called the service sector because it is the one within which the various publicly provided services such as roads, health, education, welfare, police and so on can be grouped.
This leads to another related use of the term in which the service sector is contrasted with the manufacturing, agricultural, mining, construction and commercial sectors. In this contrast, the service sector usually includes not only the publicly provided services listed above (possibly excluding police), but also privately provided personal services such as restaurants, hotels, places of entertainment, laundries, hairdressers and the like. These privately provided services are clearly part of the market economy. It is, in passing, noteworthy that few if any of them are provided commercially in Aboriginal communities. The publicly provided services are normally regarded as part of the market economy although for some economists conceptual difficulties arise in determining how they can be regarded as productive and in determining how value added is to be assessed for a service activity.

Difficult though it may be to quantify the local 'value added' in respect of services such as health care, education, water, power, police, sewerage, roads and the like the production of these services and their distribution are not wholly effected by external agencies. The local Aboriginal residents are - or can be - employed in the provision of these services and as a result some 'productive' work is done in the service activity and some 'value' is locally added as a result. This is in sharp contrast to the direct cash payments of the welfare sector to be discussed below. Furthermore, even if the value of services is not determined and their distribution is not effected by pricing and competition within a market, the communities regard them as highly valuable, even indispensable. Finally, as noted above, the services do provide wage employment for Aborigines of a kind found in the market sector elsewhere. That is, employment in a privately owned, profit-oriented store would be part of the private sector of the market component, while employment in a hospital or a clinic would be part of the public sector of the market component since it is funded by public monies. From the point of view of economic analysis within the community, both provide wage employment for cash which is then used by the employees to purchase goods or services.

The conceptual difficulty about publicly provided services alluded to above is compounded because the administrative agencies which provide the employment and the services are also the instruments through which some transfer payments are effected. The most characteristic transfer payments are those of the Department of Social Security: the cash payment to individuals of an assortment of pensions and benefits, such as unemployment benefit. But beside that, some other services for which people are neither expected to pay nor expected to insure are also a mechanism for market transfers from the dominant
market oriented community to the dependent Aboriginal community.

The dependency of Aboriginal communities has arisen as a result of contact with non-Aboriginal society and its cash economy. Subsistence economies were disrupted and since then, in the assimilation phase, dependency has been maintained by the mechanism of transfer payments - a welfare system. In cases in which indigenous people are heavily or, more rarely, solely dependent on transfer payments, the economy is sometimes referred to as a 'welfare' or 'service' economy.

This immediately leads to confusion between a nonmarket 'service' economy and the 'service sector' of the market component of mixed economies. That part of a community's economy which consists of transfer or welfare payments may then be better described as the welfare component to avoid confusion with the service sector of the market economy. This sector is dependent upon cash transfers from governmental agencies to indigenous people through social security payments to individuals or communities or on the direct supply of goods and services by such agencies. In other words, the community residents do not participate in the production of the goods and services distributed to them in the welfare sector. The distribution of such goods have both primary and secondary components. The initial or primary distribution of goods, services, or cash is externally determined with little to no local control and is not by means of market mechanisms. On the other hand, the secondary distribution - that which occurs in the community - has a greater degree of local control and may be reinvested, in part, into the market sector (for example, purchases from the store by means of cash derived from transfer payments). Nonetheless, the welfare component can not be viewed as a sector per se of the local economy in the same sense as the other three sectors, since it is not characterised by productive activity.

It is nonetheless properly regarded as an element or component because it provides resources, principally cash, which can be used economically in both market and subsistence sectors. That is, someone can buy food at the grocery store or a rifle for hunting kangaroo - in the first case it leads to direct consumption and in the second it is reinvested in the productive activities of the subsistence sector of the economy. The initial distribution of the cash resource has little to do with the local economic system but how it is distributed once it arrives in the local community must be looked at in terms of the micro-economy. Nevertheless, production rather than distribution and consumption, determines sectors.
The analysis thus leads to the identification of the following components or sectors in a community's micro-economy in terms of productive activities:

- the subsistence sector
- the market sector - privately and publicly provided goods and services
- the service sector - publicly provided services (health, education, power, water, welfare).

It could be argued that the publicly provided services of the market, the service sector for short, is best considered not as a sector of the economy at all but as community infrastructure. Of course, the staffing and institutional and physical arrangements are infrastructure, but since some productive activity takes place by means of this infrastructure, the service activity itself is to be considered as a distinct sector, part of the market sector, of the local micro-economy.

This delineation of a three-sector scheme enables us not only to describe briefly the leading features of the micro-economies of particular communities, providing a basis for systematic comparison between them, but it also enables us to provide a framework for the discussion of the inter-relationships of economic activities in the different sectors.

To indicate first how the scheme may be used to characterise and compare communities. All NT Aboriginal communities have a welfare component and broadly speaking they do not differ from one another in this respect. Where there are differences, they follow from the reluctance of a few communities to allow their members to accept unemployment benefits and, more important, from the commutation, via Community Development Employment Programs (CDEPs), of unemployment benefits into wages for productive work. The CDEPs will be dealt with below.

The communities all have what we here call a service sector, that is publicly funded services such as education, health care, police (in some), roads, power supply, sewerage (in some), barge landings (in some), welfare services. Those, as we have noted above, do sometimes entail some transfer payments, but they do provide productive employment as well for local Aborigines - and, of course, for a number of resident non-Aborigines. The service sector is being modified to some extent, with a consequent reduction in the transfer payments, by the imposition of charges for some services, notably electricity.

Community micro-economies differ most in the two remaining sectors. Some have very little subsistence
activity. The Tiwi on Bathurst and Melville Islands are one example. Yirrkala, with its outstations; Eva Valley, an outstation of Barunga; and Bulman, with its four outstations, are examples of communities with substantial subsistence enterprises. In general, the bush resources in the vicinity of larger communities have been depleted severely. Communities are likely to have significant subsistence activity only if residents have been able to establish outstations in good country or are able to draw on marine resources, such as is the case in Yirrkala. The market sector is the scene of much more activity in some communities than others: the Tiwi at Nguiu on Bathurst Island have a relatively strong market sector fostered with mission help based on local business enterprise (screen printing, pottery, store) while Yirrkala has relatively little private business activity (artefact production, store). The three communities in this study, Yuendumu, Barunga and Wugularr, each have a service sector, a smaller market sector and a limited amount of subsistence activity. Each receives welfare payments although Barunga, by means of CDEP projects has built up an aspect of its service sector and may develop projects in the market sector with CDEP funds.

To discuss the relationships between economic activities in different sectors of one micro-economy, it is useful first to list the activities in the three sectors. This we do for the communities of Yuendumu and Barunga/Wugularr/Eva Valley/Bulman, to be discussed later in detail. Here the aim is to indicate, by concrete examples, the general questions that will arise in the particular cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsistence sector</th>
<th>Market sector</th>
<th>Service sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gathering bush food, including hunting.</td>
<td>Cattle operation</td>
<td>Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle operation</td>
<td>Mining company's operations, incl. store.</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social club's store.</td>
<td>Adult education Council's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Council's road contracts.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing Association contracts.</td>
<td>- garbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Artists Assoc. Collecting materials for arts and crafts, working them to finished objects.</td>
<td>- power house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seed collection for sale in market.</td>
<td>- roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- social</td>
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<td>Security</td>
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<td>Business</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Police</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Housing Assoc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Media Assoc.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Outstation</td>
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<td>Resource Centre</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mission</td>
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</table>
BARUNGA/WUGULARR/EVA VALLEY/BULMAN

Subsistence sector
Gathering bush food, including hunting and fishing.

Market sector
Cattle and buffalo projects.
Progress Association stores.
Collecting materials for arts and crafts, working them to finished objects.
Barunga Festival.
Tourist development.
Take away food.
Garages.

Service sector
School
Adult Education Clinic
Council's operations
- garbage
- power house
- roads
- workshop
- CDEP projects*
Housing Assoc.
Police
Women's Resource Association

* These can involve the market, service, and subsistence sectors.

Some economic activities may be conducted more or less independently of one another, but in the micro-economy of an Aboriginal community few are likely to be independent, that is, to have no effect on any other activity and to be unaffected by any other activity. First, on the production side, there is generally a scarcity of resources in most communities and economic activities may be in competition with one another for the available resources. Secondly, on the distribution side, activities which are market oriented may well be in competition for a limited local market. And thirdly, several activities in the lists above, are in more than one sector. A cattle operation can provide killers for the group which manages them, without any sale of beast or meat; seed collection can be for both food and the market; arts and crafts' activities will supply local users without cash sales, as well as market outlets; the Housing Association may have both service sector and market sector activities.

Production may be considered first: of the various resources needed, labour alone is generally not in short supply, although skilled labour certainly is. Capital is scarce and people in communities are at such a basic standard of living that there is little significant accumulation of wealth, either individually or collectively (as through the Council or a business of some kind). Capital and skilled labour must therefore both be imported, at a cost, from the external dominant economy.

The material resources are principally the land and what it produces: renewable materials, such as plant and
animal life, and non-renewable materials, mostly mineral ores, gas and oil. The non-renewable resources are usually not exploited directly by Aboriginal communities (there have been one or two small exceptions in the past such as Yuendumu’s mining company). Aboriginal economic activities are, however, likely to compete for renewable resources. This is most clearly seen in the example of cattle enterprises which may well involve the destruction of plant life if overstocked, the displacement of animals and the preemptive use of water supplies which are essential for the maintenance of subsistence activities. The damage from overstocking can often be redressed and a balance reached between subsistence activities and commercial cattle activities, provided that Aborigines are not pushed into giving priority to commercial operation.

On the distribution side, activities must be considered in relation to both internal and external markets. For example, if a cattle operation had customarily met both a local market demand and an external market, it would be economically and probably politically unwise to ‘develop’ it by imposing conditions on its operation which facilitated its external market activity but hindered its local market activity. Such a situation may arise, for example, when an Aboriginal pastoral company are advised to restrict the provision of ‘killers’ for their profitability. Another example is provided by the local market for foodstuffs which may be supplied both by subsistence activity and by the sale of foodstuffs from the store.

Not all distribution in these micro-economies is by means of the local and external market or by cash transactions. Goods, services and resources such as bush tucker are also distributed within the subsistence sector. While the distribution of small quantities of produce is generally fairly flexible, that of larger amounts, for example the meat of large game like kangaroos, emus, turtles and dugong, follows rigid rules. These limit distribution to particular families, or to people who have contributed their equipment or their specific skills in the chase. Ceremonial knowledge, and the associated skills of story-telling, painting and singing, is also distributed according to rules. Such distribution patterns not only affect the subsistence sector but may play a role in the market sector, where such skills are used to earn cash. This is most obvious in the case of the artefact industry.

These examples are not intended to be exhaustive; they are intended to emphasise that in assessing a possible enterprise, it should not be evaluated in isolation from other possible enterprises and that the evaluation must take account of economic activities in three different sectors.
Productive economic activities, in both the market and the subsistence sectors, are shaped by the sociocultural and institutional context within which they are conducted. The larger Aboriginal communities have all been created either by governments or missions and have been the means through which a variety of policies, from protection, through assimilation, to selfdetermination and selfmanagement have been administered in Aboriginal society. The larger communities - but not the outstations which are offshoots from them and dependent on them - all now have local government and it is through their local councils and outstation resource centres that many, but not all services, are provided. They are also one of the principal local institutions through which, or by means of which, government funds are made available in communities. Other organisations such as housing associations and cattle companies are other avenues through which government money is applied in communities. The next two chapters deal with local government in communities and, in broad terms, with the sources of government funding for communities.
CHAPTER TWO

ECONOMIC ENTERPRISES AND COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT

The larger Aboriginal communities have one of two forms of local government. Most of them have elected councils which are incorporated under Northern Territory or Commonwealth legislation. Thirty communities are incorporated under the NT Associations Incorporation Act, 1978. They have a limited range of functions, varying from place to place, carried out in association with and funded by departments of the Northern Territory government. Another seven Aboriginal communities have community government under the NT Local Government Act 1985. This form of government is seen as a vehicle for economic development.

Local government is a relatively new institution in Aboriginal communities, dating from the late 1950s and, for many, even later than that. The earliest councils were set up in the larger communities, and at first they were seen, along with housing associations, progress associations and social and sports clubs, as a way of introducing Aboriginal communities to non-Aboriginal methods of social and political organisation. These larger permanently settled communities were the creation of mission activity and government policy, many of them originating after the Second World War. Many other smaller communities existed on white owned cattle stations and a few remnants of Aboriginal bands and tribes continued to exist, beyond white administrative control, in the remotest parts. Mission and government settlements had white administrative staff, headed by a superintendent or someone of similar title and these people retained their position during the early years of council development. To say that local government dates back to the 1950s is not to say that Aborigines in remnant communities or, in the earlier pre contact communities, were in a state of anarchy; they were not, although political institutions and leadership of the kind familiar in white society were unknown in the pre contact communities (Hiatt 1965, 141, 147; Loveday 1983, 1).

The early councils were part of what was called in the language of the assimilation policy of the time 'education for citizenship', but in addition it was also hoped that the white administrators in communities would be able to draw on them for advice about community attitudes and help in carrying out administration policy.

These larger communities were either government run or mission settlements and all included groups of Aborigines
from different tribes or clans, which had no tradition of local government in the non-Aboriginal sense, and no tradition of cooperation with one another in such activity. In addition, communities were often disrupted by tension and sometimes conflict between clans and families about the distribution of goods and services, especially if they disagreed about traditional ownership of land and its contemporary use (Anderson 1988; Bagshaw 1982; Gerritsen 1982a, 1982b, for examples).

These characteristics alone made it unlikely that the early councils would provide a training in civics, citizenship and local government of the kind hoped for by administrators. In addition, no real power over local affairs or local expenditure was conceded to the councils, either by government or mission administrators. Finally, all councils had to deal with tension arising from the assimilation policy and the clash of cultures: tensions between young and old, between women breaking away from traditional law and those upholding it, between traditional leaders and others who depended for their influence on white society (Loveday, in Wolfe, forthcoming).

The weakness of the councils was revealed when, in the mid 1970s, the national Labor government tried to insist upon them taking a larger degree of responsibility for their own affairs in the name of a new policy of selfdetermination. The disorientation and disruption of local council affairs which had marked the earlier period continued and possibly increased.

It was in this context that the NT government, newly selfgoverning from July 1978, introduced local government legislation which provided, among other things, a special form of community government for small communities, including Aboriginal communities. This was designed to give small communities or towns, both Aboriginal and predominantly non-Aboriginal, more responsibility for and more control over the provision of services at the level of the local community. The community government provisions of the local government act enable councils, if they so wish, to conduct commercial enterprises.

Community government was introduced at a time when the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976 was coming into force. Under this Act some communities found themselves on land transferred from the Crown, the Reserves of earlier days, to Aboriginal Land Trusts, comprising traditional owners. The Trusts are a title holding body only and the title is inalienable freehold. But not all land was transferred in this way: some communities were able to lay claim to Crown land outside former reserves by establishing traditional ownership before a Land Claims Commissioner. If a claim was
successful, inalienable freehold title was transferred to a Land Trust. Aborigines could also obtain land on leasehold title by purchase in the commercial market.

The study communities have different relationships to land in their area. Yuendumu and its council are on Aboriginal land, once a reserve and now held by a land trust. Yuendumu people have obtained additional land by a successful land claim but this is outside the area under the council's administration. At Barunga, part of the land within the boundaries of the community government scheme is not Aboriginal land, namely the Maranboy Police Common. Wugularr is on Aboriginal land which had been reserve land and so is the community of Bulman. Eva Valley is on Aboriginal pastoral leasehold property, on lease from Kronus Pty Ltd.

The Northern, Central and Tiwi Land Councils and the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account were also set up under the Land Rights Act. The Land Councils have a complex list of functions which include some relevant to the present discussion, namely representing traditional owners in negotiations with bodies such as mining companies, assisting in negotiations connected with other uses of land such as cattle operations, feral animals, stock disease, distribution of royalties and the granting of permits for entry on Aboriginal land. The Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account administers funds received from the Crown as royalty equivalents and some additional royalties (Altman 1983, chs 6, 7; Howie in Peterson 1981, 28-52; Toohey 1984; Young 1988).

A community which elects to take on a community government scheme will have a council which is incorporated under the community government provisions of the Northern Territory Local Government Act, as revised in 1985 and brought into effect in July 1986. The community government section of the act, part 8, is an amended version of part 20 of the preceding local government act. The 'commercial development' function is not new but was included in the old part 20. It probably dates back, via Papua New Guinea legislation, to United Kingdom local government practice (Fenbury 1978, 27-8). Councils in communities which have not adopted community government do not have the commercial development function. One aspect of the present study was to explore the possibilities for enterprise development under the commercial development function of community government councils.

There is, in addition, a Commonwealth Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act, 1976, but only three councils were incorporated under it. Broadly speaking, its provisions for councils are similar to those in the NT
legislation but it does not allow councils to conduct economic enterprises.

Only a handful of communities took community government under part 20 of the old NT Act; they were

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Community</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lajamanu</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Pularumpi</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angurugu</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Mataranka</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milikapiti</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Elliott</td>
<td>1985</td>
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Under part 8 of the amended Act, Barunga/Beswick (now Barunga/Wugularr), Wallace Rockhole, Borroloola, Pine Creek and Nguiu were added to the list in 1986-87, to make a total of 11 places under the Local Government Act. Any small community for which the ordinary municipal arrangements are unsuitable can apply for a community government scheme. Small 'open' towns with mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations (Elliott, Mataranka, Borroloola, Pine Creek) as well as Aboriginal towns on Aboriginal land are included in the list. At the time of writing at least four more small places were about to take on their community government schemes.

A major development took place in 1986 following a national enquiry into local government finance. The enquiry (the Self Report 1985) led to a decision that money made available to local government under the personal income tax sharing scheme of the Commonwealth would be extended to Aboriginal communities. This was known as PITS money, short for personal income tax sharing. The Commonwealth Financial Assistance to Local Government Act (1986) gave effect to this and the NT's June 1986 legislation setting up a Territory Grants Commission created the machinery for allocating the Commonwealth local government funding. It is at the annual discretion of the NT Minister whether the Grants Commission will also be asked to advise him of the allocations of NT local government funds. So far, since its inception in 1986, the Territory Grants Commission has been asked to recommend on the distribution of the NT local government funds as well as Commonwealth funds. The communities which have taken community government under the NT Local Government Act get Commonwealth funds by right. Those still under the Associations legislation are declared to be local governing bodies, as distinct from local government bodies, to enable them to share in the funding. This status is at the discretion of the Commonwealth and NT Ministers.

A community government scheme provides for community setting up a council under the scheme to determine for itself

- the boundaries of the area or areas within which it will operate
- the composition and procedures of the council
- the details of the method of election, including eligibility of persons to vote for and to be members of council
- the functions to be performed by council.

The last of these is of most interest here, because it includes the commercial development function.

Community government is a new means by which Aboriginal controlled economic enterprises may be set up. Although part 20 of the original Act in 1979 gave the power, it was little used until recently. Already quite a large number of economic activities are carried on in communities by organisations such as cattle associations, progress associations and housing associations. These are usually registered under the NT Associations Incorporation Act (1978). And there are a few Aboriginal owned private enterprises registered under NT Companies Act (1963-78). But Councils are the dominant economic force in most communities by virtue of the number of people they employ and their expenditure.

Besides economic activities, there are also many administrative activities in communities, some of a local government character and some more general which are, in the Australian context, normally carried out by state government departments. Originally, under Commonwealth administration, all services in communities were provided directly either by the relevant section of the administration or by the mission running the particular community. By the time the Commonwealth transferred its administration to the new Northern Territory government in 1978, many larger Aboriginal communities had councils which attempted, often not very successfully, to carry out some simple local government activities. At the same time, some of the principal services were provided directly by Territory government departments. The Department of Transport and Works was one of these, while the former Department of Community Development (DCD), operating either through the local council or in association with it, was another. Under community government, the local councils would take responsibility for the services they provided (or most of them; some have gone to the new Department of Health and Community Services), and they would be funded accordingly by an allocation recommended by the NT Grants Commission, the body set up in 1986 to advise on the allocation of all Commonwealth local government funding in the Territory.

In addition, other departments, notably the Territory's Departments of Health and Education, provided and still provide their services directly to communities. A number of
other agencies of government, including Commonwealth agencies, also provide services in communities; they include the former NT Electricity Commission now the Power and Water Authority, in some places, Telecom, the NT Police, the NT Magistracy, the Commonwealth Department of Social Security. These too operate directly in communities, not under the control of local Aboriginal institutions. In some places, these Territory departments have attempted to come to terms with local Aboriginal opinion either by consulting the community council or by consulting some other local advisory group, for example school councils. In addition, the Departments of Health, Education and Police have substantial numbers of local Aboriginal staff in communities.

Community government allows a local community council to conduct a commercial enterprise or to foster such an enterprise in the area of its jurisdiction. This opens up several possibilities.

The first is that the leaders of a community considering taking on a community government scheme, may decide to accept that existing enterprises will remain independent of the new council and not be placed under its control. A decision of this kind may well be necessary in order to obtain a high level of community agreement to a community government scheme.

A second possibility is to contract the provision of a service to an Aboriginal entrepreneur. The council, under community government, has the responsibility to provide municipal services in its area. Instead of hiring its own workforce and maintaining its own equipment, it could enter into a contract with an Aboriginal group or entrepreneur to provide a particular service.

A third possibility is that a local council itself might act as the agent for the delivery of a service provided by a government department. What were once called 'essential services' are now called Northern Territory utilities, namely, power, water and sewerage, supplied by the Power and Water Authority (PAWA) and roads, airstrips and barge loadings, the responsibility of Transport and Works (T&W). Community councils may negotiate commercial contracts with either PAWA or T&W for carrying out, on their behalf, one or more of these services.

Another possibility is that a community government council may itself conduct a business enterprise, as distinct from providing a service taken over from a government department. It might decide that the community would benefit from, say, a vegetable garden or a cattle operation, and it could then either conduct such an enterprise itself or help and encourage local Aborigines to set up such an enterprise.
There is also the possibility that a new community government council might negotiate an agreement to take over an existing community enterprise, such as a housing association or a cattle company. Of course, a take over is not inevitable; an existing enterprise may be left to carry on more or less independently of the council perhaps providing, through rates and charges, some revenue for the Council. Nonetheless, it is difficult to imagine that a community council would remain indifferent for any length of time to the operation of independent economic enterprises in its area of jurisdiction. In some way or another all enterprises, even those which elsewhere would be regarded purely as commercial and private enterprises, have a measure of 'public interest' about them in a small Aboriginal community. A council would be bound to concern itself with them if only to ensure that they did not cause local dissension, charge excessive prices and so on. No council, for example, could ignore a private enterprise liquor outlet in its community.

Furthermore, since the populations of most communities are small and all have low disposable incomes, the market opportunities are very limited. Likewise the opportunities for employment are very limited. As a result, any council which is concerned with ensuring that enterprises in its area do not fail, with the loss of hard won capital and the disruption of a service or with ensuring that employment is maintained, will be concerned about such things as the operation of a store or a cattle company, even if they are independently owned and operated. In other words, a community government council may well find that it has more than a responsibility for providing certain essential services; it may develop interests which lead it in the direction of attempting a measure of overall management or guidance of the local community economy. Its ability to give this guidance will depend on the extent to which its powers within its jurisdiction enable it to protect its local economy from pressure and intervention from outside sources, including governmental sources.

This assumes, of course, a measure of confidence in and of community support for a council which are sometimes lacking. Most of the larger communities - the ones which are most likely to consider proposals for taking community government - are creations of the administration in earlier years; they are not the way in which traditional Aboriginal society organised itself. These communities normally have people from different tribes and the land on which the community is situated will traditionally belong to only one of them. The traditional lands of other residents may well be far off, and already supporting outstations and kinfolk. Whether the community government area includes outstations or not, there is bound to be argument over the provision of
services and the use of funds. Marked differences of opinion can develop within a community over the administration of local government services. These differences will be about the effectiveness of the service and the allocation of the related 'public goods'. In addition there may well be arguments about such things as the allocation and repair of houses, the use of vehicles, about businesses, such as the store, which have a service component. In the example of Barunga-Wugularr given below, there is tension between the two communities about the location and control of the vehicle maintenance workshops. Then there will be differences of opinion about having alcohol in the community or other similar things. If a community has outstations, there will be tension between outstation and town residents about the provision of services and this was one source of tension in Yuendumu when it discussed community government (see below). These differences are focussed in different ways, but in almost all instances they result in a form of political activity in which personal and public ambitions are interwoven. The kind of politics is best described as factional politics, but without the disapproving implications which that term entails in a different context.

The result is that councils are often locally criticised as inefficient, likely to lose their funding, and may become incapable of carrying out more than basic routine functions. Some are criticised for presumed favoritism in the allocation of goods and services; some are criticised for being subject to the influence of white town clerks or other advisors, some are criticised for secrecy about their operations. Others are criticised for getting their accounts into a muddle and 'losing' money. To allow such a council to operate commercial business seems to critics to be asking for trouble. At the very least, separate accounts must be kept. But, beyond that, criticism has the general result that there is often great doubt about letting a council 'run everything' under community government.

Any economic enterprise in an Aboriginal community will therefore have to be conducted in a socially and politically complex environment and any business conducted by a council is bound to be subjected to complex argument and pressure simply because it is seen as the business of the community as a whole. Even non-council enterprises, if they have an essential service component, will be a matter of general community concern and this may well lead a council, which is interested in the general betterment of its area, to interest itself in them. And under community government it does have powers to influence such independent enterprises even if it does not run any enterprises itself.

This has been a major issue in one of the study communities, Yuendumu, where discussions about community
Figure 2.1  An Idea for Community Government at Yuendumu
government called forth much discussion and anxiety about what would happen to the mining company, the store and the cattle company, all independent enterprises. Since then a new proposal has emerged which has been described in Junga Yimi (6, 1, June 1987), as follows

we are still trying to think of a good way for the Council to go into full Community Government. What we think now is that the Warnayaka Tribal Assembly should be the boss of the Council. We think the Tribal Assembly should tell the Council who it wants to run the Council (the Executive Committee).

This, and the accompanying diagram show how traditional leaders in the community would retain power over the subjects central to the maintenance of traditional community life. The council executive would be responsible for the basic services and, in addition, for the coordination of community organisations. These organisations are, as we shall see (section 2), the existing independent enterprises and although they would remain independent, the proposal clearly recognises that council's executive committee would have a general interest in these enterprises and may wish, by means of consultation, to influence them.

Fifteen functions are specified in the Community government part of the Local Government Act (s.270). They are functions which a community government council may adopt - not must adopt. The list is commercial development, communications, community amenities, education or training, electricity supply, garbage collection and disposal, health, housing, relief work for unemployed persons, roads and associated works, sewerage, water supply, welfare, raising of revenue (as specified in the Act), such other matters as are approved by the minister.

In relation to some of these functions, a Council would have only limited scope for independent activity. It could not, for example, set up its own health clinic, recognised by the Department of Health, while the Department itself had its own clinic in the community. The functions which are in the hands of government agencies include some already noted: power, water, sewerage (PAWA) and roads (T&W), health and education, which fall principally under the NT Departments of Health and Education, communications, principally the responsibility of Telecom, a Commonwealth agency. The Commonwealth also has its own health and education programs, some directly delivered in communities.

A Council might, of course, make an agreement with one of these government agencies to act as agent for it and many of them do, for example in relation to the generation and
distribution of electricity. Now that charges are being made for electricity there are proposals that Councils collect the money, on a paid agency basis, for PAWA. The agency relationship is not always an easy one for Councils to enter into because it may entail activities they are unwilling to take on, such as disconnecting electricity from consumers who cannot or will not pay bills or because it entails costs, such as the work Council staff do for clients of the Commonwealth Department of Social Security, costs usually borne by the Department elsewhere but by a Council in an Aboriginal community.

There are, of course, some functions which a Council may perform more or less independently, provided it has the funds. No other government agency is involved. These are, typically, the provision of amenities such as sports fields, garbage collection and disposal, relief work for the unemployed. Housing for its own staff is also a Council function, but community housing in general is a function for other agencies, such as the Territory Housing Commission and the Aboriginal Development Commission.

Three functions remain from the list given in the Act:

- commercial development
- raising revenue
- and the non-specific one, that a council may do such other things as the Minister approves.

In addition, a community government scheme may provide that a council can levy rates on land or business conducted within its jurisdiction and may exempt land or persons from rates imposed generally. This rating power, the revenue raising power and the non-specific function above are the three new elements in the legislation - all the rest were functions under the old act, part 20. And, of course, community government councils have power to make by-laws in relation to the functions and to enforce them (ss.292-295), subject to prior consultation on specified matters with the NT Liquor Commission and the Commissioner of Police (s.292(2), s.292(3)).

Three more points may be noted. The Act makes no provision for communities to gain responsibility for law and order (police, courts) but there is some talk that the by-law making power could be used to give local community expression to tribal law. Second, the legislation distinguishes functions and powers and says (s.272) that the powers of a council are to do 'all things necessary or convenient to be done' or incidental to or in connection with the performance of its functions, including the levying
of rates and imposing charges for services provided. Finally, the Minister has a number of reserve powers to ensure that Councils stay within the terms of their Community Government schemes, for example over NT subsidies and grants (s.282) and to dissolve a council (s.296).

When a particular community takes on a community government scheme, a list of more specific functions, all derived from the general list in the Act, is worked out. For example, under the health function, Wallace Rockhole can provide and maintain sanitation facilities and remove health hazards; under the education function it can provide adult education and vocational training; under the commercial function it has several specified activities – selling petrol, operating pastoral enterprises, a mechanical workshop, production and sale of artefacts, promotion of tourism and so on. Angurugu Council may operate a bank agency, it may contract with Australia Post and Telecom to act as their agents in the council area; it may contract with the Groote Eylandt Mining Company or the relevant NT government agencies for the generation and supply of electricity. It might operate a commercial fishing enterprise and a fish market for the benefit of residents. The special scheme worked out for Barunga/Wugularr is discussed below in the third section.

We have so far passed from the level of the Act to the level of the scheme for the particular community. But there is yet another level to look at, beyond the paper itself, to the schemes as they operate in real life. Initially, places like Barunga/Wugularr and Wallace Rockhole are unlikely to look much different now from what they did six months or so before these schemes came into effect. In other words, a council must be expected to phase in its undertaking of functions and it could be years before councils with community government are performing the full range of functions spelled out in their own specific schemes. Secondly, the mix of enterprises run by community governments with similar schemes will vary according to their decisions about what to contract out and according to the extent to which enterprises in the hands of other local organisations are taken over by the Councils. And finally, the arrangements made to accommodate the councils of 'white fella' origin to traditional authority and leadership will vary from place to place. Some of this variety is to be seen in the complex electoral arrangements which have been adopted in Barunga/Wugularr to ensure balance of representation between clans and places and in the complex arrangements, noted above, under discussion in Yuendumu. There is therefore bound to be variation from one place to another and this flexibility or scope for variation is one of the major differences between community government and the normal form of municipal local government in the Territory.
One underlying question here is whether any community would have the resources or the population (as a market) to sustain more than one enterprise of the same kind. Yuendumu, with a market for store goods of about 700 people or over 1,000 if outstations are included, provides a rare example of two stores in competition with each other (the outstation of Nyirrpi has its own store; see below). It seems unlikely that many NT Aboriginal communities could do so and consequently a council could set up a competitive business such as a store or a cattle company in the hope of making money only in the most exceptional circumstances; its other option is to tax an independent entrepreneur if it wishes to make something from an economic activity already being carried out by someone else. Of course there is no need for a local monopoly if an enterprise is trading with the outside world. Whether it is council run or privately run, most enterprises depending on the local market are likely to succeed only if they have a local monopoly and to attain such a monopoly could be a major question, not only for internal community business relations but also for relations of the community with the 'external' world.

Inevitably then, both in respect of activities that might be carried on by Council or those that might be of interest to a Council, though in private hands at present, we must look at much more than the money, the markets, the skilled staff and the employees. It will be essential to come to grips with the social, cultural and political context of a given community and to take that into account in assessing the viability of a given project. And the politics of a community includes other players beside the local people. The interaction between the community council on the one hand, and the various 'outsiders' from government departments and other outside bodies such as Land Councils are an important element in local politics.

This may be exemplified by reference to the difficulties which arise when a project requiring a large area of land is under discussion. In such a project, the 'outsiders' may well include staff from a private consultancy firm, the Aboriginal Development Commission, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, two or three departments of the Northern Territory and one of the Land Councils. These organisations will each have different responsibilities and interests in relation to the project and will normally seek to forward those interests in negotiations with the local Aboriginal council or other organisation involved and with traditional leaders.

From the point of view of the leaders of the local community, there is a confusion of voices from outside organisations, some black, some white, all claiming to have the interests of the community at heart. There is no power
in the local Council for reconciling these voices with one another or for making Council's point of view prevail.

This leads on to a further consideration. Land based projects requiring a large land area of the kind often favoured by consultants who believe that a project may not be commercially viable unless it is large may be very difficult to set up and to keep in existence once they have been set up. The formation of Land Trusts under the Land Rights Act (NT) 1976 has brought those problems into sharper focus.

Any large area project is likely to entail negotiations between a number of separate language groups, clans or tribes and traditional leaders. For many the anxieties about a project which means subjecting their land to cash economy exploitation may be either unacceptable or difficult to accept. It follows that any proposed project of the large area land based kind could only be initiated after prolonged argument in the course of which the enthusiasm and interest of the Aboriginal initiators may evaporate and in the course of which opportunities will be presented for outsiders, especially white consultant and guardian organisations, to take part in the process and complicate it still further. Traditional owners would have the power to block a project indefinitely. In addition, a project once negotiated could have commercially difficult, if not crippling, conditions attached to it in order to preserve the interests of traditional owners. It may, above all, have saving clauses that entitle traditional owners to withdraw from the agreement if stated conditions are not met and if a project is successful, there may well be argument about the sharing out of the benefits from it, arguments which may well put the continuation of a project in jeopardy.

These remarks do not mean that enterprises requiring large land tracts should not be undertaken, but rather that the negotiation of such development can be expected to be slow and complex and may not result in the establishment of a viable enterprise. Of course, there are some which have been set up and are operative such as the cattle company at Yuendumu. In such cases, the kinds of difficulties noted above have been sorted out. If Aborigines are to be in control of enterprises in their communities, they have to be the ones who work through the difficulties associated with making them operative. Aborigines are better able to do so with enhanced prospects for success if outsiders accept the fact that there must be Aboriginal control in order for such enterprises to be successful. That is, it is the local Aboriginal residents who have to make the decision, which should not be influenced by outsider expectations or demands. Enterprises set up by Aborigines who have worked
through the difficulties for themselves are more likely to be 'successful' than enterprises set up for them by other people.

The difficulties are likely to be less for the smaller land-based enterprises, but most activities entail some use of land, if only for the siting of a store or for the gathering of traditional materials for an arts and crafts enterprise. There may, therefore, be similar argument about almost any enterprise.

In summary, any project which a community government council promotes will entail arguments and negotiations with people from a variety of agencies, mostly governmental, whose cooperation is needed if the necessary funds and skilled assistance are to be made available. Traditional owners or the leaders of different clan or language groups may also be involved since many projects entail some use of land. And if established enterprises are threatened in some way, those in charge of them will be involved in the argument and negotiation. For all of these participants in the process of making decisions about enterprises, power either in the local community or in the administrative world outside it is at stake. This leads to a consideration of the power which a local council, or its leaders, may bring to bear in seeking to achieve an economic enterprise objective.

Aboriginal leaders are not in the same general situation as their mayoral and council counterparts in a small non-Aboriginal country town. The community in a small country town will be in general agreement about the desirability of market-oriented economic activity and, with rare exceptions, it will expect private entrepreneurs, not the local council, to undertake this activity. The institutions of local government will be widely accepted; local citizens can be found with the experience and training to effectively fill positions in local government; local economic activity is sufficient to enable the non-Aboriginal Council to raise useful revenue by rates and charges.

The Aboriginal leaders, on the other hand, will have to cope from time to time with doubts about the desirability of undertaking white economic activities, or about the desirability of having Council undertake them.

All Aboriginal communities depend on the cash economy of white society and on a variety of services from white society. And yet most communities are extremely poor in resources and are economically marginal at best. Some are better able than others to work out a combination of subsistence living and participation in the cash economy but for none, not even in the remotest outstation, is a complete return to subsistence an attainable, or even a desired,
alternative. And apart from subsistence, there is in most, probably in all communities, a concern to maintain, and if possible to strengthen, traditional cultural practices beyond those of a subsistence economic nature. Most Aboriginal communities are therefore uncertain about the direction they should take, and they are occasionally divided about it. In this context, it is very hard for a Council to generate general and sustained support for a policy of promoting enterprise. A general policy is likely to be a matter for a few determined leaders and they are likely to have their leadership questioned from time to time.

A similar ambivalence arises in relation to leadership and the institutions of local government, the councils and the elections for them. The communities and their councils were originally creations of white administrative or mission activity. A history of being administered has had a long and deleterious effect on them, leading to apathy towards and doubt about local government of non Aboriginal origin. In addition, Aboriginal traditional leadership was never exercised within the large tribally mixed communities created by white administration. It was overridden, sometimes destroyed and usually ignored, relegated to the background. Other Aboriginal leaders were not trained in the work of community management. But when the communities were expected, from the later 1970s onwards, to make their local government institutions work, Aboriginal leaders, both traditional and non traditional, made their appearance in local community politics. These people and their successors provide the contemporary leadership.

Some leaders are skilled in handling 'white fella business' and the non-Aboriginal advisors and administrators who come with it; some have a combination of managerial and political skills and a traditional status which enables them to handle a wide range of affairs in their own communities - but many leaders do not have the necessary skills and status. Some are relatively weak and unable to hold their positions in a community or its council for long; they do not learn much, and no one else does either, about how to manage community affairs and promote enterprise. In some places, traditional leaders leave council business to others; there is then a divided leadership in the community and the council leadership is relatively weak. Of course, the council itself may include traditional leaders and then the council will reflect differences among them and their groups.

Even strong and experienced leaders will have a monumental task in maintaining themselves and making councils work as instruments for the generation, collection and refinement of local opinion about the 'collective' or
'public' business of the community and for maintaining community commitment to decisions once they have been taken. The sense of community is not only very weak, but the mechanisms for the identification and discussion of matters of public business and the generation of a community (or even a majority) opinion about them have never been developed. As long as communities were administered, the identification of public business and decision making about it were in the hands of officials or missionaries and the residents had no reason to make the early councils 'work' as mechanisms for community decision making about public business. And in order to get and maintain a decision, leaders have to maintain themselves as leaders within the context of clan and family and outsider whites which constitute the 'body politic' of all communities of any size. It is in this context that economic enterprises must be assessed; it is not the same exercise as deciding whether a Woolworths should be set up in a country town.
CHAPTER THREE

FUNDING SOURCES FOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN THE NT

NT Government Administration and Funding

We noted in Chapter 2 that the NT Local Government Grants Commission recommends how the Commonwealth financial assistance money and the NT government operational subsidy money will be allocated to communities. In 1987-88 the money was allocated to 42 Aboriginal communities, comprising both those which have community government status and those which have been given status as local governing bodies. The allocation recommended by the Grants Commission is administered by the Office of Local Government (OLG), housed in 1988 in the NT Department of Labour and Administrative Services.

At the inauguration of the Commonwealth's Financial Assistance scheme in 1986, there was a widespread hope, if not expectation, that the NT government's operational subsidy would continue without substantial change and that the Commonwealth money would therefore be additional new money. Being untied, it would be open to councils to develop new projects with this new money. Hopes were, however, disappointed. At a late stage in the budget cycle, the Commonwealth, without negotiation, reduced its general assistance to the NT government by the same amount as the additional money provided under the Financial Assistance scheme. The NT government decided that it had no capacity to absorb the cut in general assistance except by making a concomitant reduction in its operating subsidy. This meant that the new Commonwealth money had to be used for recurrent expenses of a kind hitherto met from the operating subsidy (once described as TMPU or Town Maintenance and Public Utility funds). This inaugural situation has since been maintained, in conditions of increasing financial stringency, in the year 1987-88.

The Commonwealth's financial assistance money totalled $6.009 million in 1987-88 ($5.43 million in 1986-87), and of this $2.369 million went to the 42 Aboriginal communities. The Territory's operational subsidy for the same communities totalled $11.8 million ($11.98 million in 1986-87). The Grants Commission recommends the distribution on the basis of need, and uses the same principles and methodology for each body of funds (NT Government 1988, 12-13). The money flowing into communities from these two sources is untied
money, in the sense that it does not come dedicated to some purpose or program determined by the NT government or the Commonwealth government. It is therefore at the disposal of the councils, to be spent according to their decision and on their responsibility. But this does not mean that it is uncommitted money; recurrent expenses for the running of councils have to be met out of it and are a first charge on the funds provided. Typically, most of a council's budget would be spent on recurrent items. For Yuendumu, recurrent expenditure includes the following items for 1988-89: council administration, sanitation and garbage, water supply and services, cemeteries, sport and recreation, parks and gardens, road maintenance, trading activities, electricity and mechanical workshop. These items make up nearly 94 per cent of the estimated expenditure for Yuendumu in 1988-89 of $647,054. The total expenditure is to be met by income of $282,500 (40 per cent), by the operational subsidy from the NT's Office of Local Government of $324,554 (46 per cent) and by Commonwealth financial assistance of $100,000 (14 per cent).

The financial assistance and operational subsidy money is a substantial amount, which is consistently and annually available, and it enables councils to provide employment for a substantial number of people - including white staff with specialist training. Normally very little uncommitted money would be left in a council's budget once the recurrent items had been met.

Administratively, the procedure for allocating the funds is initiated at the council level, with the assistance of field staff from the Office of Local Government. Councils' draft budgets for recurrent operational expenditure are the basic documents which are used by the Grants Commission for its assessment of need. The Commission has a total budget figure for local government in smaller urban areas and communities specifically gazetted as local governing bodies. In 1987-88 the figure was $10m, to be divided between 50 of these communities. It makes the initial allocation of this money on the basis of need. It travels to the larger communities so that councils can present their budgets and argue for them. Once the initial allocation is made, it is tested to ensure that it satisfies the minimum per capita entitlements prescribed by legislation and adjusted if necessary. The formula by which the allocation is tested is complex and includes a number of variables (Grants Commission 1987). Capital expenditures are determined by the Department of Transport and Works and the Power and Water Authority.

The staff of the Office of Local Government give councils support in a variety of ways and play an important
part in their budgetary processes. Their work is described as follows:

Thirty seven staff, including the 29 field officers, are deployed at the four regional offices in Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs with a sub-regional office at Tennant Creek. They service the 42 major Aboriginal communities as well as some 400 other populated communities.

Their objective is to visit each of the main communities on a minimum monthly basis, and more frequently when necessary. Tasks undertaken by field staff include assisting with council meetings; checking the appropriateness of council agendas, minutes and other records; assistance with budget formulation, compliance and review; accounting and bookkeeping assistance and monitoring; conveyance of Government information to communities and the transfer back of community concerns and needs to relevant mainstream government departments; discussions on the general operation of the council and progress towards community government where this does not exist; the need for review of community government schemes where they are established to reflect changed community needs or perceptions; the identification of needs and opportunities for economic enterprise, employment and training; preparation of physical development plans; and assistance with general council activities including both indoor and outdoor employee activities and programs (NT Government 1988, 15-16).

A number of services are provided directly to communities by functional departments of the Northern Territory Government. These services include water, sewerage, electricity, health, education, welfare and law and order. But before discussing some of these in more detail, it is necessary to outline recent administrative changes. These are dealt with in a recent submission by the NT government to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (NT government 1988). Briefly: from self government in 1978 to the present time health, education and law and order services have been directly provided by the functional Departments of Health, Education and Police. Government departments located staff in the larger communities and instituted programs of training for aides or trainees in each functional area. However, for other state-like functions including power, water, sewerage and transport, differing administrative
arrangements applied over the period, but latterly resided with the then Department of Community Development. This Department, as its title clearly indicated, had a broader mandate and was not dissimilar to the functional arrangement of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. However, it was not specifically Aboriginal client based, and did not have the services of health, education and law and order in its brief (NT Government 1988, 4).

Policy in relation to Aboriginal affairs in general remained divided, not only between the other service departments, but also between them and the Departments of Lands and Mines and the Conservation Commission each of which had functional interests in areas of land in Aboriginal control or under claim by Aborigines.

In March 1987, the Department of Community Development (DCD) was abolished and the government 'mainstreamed' service delivery.

Each functional department now has responsibility for providing its area of service to all Territorians including Aboriginals whether on communities or elsewhere, in an equal fashion but having regard to special needs of groups and communities. Each department has established the necessary staffing arrangements to provide services to Aboriginal communities, in the full process of needs identification, programming, budgeting, construction, repair, maintenance and operations.

As a result, the Aboriginal Essential Service function (AES) of DCD has been divided between Transport and Works and the new Power and Water Authority. The Department of Transport and Works (T&W) has responsibility for roads, airstrips and barge landings. The Power Directorate of the Power and Water Authority (PAWA) has responsibility for the supply of electricity and the Water Directorate for the supply of water and for the provision of sewerage services in the communities which had water borne sewerage systems. Other changes made when DCD was dismembered include the transfer of the Aboriginal Policy and Projects Branch to the Department of the Chief Minister and the transfer of the Welfare Services to the Department of Health and Community Services. The field staff of DCD who had worked in Aboriginal communities were eventually retained by the Office of Local Government.

The budget for the Power Directorate in 1987-88 was $12.62 million for operation and maintenance with $1.76 million for capital works. The Water Directorate had $8.82
million for operation and maintenance and $5.05 million for capital works. Transport and Works had approximately $2 million.

Most community councils have an essential services operator or supervisor who works in association with the OLG field staff to formulate proposals for the operation, maintenance and repair of power, water and sewerage facilities. The two directorates do not carry out work themselves but, after discussion at the level of the five regional offices, they will let contracts to private contractors for operation, maintenance and repair. The community councils usually have the contracts for operations; outside contractors who have the necessary expertise are usually employed for maintenance and repairs. Few Aborigines are fully trained in all aspects of powerhouse operation so there is usually a principal non-Aboriginal for this work, with Aboriginal assistants or trainees. Outside contractors are expected and, in many contracts, required to employ and train Aborigines, but the requirements and expectations are neither easily fulfilled nor easily enforced. The provision of funds through the Commonwealth Aboriginal Employment Development Program can help to ensure that Aborigines are employed by contractors.

Transport and Works gives 'consideration to the involvement of Aboriginal communities in construction work where local resources and expertise are adequate to the task' (NT Government 1988, 23). This extends to roads, barge landings and the like. Repairs and maintenance, for example on roads, are also carried out by councils under contract and are one source of revenue for them.

In general, the majority of communities can raise some revenue, even if it is limited in amount, by contracting with PAWA to maintain and operate power house, water and sewerage systems, by contracting with T&W to maintain local roads, airstrips and barge landings, by agency commissions (for example for operating banking, airline and post office agencies) and by hiring plant and equipment to private contractors. Service or rental charges imposed on local residents in some communities are another source of revenue. Now that the Power and Water Authority are about to charge individual customers directly for the supply of water and electricity they will be competing with local councils for the dollars which are mostly derived from social security payments. PAWA is seeking

the assistance of councils on a commissioned agency basis in reading meters, collection of payments and disconnection. There has been a varied response to this approach and a general but most understandable reluctance to provide
assistance particularly with disconnections (NT Government 1988, 21).

At the time of writing charges are still not being levied for electricity and charges for water are far from certain.

Capital asset replacement is of considerable importance in communities and in 1987-88, the NT government introduced a $12.5 million six year capital replacement program.

The priority basis was to assess current asset condition against the local government operational needs of the community and its capacity to raise revenue through civil engineering contract work in its locality. Grants totalling $1 million in this ongoing program were supplied in April 1988. The 1988/89 budget provision is proposed at $1.787 million, with $2.5 million in the four subsequent years, all at 1987/88 values (NT Government 1988, 14).

Another change taking place in 1988 is that funding for internal roads in Aboriginal communities and for their external access roads will be included in the Commonwealth Road Program, rather than the T&W budget.

The remaining NT Government departments need be dealt with only very briefly.

The NT Housing Commission function does have an Aboriginal housing component. In 1986/87 almost $18m was earmarked for Aboriginal housing (i.e. outside urban districts), two-thirds of this coming from the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement portion and the rest being the NT government contribution. It receives advice on Aboriginal housing needs through DAA and ADC.

The Education Department through its TAFE function has a contribution to make in training Aborigines in skills necessary for enterprise management and development. The Aboriginal teacher aide program, in some places supported with CDEP funds, provides some local employment and training for Aborigines within the Education Department system. The same kind of employment is provided by the Department of Health's health worker program and by the police aide program of the Police Force. The NT Tourist Commission (NTTC) has had, in the past, very small amounts of money for funding Aboriginal dance groups and such like for tourist promotional activities but it has recently restricted itself to promoting tourist awareness of Aboriginal culture by way of films, brochures, videos and seminars. This is to say that it has no money for direct support of Aboriginal tourist related enterprise. The Department of Aboriginal
Affairs has provided small amounts for these activities recently.

The Department of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs, to which an Aboriginal community has access, can provide funding under Aboriginal Recreation Programs (mostly for recreational officer salaries), vacation care, and sports, youth and arts projects.

Finally the Conservation Commission of the NT (CCNT) has a small input into some communities by providing training and employment for Aboriginal rangers.

The regional offices mentioned above are based in Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. Each is headed locally by a regional coordinator, under the authority of the Coordinator General in the Department of the Chief Minister. Coordinating meetings are held, usually attended by officers from Power and Water Authority, Transport and Works, Office of Local Government, Conservation Commission, Liquor Commission, Police, Health and Education. Practice varies but in appropriate circumstances representative Commonwealth officials may be invited to attend. Regional level coordination is not a new development but an old mechanism in the Territory administration and it has often proved to be fairly weak. The present arrangements appear to leave Power and Water Authority and Transport and Works with room to operate fairly independently if they wish to do so in a particular area, independently of one another and of other departments. Of course, this is only to say that, as functional departments, these are approximating the other functional departments, especially Health and Education, which have always operated with a high degree of local independence.

These administrative arrangements lead to the question whether services needs can be assessed in terms of total community development. There is no government agency to assess communities on an overall 'needs' basis. Power and Water Authority and Transport and Works assess only in terms of their own programs. The various government agencies have been charged with the duty to establish units specifically to look at the needs of Aboriginal communities, but only in terms of each agency's particular area.

There is, therefore, no longer a government agency responsible for developing programs in consultation with Aboriginal communities that will develop a strategy for community based development taking heed of social issues in its delivery of services. The creation of the Aboriginal Coordination Unit in the Chief Minister's Department, the establishment of 'regional coordinating committees', and the
advisory work of the Office of Local Government field staff, were partly designed to fill this gap. In addition the Department of Lands and Housing has the role of coordinating infrastructure development, with the implication that the emphasis in coordination is on the physical aspects of service delivery.

Commonwealth Agencies and Funding

The main Commonwealth agencies funding programs in Aboriginal communities are the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA), the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) and the Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC).

Commonwealth administration has also been subject to rapid organisational change. The Department of Employment, Education and Training was created in 1986 by an amalgamation of part of the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations and the Department of Education. Another major change is forecast to take place early in 1989 with the formation of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Commission, a body which will absorb the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal Development Commission and Aboriginal Hostels.

The Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) is mainly the responsibility of DEET, but it has components which are the responsibility of DAA and the ADC. The AEDP was developed as a result of the Miller Report (1985) on Aboriginal employment and training and it superseded or brought together a number of earlier programs.

The broad policy statement lays down a number of ways in which Aboriginal employment is to be increased. Some of these are of particular relevance to Aboriginal communities and the development of enterprises in them. The government accepts that there the prospects for employment in the 'mainstream labour market' are bleak or nonexistent in remote communities. It therefore will take steps to establish or re-establish a local employment base for Aboriginals living in these situations through measures to expand the economic bases of such communities. Special emphasis will also be given to the development of an employment base for Aboriginal town campers in more populated areas with a view to activities leading to the creation of self-sustaining community employment or to employment in projects designed to facilitate the transition from welfare dependency to mainstream employment. The
Government is also committed to support for Aboriginals living in homelands and outstations (Australian Government, Nol, 1987, 10).

The government also proposes to provide further assistance for Aboriginal communities to develop Aboriginal community controlled and managed business enterprises in rural and remote communities where no such private sector exists on any scale. ... This will involve emphasis on the development of community enterprises in retailing, transport, agriculture, tourism, broadcasting and performing arts, artefact production and contracting in housing and construction and public works.

It will also try to generate employment in community development projects such as municipal services, public works, community services (including child care, broadcasting, artefact production and the like).

To do these things it will be necessary to provide:

- further financial assistance in the form of grants and/or loans and grants to enable communities to obtain the capital required to purchase or establish enterprises, and for working capital in the initial development stages;

- additional assistance in the development stages for labour costs to maximise employment opportunities; and

- a range of management, technical and administrative support and advisory services to maximise the success of community enterprises (Australian Government, Nol, 1987, 10).

The government also emphasises that traditional economic activity continues to be a significant feature of Aboriginal lifestyle and culture in many remote areas, but has not been sufficiently recognised as a legitimate form of employment. The Government now recognises these activities as a legitimate form of employment and economic activity. Therefore, the Government's policy is to make available assistance for community development projects to remote traditional communities to support employment in
activities such as subsistence food production, artefact production and other cultural activities and the cultural teaching of youth. Such a constructive approach to community development will help to preserve traditional cultural values (Australian Government, No1, 1987, 11).

A number of programs, some old ones revised and some new, have been set up to provide means to reach these objectives.

The Aboriginal Development Commission has responsibility for an expanded Community Economic Advancement Projects (CEAP) scheme and for an expanded Community Employment and Enterprise Development scheme (CEED). These are described as follows:

- the Community Economic Advancement Projects scheme provides communities with loans at concessional rates or a capital package involving a loans/grants mixture to establish community owned and operated businesses that have the potential to become commercially viable within 3 years;

- the Community Employment and Enterprise Development scheme for capital grants to more remote Aboriginal communities to establish businesses that have a potential for commercial viability within a 5 years period (Australian Government, No3, 1987, 3).

DEET has responsibility for the Enterprise Employment Assistance (EEA) program which involves the payment to Aboriginal community enterprises of employment subsidies equivalent, on average, to the unemployment benefit and job search allowance payments Aboriginal employees would otherwise have received. In the case of remote communities, very small settlements of mixed race or town camps, where there are few or no real prospects for developing enterprises to meet all labour costs, Enterprise Employment Assistance is available on an on-going basis. Once sufficient returns are generated to meet all operating costs and the usual allowances are made for contingencies and depreciation, this assistance will be gradually reduced (Australian Government, No3, 1987, 4).

In the Northern Territory $557 million was provided for this in 1987-88.
DEET also has three training schemes, as follows:

- the Enterprise Management Training Scheme providing specifically developed structured formal and/or on-the-job training to Aboriginal enterprise managers and boards of directors;

- the Community Management Training Scheme providing specifically developed structured formal and/or on-the-job training to Aboriginal community project managers, administrators and community council members (including training packages for discrete Aboriginal local government);

- a range of other Special Projects including operational training and job skills courses, and on-the-job training placements concerned with the job skills development for Aboriginal employees in community enterprises and Community Development Employment Projects (Australian Government, No3, 1987, 10).

Just under $3.48 million was provided for Special Projects, including some Enterprise Management Training, in DEET's Northern Territory budget for 1987-88. This was about one third of its program budget ($9.35 million), and most of the other two thirds went into programs which were primarily for work experience, negotiated fee training and public sector training.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs has responsibility for Community Development Employment Projects (CDEPs). Under a CDEP, the Department will provide money for both wages and oncosts.

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme is currently applied only when all eligible members of a community agree to participate, and its coverage to date has been for discrete Aboriginal townships and settlements in remote areas. The Government will increase the flexibility of the scheme in 1987/88 in two main ways. These are:

- to enable groups within a community to receive assistance for a community development project (that is, not all potentially eligible participants in a community will be required to participate in the project); and
to extend the coverage to a wider target group such as communities in small multi-racial settlements in remote areas, town camps outside of remote areas, Aboriginal pastoral properties in remote areas, Aboriginal original lands' communities (regardless of whether or not neighbouring Aboriginal towns are participating in the scheme) (Australian Government, No3, 1987, 6).

The funds for a CDEP are provided in lieu of paying unemployment benefits (UB) to individual unemployed people. These benefits are the responsibility of the Department of Social Security (DSS) and the CDEP scheme entails interdepartmental agreement and funds transfer (see Sanders 1988 for details and history). The government explains the funding as follows:

Currently, Community Development Employment Projects are comprised of a wages component which enables the conversion of unemployment benefit entitlements of Aboriginal community members (who would otherwise be unemployed and in receipt of the unemployment benefit or job search allowance) to be 'pooled' and converted to wages for work performed in development projects that the community determine be undertaken. Employment undertaken is generally on a part-time basis and at award or going rates. The scheme also provides for an additional 20% to meet project on-costs and overheads (particularly workers compensation costs). The Government will continue the scheme on this basis with each project receiving the wages component plus an additional 20% for on-costs... The Government acknowledges that Community Development Employment Projects have not been funded sufficiently to enable Aboriginal communities to develop the infrastructure, or meet the on-going costs, required for meaningful community development. Therefore, a Community Development Employment Projects Support Program has been established (Australian Government, No3, 1987, 8).

The AEDP is not the only program, or group of programs, through which funds are made available to communities. The CDEP scheme for example, is a large, but by no means the only, program which DAA handles. This can be shown by considering DAA's Northern Territory budget for 1987-88. This provided for a total of $30.22 million, divided between capital expenditure ($8.06 million) and recurrent expenditure ($22.16 million). These sums may be further subdivided by program as follows.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program title</th>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>Recurrent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Community Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Infrastructure</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>9.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>10.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total community development</strong></td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>14.20</td>
<td>20.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Public Affairs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage protection</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcasting &amp; communication</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion &amp; development of art and culture</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public awareness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total public affairs</strong></td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. Sub programs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>: Health</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>: Law and justice</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>: Recreation</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>: Social support</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>: Substance abuse</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proposals for particular projects will be developed by the community leaders working in conjunction with DAA's field officers and the NT regional manager will have an input into the decision making. Projects are monitored by field officers and reported on at regular intervals.

Some of these programs call for further comment. Community infrastructure funding is principally for the smaller communities: outstations, excisions on pastoral properties and outstation resource centres. The larger communities, or rather some of them benefit from the Community Development Employment Programs, CDEPs, which are now set up in fourteen communities. The broadcasting budget includes funds for Central Australian Media Associates (CAAMA); the health budget includes funds for the Aboriginal Development Foundation in Darwin, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in Alice Springs and the Kalano
Community Association in Katherine. Thus not all of the DAA money flows to communities although most of it does under the infrastructure and employment programs. The regional breakdown may be added for completeness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>Recurrent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>8.62</td>
<td>12.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nhulunbuy</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>6.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennant Creek</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with DAA, so with DEET and the ADC: the funds they disburse are provided for programs which operate not only in communities but for all Aborigines, whether urban or rural. It is not always possible to obtain figures which break the funding down to show the specifically rural components, especially since the budgeting is not done on that basis, but on a program basis.

Aboriginal Development Commission

Since the recommendations of the Miller Report, ADC has developed a whole new package of enterprise loan funding and other assistance, detailed in its Corporate Plan 1986-1991.

In considering enterprise development in Aboriginal communities this is the most significant funding agency. Consequently its funding 'philosophy' is an important factor. Unlike the previous two funding agents, ADC insists almost exclusively on a 'commercial viability' condition before it will consider funding an enterprise. The Commission's reasoning in its restrictiveness on grant funding and conditions of loan funding is that it is aiming to gain greater financial independence from the vagaries of government funding.

The enterprise support programs of the ADC are summarised as follows:

A. Business Enterprise Development

CELP: Community Enterprise Loans Program
- developing 'large enterprises' on communities
- loans, or the provision of a guarantee up to 80%
of the funds required
- No limit to size of the CEL
- Must be incorporated under Commonwealth C&A Act 1976 or equivalent
- Applicant must provide 20% equity
- Loan repayment 15 years maximum
- Must be financially viable
- ADC may provide a CEAP grant as equity contribution
- ESU to provide oversight, and a schedule of training using DEET's EMTS

SBLF: Small Business Loan Funding
- The development or acquisition of small businesses
- Preference to new enterprises
- Loans, or the provision of a guarantee up to 80% of the funds required
- $500,000 maximum
- Aboriginal or TSI individual
- Aboriginal organisation - C&A Act 1976 or equivalent
- To provide 20% equity
- Loan repayment 10 years maximum
- Must be financially viable
- For Community applications ADC may provide a CEAP grant as equity contribution
- ESU to provide oversight, and a schedule of training using DEET's EMTS

SBJFS: (Pilot Scheme up to 30/6/87) Small Business Joint Funding Scheme
- Development or acquisition of small businesses
- Loan or provision of a guarantee to satisfy lending criteria of the CDB or other lending institutions
- Aboriginal or TSI individual
- Aboriginal organisations - C&A Act 1976 or equivalent
- To provide 20% equity
- Loan repayment 10 years maximum
- Must be financially viable
- ESU support
- Training requirements under DEET EMTS or other training scheme

BEAP: Business Equity Acquisition Program
- Development or acquisition of small businesses by subscribing for or otherwise acquiring equity in a company (where most cost-effective)
- ADC acquires stocks and shares. Have to acquire more than 50% of the company
- No limit to the size of acquisition
- Aboriginal or TSI individual
- Aboriginal organisation - C&A Act 1976 or equivalent
- To provide 20% equity
- Loan repayment 10 years maximum
- Must be commercially viable
- DEET EMTS assistance
- ESU support

B. Economic and Social Advancement Projects

CEEDS: Community Employment and Enterprise Development Scheme (up to 5,000 population - remote)
- Develop enterprises in remote areas or small rural towns
- May vary in size from a local store to a medium size pastoral property
- Grant, for establishment and working capital, for up to five years
- Must have potential to be commercially viable within five years, such that its operating revenue exceeds operating costs and depreciation...
- Feasibility study etc. before
- The grant not exceed $60,000 over five year period/person employed
- DEET to assess training needs
- DEET EEA to be paid directly to enterprise in advance (four weeks cycle)
- Additional funds may come from other sources
- ESU to oversight number of employees

CEAP: Community Economic Advancement Program
- Develop commercially viable enterprises
- Aimed at medium and small towns
- Grant or grant/loan mix
- Stores in remote areas always grant funded
- Commercially viable within five years
- Feasibility study before
- For establishment and working capital
- Grant will not exceed $50,000 over three year period/person employed
- Funding will only be for three years
- Training
- EEA (for one year)
- ESU in appraisal

SPPP: Social Facility Provision Program
- Where different government departments provide recurrent costs for variable social facilities
ADC offers CAPITAL assistance not available from other agencies
- A non-commercial enterprise (does not earn enough to cover recurrent costs)
- Designed to complement initiatives of other agencies in the provision of community services
- Grant
- Appears to be a last resort fund
- Does not have to be for profit or commercially viable
- Funds will not be provided for facilities for which local, state or Commonwealth agencies responsible

Note that the Enterprise Support Units (ESU) provide management guidance, overseeing of financial administration, and advice on developing a training program tailored to a particular enterprise in the community. Programs to especially note include Community Enterprise Loan Program funding (CELP) which is for incorporated community bodies to set up 'large enterprises', whereas the Small Business Loan Fund (SBLF) is designed for funding small enterprises run by individuals or incorporated bodies. The Community Employment and Enterprise Development Scheme (CEEDS), a new grant scheme in response to Miller Report findings, is aimed especially at remote communities and small towns. Note also that a combination of grant and loan funding is quite possible - a small enterprise, for example, funded by a Small Business Loan (SBLF) may also receive a CEEDS grant.

There is provision for non-commercial enterprises to be grant funded through the Social Facility Provision Program (SFPP). However, this is aimed principally at capital costs for social or community facilities where another body is already recurrent funding. Whether capital funding for, say, a non-commercial cattle enterprise providing an arguably necessary social facility in a community could be achieved through this program remains as yet unclear.

Private Sector Funds

Mining royalties are the principal source of private sector funds available to communities. Royalties are paid to the Commonwealth government and equivalent funds are then distributed in three ways. Thirty per cent of royalties goes to the Aboriginal Benefit Trust Account (ABTA), 30 per cent to the affected communities and 40 per cent to the NT Land Councils. ABTA funding is available to any Aboriginal community or organisation which proposes a project falling in one of the ABTA's categories. In the past, the ABTA has funded projects which are designed to develop the income potential of a community; or projects which promote and strengthen Aboriginal culture and identity. Social and
recreational self help projects and motor vehicles have also been funded.

**Administrative Complexity and Aboriginal Control**

In assessing the funding arrangements as a whole, it must first be emphasised that the reality is in sharp contrast with the theory of selfmanagement which has been the headline for government policy for a decade or more. Government agencies are the principal sources of funds for Aboriginal communities and for enterprise development in them. The arrangements are so complex that the Aboriginal controlled enterprise, whether it is a community council enterprise or a 'private' Aboriginal enterprise, which needs funds faces a daunting task, much more complex than that of a non-Aboriginal enterprise seeking finance from a bank, or some similar source.

The NT Government's submission (1988, 5-6, 46) gives this complexity special attention and notes that the rapidity of change at both levels of government adds to difficulty confronting communities. Its summary is as follows:

- It cannot be overemphasised that the administration of Aboriginal communities and the provision of support services to them is an extremely complex area, rapidly developing over the recent past and into the future. Problems involve:
  - (a) the multiple agency provision by three levels of government in the Northern Territory;
  - (b) the current inconsistencies within the service delivery of Government agencies;
  - (c) the difficulties arising for community comprehension from the frequent changes of government administration systems; and
  - (d) cross-cultural inconsistencies such as the non-Aboriginal full-time work ethic as against the Aboriginal traditional mobility and dominance of ceremony will continue to pose particular difficulties in meeting the special needs of Aboriginal Territorians (NT Government 1988, 46).

Complexity entails continuing dependency in this context. It is not simply a matter of the Aboriginal community or enterprise depending on government for funds. It is also a matter of depending on people who know and understand the administrative system, who have up-to-date knowledge of people in it and of changes made in
organisation, programs and staffing and who have budgeting and management skills or training.

Aboriginal people with knowledge of these matters are seldom found in communities and if they have some knowledge of 'white fella business' they are usually working to the limit of their time and ability. Inevitably, communities depend on non-Aborigines whom they employ or on the non-Aboriginal field staff of the various government agencies providing funds. These people always have significant influence and sometimes considerable power in the communities they serve, power or influence which can be brought to bear in decision making for economic enterprise.
CHAPTER FOUR

PROBLEMS AFFECTING ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT
IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Discussion of Aboriginal enterprise activity in the north inevitably focusses on Aboriginal failures in this sphere of economic life. But failure is generally judged in non-Aboriginal terms, as failure to make money. Money making may not have been the Aboriginal enterprise priority. Aborigines in remote towns and settlements participate only partly in the cash economy, and measure success in ways in which cash has limited relevance. Moreover many non-Aboriginal influences have undermined the commercial success of Aboriginal enterprise from the start. This chapter considers problems common to many types of Aboriginal enterprise development.

Two issues to be clarified before discussing problems in detail are the appropriate definition of enterprise, and hence of failure and success, and the need to recognise that economic modes of production are firmly embedded within Aboriginal cultural and social structures. Enterprise, as discussed earlier, includes both productive activities which generate cash income and require cash resources; it also includes productive and distributive activities conducted within the subsistence sector. However the definition is conventionally applied only to market production, and success as an entrepreneur is almost invariably measured in terms of commercial success, the generation of profits within the cash economy. Such a narrow definition discounts entrepreneurial success outside the cash economy. It may also discount Aboriginal perceptions of success, often as strongly associated with community stability and cultural integrity as with material success. Thus, in assessing the relative 'success' of Aboriginal-owned cattle stations in Central Australia in the late 1970s, those which generated the largest profits were given the greatest accolades and perceived as models for others to emulate. But these 'successful' properties, although Aboriginal-owned, effectively remained under strict non-Aboriginal management and hence did not necessarily reflect Aboriginal views of enterprise development. As later became apparent, relaxation of non-Aboriginal control increased community coherence, albeit at some expense of profits.

Ideas about enterprise development also tend to be restricted to projects which fit easily into monetary systems, and the potential contribution of resources and activities stemming from subsistence production are ignored.
Such omissions are particularly serious when examining the economy of remote Aboriginal towns in the Northern Territory. In these communities production occurs both for the market and for consumption; it may also be incorporated into exchange, particularly in the non-market sector. Thus the exchange of bush-tucker, procured through the subsistence sector, plays an important part in cementing the whole framework of reciprocity between groups and individuals. Products obtained through the market sector, such as purchased foods and clothing, may also be used in exchange systems. These elements, and the linkages between them, are well understood by Aborigines. But when assessment of success is based only on the market component, conflict will occur. The commercial profits of Aboriginal cattle projects, for example, may well be undermined by heavy consumption of animals as free killers for the community or by the gift of carcasses to other people in exchange for other favours. Here, in non-Aboriginal eyes, the consumption and exchange elements become intrusions, to be eliminated if at all possible. Realistic planning for Aboriginal enterprise development must take all components into account.

Failure to recognise that Aboriginal economic activity is part of the social structure, and vice versa, is another basic issue underlying problems of enterprise development. These two elements cannot be divorced from each other. While such a linkage also occurs to a degree within other sectors of Australian society, non-Aborigines tend to examine economic components of production in isolation, as if social factors were unimportant. Thus the kinship system, which can determine not only who participates in an enterprise but which might also control entire profit distribution systems, is seen as irrelevant and a hindrance to success. In the case of Aboriginal enterprise, failure to tailor the organisation of a project to components such as the kinship system might well mean that the whole venture collapses. Government funding agencies such as the Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC) generally follow assessment guidelines which stress commercial aspects of an enterprise to the exclusion of social aspects. This, as has been argued elsewhere (Young 1988), is often far removed from the real situation in Aboriginal towns where community and enterprise interests intermingle.

These two issues help to explain the common pessimistic view of the contribution of enterprise to Aboriginal self-sufficiency. Market oriented enterprises face many problems which have prevented them from making the monetary contribution expected of them; and the potential contribution of other forms of enterprise, geared more closely to subsistence, have not even been considered.
**Market Enterprise – Detrimental Factors**

Aboriginal market-oriented enterprises in remote parts of northern Australia exhibit a number of characteristics common to all such activities in that area. They are affected by physical isolation, with resultant high costs in both production and distribution. Climatic uncertainties cause unpredictable fluctuations in production and have a marked influence on all forms of communications. All are small businesses, unable to make savings through economies of scale and vulnerable to market fluctuations. And most depend heavily on external markets, either in other parts of Australia or even overseas. They also have a number of characteristics which tend to distinguish them from other private sector business operations. These may be listed as follows:

(a) Although primarily perceived to be operations with the capacity to generate independently controlled profits, most were established through direct support and guidance provided by external bodies, usually under government or mission auspices. Thus their affairs tend to come under strong external scrutiny, and sometimes under external influence or control.

(b) Aboriginal involvement in the decision to set up these enterprises was often minimal.

(c) Most enterprises are owned and administered by Aboriginal corporations, with broad community participation, rather than by individuals or families.

(d) Many enterprises, particularly those such as retail stores which also perform a service role, exercise a monopoly within the community.

(e) In remote communities, where the economic base depends heavily on public sector funding, market enterprises provide employment for only a small proportion of the workforce. In an overview of employment in 15 Northern Territory communities conducted in 1983 enterprises accounted for only 15 per cent of the wage force (Young 1985, 172); and in a recent study of Yuendumu, a large Aboriginal town in Central Australia with a relatively high level of enterprise development, the percentage share of employment was only 21.0. Such a low level of involvement obviously affects the status of enterprise operations within the community.

(f) Although the gross income of some market enterprises is potentially fairly large, particularly when they exercise a monopoly, their profitability is undermined by high overheads and by the low income of their customers. Many are undercapitalised.

Characteristics such as these do not in themselves explain all of the problems which have affected the performance of Aboriginal market enterprises. They should,
however, be borne in mind as essential elements against which to assess these problems.

Problems affecting the success of Aboriginal market enterprises in remote communities belong to two main categories: first, those arising from factors affecting the operation of such businesses throughout Northern Australia in general; and secondly, problems peculiar to Aboriginal enterprises as a result of sociocultural and socioeconomic differences between Aboriginal and larger non-Aboriginal Australian societies. Such factors, summarised in Table 4.1, provide a framework for understanding difficulties facing Aboriginal enterprise development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors common to North Australian enterprise development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical isolation and resultant high costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty of local resource base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small size of local population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High dispersion of local population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level of external involvement in ownership, marketing, finance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors relating to Aboriginal attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinship networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human/land responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergroup relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors specifically affecting Aboriginal enterprise development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors stemming from historical and contemporary operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inbuilt 'training' component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumed non-profit making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing poor commercial viability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of management/financial training for Aborigines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment of inefficient, inexperienced non-Aboriginal managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on government finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undercapitalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunity, leading to lack of interest in entrepreneurial success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1
Factors affecting the success of Aboriginal economic enterprises
Factors Common to Enterprise Development in Northern Australia

The first group of problems relate to physical factors such as isolation and the poverty of the local resource base; to economic factors such as the dominance of external operators in ownership, marketing and finance; and to social and demographic factors such as the small size and sparse distribution of the local population, the customers for many of the local products.

Physical isolation plays a very large part in the operation of any commercial activity in Australia's north. Not only does it directly raise freight costs, both of raw materials which cannot be obtained locally, and also of many finished products to the market, but it also enhances the risk of loss of goods through damage in transit. Northern retail stores, forced to rely largely on southern suppliers for their stock, both pay the high freight rates and also must expect additional costs to cover wastage of goods carried over rough unsealed roads. Such costs are inevitably passed on to northern consumers, who face prices which in towns such as Alice Springs and Darwin are at least 15 per cent higher than those in Sydney, and 33 per cent higher again for people living in remote Aboriginal towns like Galiwinku or Yuendumu (Young 1984, 94). Poor communications are an additional disadvantage stemming from physical isolation. Inadequate telephone systems, such as radio-telephones with over-crowded channels and reception frequently interrupted by atmospheric disturbances, add extra costs above those arising from freight. Prior to the establishment of terrestrial micro-wave telephone links to most major Aboriginal towns in the central part of the Northern Territory, it was common for managers of enterprise organisations to make long journeys to Alice Springs solely to make STD phone calls to their suppliers or visit their financial advisers. The effects of isolation are not all negative: in some instances isolation imposes costs on an outside supplier which a local supplier does not bear – it gives a measure of 'natural protection'. These instances are, however, rare because of the poverty of the local resource base.

The local resource base in northern Australia is limited. Rugged and difficult terrain, harsh climatic extremes of temperature and rainfall and the resultant fragility of soils restrict the use of the land for agricultural, horticultural or pastoral purposes. Mineral deposits, while apparently widespread and of considerable economic value in many areas, are not only dependent on high capital investment for development, but also depend on world market fluctuations and political and economic decisions for their actual exploitation. And while natural resources such
as game, bush fruits and vegetables, goanna, fish and other bush tucker offer very important inputs to the local diet, they are not commodities which would easily form the basis for market enterprise development. They could, of course make important contributions in enterprise for consumption. The poverty of this resource base not only hinders the growth of a variety of different enterprises, but also inhibits their competitiveness. Agricultural and pastoral operations, for example, are seen as the backbone to economic activity in much of the north. But some areas, such as parts of north Queensland, have environmental and locational advantages over others. Under those circumstances it becomes very difficult for a farmer from the Kimberley area of Western Australia, disadvantaged by both remoteness and environmental problems such as soil erosion, to compete in production of the same commodity with his counterpart in Queensland.

Problems arising through physical isolation can theoretically be overcome by production which does not aim at external marketing, but relies solely on local trade. Thus enterprises in remote communities should both use the local raw materials whenever appropriate, and should sell locally. Unfortunately the success of such strategies is affected by the small size of the local resident population, whose needs are quickly satisfied. This inhibits the potential for growth in the business, or, if growth is to be sustained, forces the business into reliance on external markets. Another strategy for overcoming such problems is the production of unique high value goods, in demand to a wide market, able to withstand the high freight costs and also to compete successfully with businesses elsewhere. This is a strategy worth developing in the case of some Aboriginal enterprises. Even when such enterprises use non-local raw materials, as is the case with craft industries such as Aboriginal batik cloth and clothing making, the relative costs are worth bearing because the finished product, sold on the basis of unique Aboriginal design, cannot be obtained elsewhere. It should however be stressed that, despite these advantages, craft manufacture does not necessarily bring a high cash return to the individual producer. As Altman (1987) discusses, earnings are affected by marketing deficiencies, fluctuations in supplies of raw materials and the need to participate in other activities. Nevertheless, while earnings from craft on a piecework basis may be low, they do provide an important supplement to cash flows from other sources, particularly the welfare sector.

A further factor affecting northern market enterprises is the high degree of external, including foreign, ownership and hence of financial control. This characteristic is more marked in the non-Aboriginal enterprise sector than among Aboriginal enterprises which by definition are owned by
local residents. In 1986 over 50 per cent of cattle stations in the Northern Territory were owned either by foreigners or by people/organisations from interstate, and the northern mining industry is almost entirely in the hands of multi-national or large southern Australian companies. Although hard evidence of the effects of such ownership patterns on the enterprises is unclear, there are some indications that owners from outside the region are less committed to the welfare of local employees, and may pay scant attention to good husbandry or the maintenance of improvements. Doon Doon cattle station, in the neighbouring East Kimberley region of Western Australia, was owned by a Texas rancher before its purchase for the local Aboriginal community in 1976, and there is ample evidence that the property had been allowed to deteriorate markedly during the preceding decade (Young 1988). While Aboriginal enterprises do not suffer from problems arising from foreign ownership, external financial controls can create difficulties. Although government funding agencies such as ADC have regional offices in Territory towns, funding allocations require agreement from head office in Canberra, and people often express concern that authorities in such situations lack proper understanding of the kinds of problems faced in isolated communities.

A final problem stemming from physical isolation is that of psychological separation from kin, friends and business associates. This is a lesser factor for Aborigines working in their own market enterprises. However it still affects their non-Aboriginal employees. One of the reasons for high turnover of non-Aboriginal staff in Aboriginal town organisations is loneliness, the need to be close to ageing relatives, or to send teenage children to school, and fear of being cut off from the mainstream of Australian life for too long. Interestingly enough, as Holmes (1985) noted, the problems caused by such high staff turnover have persuaded some non-Aboriginal employers to change their policy on employing Aboriginal labour in cattle stations, and the numbers of Aboriginal workers has increased.

Factors Specifically Affecting Aboriginal Enterprises Development

Factors more specifically responsible for problems in Aboriginal enterprises belong to two main categories. One, which can be described as primarily Aboriginal in nature, includes factors which stem from customary behaviour and attributes culturally specific to Aborigines living in remote parts of the north; and the other includes those which are artefacts of both the history and contemporary operation of such enterprises, largely the result of decisions taken within the non-Aboriginal world (Table 4.1). The former include Aboriginal social organisation, a major
component of which is kinship. Kinship provided a primary conceptual model for the organisation of Aboriginal society in the past and continues to do so today. It also includes features of Aboriginal economics, such as the division of labour based on age and sex criteria, egalitarianism in relationship to material goods, and traditional distribution and exchange networks based on reciprocity. The relationships of Aborigines to the land and associated resources and their responsibilities to these natural phenomena are central to Aboriginal culture today, as is the traditional hierarchy of authority based on age and status in the social system in relationship to ceremonial knowledge and gender. Behind all of these sociocultural differences is a system of values which differs significantly from those of the larger, non-Aboriginal society of Australia.

Residents of most remote Aboriginal communities in Australia's north belong to closely knit extended family groupings, inter-related through marriage and forming a tight social structure which is of great importance in providing a stable support system in both social and economic terms. Reciprocal exchange, of both money and goods, is a vital component of this system. Inevitably people involved in market enterprises find themselves caught in a web of sharing which affects not only their own earnings, but also use of materials and equipment belonging to the business and perhaps also the disbursement of the profits. Such practices may well be difficult to reconcile with market enterprise operation, and are generally assumed to be a major reason for commercial failure. Additional factors include the strong authoritarian hierarchy existing with Aboriginal families, a hierarchy which is based more on traditional knowledge and age than on skills such as English literacy, or business knowhow. Since many of those involved in the financial and management sides of enterprise operation are younger, more highly educated members of the community it follows that their authority may frequently be over-ruled by their older kin, and they may feel obliged to hand on benefits to the detriment of the commercial side of the business. Young women are particularly vulnerable in this way, both because of age and gender. Loss of stock in Aboriginal retail stores, where most check-out operators are young women, can be partly attributed to older men taking advantage of their powerful positions in the community.

Further conflicts arise through Aboriginal perceptions of the inseparable relationship between particular families and particular areas of land, responsibilities which give certain individuals the right to control all operations within these areas. Relationships such as these are vitally important in determining appropriate management structures not only in obvious cases such as cattle enterprises, where the land itself is the resource for the business, but also
for other enterprises merely located on that land. As Peterson (1985, 90) points out, such a structure either caused village councils or enterprise organisations to be dominated by specific groups or, if the resultant conflict created an irreconcilable situation, led to the complete collapse of Aboriginal authority and its replacement by that of external non-Aboriginal operators. While it may appear to non-Aboriginal authorities that community-based enterprises should offer equal employment opportunities to all, and that workers should be selected according to skill alone, such a policy may not accord with Aboriginal perceptions. To them the directors of a community cattle enterprise should be traditional owners of the land on which the cattle graze, even if this means an unequal distribution of resources in the community at large. Attempts to force Aboriginal groups to accept non-Aboriginal perceptions of 'fair play' have usually failed.

Allied to this characteristic is the Aboriginal perception that people do not have the right to speak for or control resources of which they are not the traditional owners. This makes it difficult for the authority structures common to market enterprise companies to function efficiently. An Aboriginal board of directors, for example, may not feel comfortable making decisions on behalf of shareholders, and discussions to overcome this kind of problem may be extremely protracted. The general assumption that Aborigines lack entrepreneurial motivation also arises partly from this characteristic. It seems true that most Aborigines in remote communities do not see the value of competing with their fellows merely to realise cash profits, although they do recognise that such profits can enhance their standing if they are used within reciprocity systems. People's unwillingness to compete may of course be partly due to the fact that they know they will have to distribute their gains widely. Big winners in card games do sometimes leave the community immediately so that they can keep their cash rather than having to plough it back into the system.

The second group of factors includes the reason for the establishment of an enterprise, its previous history, financial support systems and how they operate, and other forms of support such as advice about management or assistance in finding appropriate managers. Many of today's market enterprises in remote Aboriginal communities were not in reality established as profit-making ventures. They were artefacts of the assimilation era, basically training schemes designed to provide Aborigines with skills which would enable them to enter the workforce as employees of non-Aborigines. People learned to work as stockmen, domestic servants or seamstresses or as semi-skilled mine workers. They received no instruction in the management of enterprises and their knowledge of financial matters was
minimal. That, coupled with the fact that they were initially paid in kind or received wages far below the appropriate level, effectively laid the basis for current poor comprehension of business finance, still a major problem facing Aboriginal market enterprises.

Potential profits from enterprises were undermined by the fact that they were labour intensive and that they stressed training above cost efficiency. They were also affected by an ignorance of the realities of the market for commodities produced in such isolated areas. Small scale cattle projects were started in places so remote that the high costs of taking their stock to market prevented them from making money; they could have been commercially successful only if they had increased the scale of their operations. Clothing workshops produced garments for local purchase at subsidised prices; but, once these establishments were required to export their goods to reach a wider market, there was no potential for success because their real costs were so high. Another problem concerning the previous history of Aboriginal enterprises is that many of those acquired as existing establishments were in a sorry financial state long before they came into Aboriginal hands. Cattle stations purchased with government funds during the 1970s were, in addition to being places of traditional and social significance to Aboriginal groups, mostly cheap because they were run-down, lacking in improvements such as well-maintained fencing and bores, and in some cases with stock desperately in need of replenishment or replacement. Their new Aboriginal owners were generally expected to prove their worth as entrepreneurs by running such businesses at a profit, regardless of the overall possibilities for such success.

Undercapitalisation is another major factor undermining the commercial viability of many Aboriginal enterprises. Not only does it condemn businesses to operating with inadequate and obsolete equipment and resources but it also creates severe cash flow problems. As a result many such businesses cannot build up their cash reserves and become locked into creditor-debtor relationships which tie them to specific suppliers or financial organisations which might not be the most efficient for their purposes. Aboriginal retail stores, for example, may find it very difficult to select a new wholesaler because they never meet their continuing debts to the existing one. Such creditor-debtor relationships, of course, not only affect whole enterprises but also individuals who, through acquiring goods on credit at a store, may be permanently tied to the use of that outlet as a cheque cashing agency (Young 1984, 96-100).

Management and associated needs have posed additional problems for Aboriginal economic enterprises. Aborigines
have continually been judged as incapable of performing the same tasks or assuming the same responsibilities as non-Aborigines, and hence were given little opportunity to learn the skills needed in management. As a result, Aboriginal entrepreneurs were faced with running businesses without the necessary financial and management knowledge. Their options were either to employ others, usually non-Aborigines, who had such skills; or to try to acquire such skills themselves. For a number of reasons the first alternative has normally been adopted. Lack of education, coupled with lack of appropriate training in management has forced the directors of Aboriginal enterprises to accept outside management, at least in the short term. Even when people have subsequently felt sufficiently confident to take on such responsibilities themselves, they have found that their lack of financial knowhow still disadvantages them. It is therefore rare, in remote communities in northern Australia at least, to find an Aboriginal enterprise which does not employ non-Aborigines. The employment of such people has also caused problems. While some are both highly efficient, sympathetic to Aboriginal needs and aspirations and willing to acknowledge their subordinate positions as employees, such attitudes are by no means universal. Remote areas of the north, with all their inherent disadvantages of isolation from the mainstream of business life, attract people who would have problems in being successful else-where, and tales of managerial inefficiency and dishonesty in Aboriginal communities abound. Moreover it is extremely difficult for potential Aboriginal employers to judge applicants' qualifications or character and unscrupulous operators have in some cases been able to pass freely from one management post to another, even in neighbouring communities. One way around this problem is to accept advice on and supervision of these matters from government adminis-trators, a solution which may well result in obtaining more appropriate people but which also reinforces external control over the whole operation of the enterprise.

The alternative approach, purposely extending the management skills of Aboriginal members of the community, has been bedevilled by a lack of appropriate training programs, and a lack of commitment to such training on the part of many authorities. Appropriate training means not only providing people with skills useful for dealing with the complexities of business operation in remote settings, but also providing a suitable environment in which to transfer these. In retail businesses, for example, the types of training provided for prospective managers of urban supermarkets are not appropriate to the needs of running an Aboriginal community store 500 kms from the nearest small town, with no direct telephone linkage; and sending Aboriginal trainees off to towns such as Adelaide or Brisbane for such training is, culturally and psychological-
ly, so disruptive that most will be unable to complete the
course. More suitable types of management training have now
been attempted in a number of key areas such as community
council administration and retail store management but the
need for such measures should have been realised many years
ago. Organisations such as ADC, while acknowledging this
need, have felt bound to adopt an ambivalent attitude
because they are concerned that Aboriginal management will
never be sufficiently efficient for their enterprise invest-
ments to bear fruit.

Another important factor affecting Aboriginal market
enterprises in particular is their dependence on government
finance for improvement and investment, at least in the
initial stages. Because of existing problems with enterprise
infrastructure, and the need for investment to improve
financial viability, most Aboriginal enterprises have
required an injection of funds in addition to any profits
which they can otherwise make. Such funds in most cases must
come from government agencies such as the ADC, agencies set
up specifically for this purpose on the understanding that,
because of lack of capital, Aboriginal business operators
are unlikely to be able to raise finance through more
conventional channels. The only exceptions to such arrange-
ments in remote parts of northern Australia are in those
communities which receive monies through royalty type agree-
ments with mining companies.

The dominance of government funding arrangements
creates its own problems - dealing with rigid bureaucratic
systems of rules felt to be necessary when public funds are
at stake; supervision by people who, although often very
well meaning, may well lack the professional background to
make the necessary assessment of needs; and the perpetuation
of dependence on government funding, which in itself
undermines the very basis of enterprise as an avenue towards
increased economic self-sufficiency. Administrative agencies
are notoriously reluctant to approve risk taking, and by
nature inhibit entrepreneurial tendencies; their concern at
the use of public monies for support of such practices
necessitates such attitudes and policies. These concerns
lead to problems such as delays in meeting requests for
grants or loans, and the imposition of administrative
requirements which prevent speedy decision making. Moreover
government officials involved in these procedures may be
quite unskilled in assessing the complexities of the
business side of enterprises; the advice which they give may
be quite impractical. In addition there are as yet no
single government agencies capable, within their terms of
reference, of dealing with all needs of many Aboriginal
market enterprises. The viability of such businesses depends
not only on funding support for the improvement of
infrastructure, or purchase of new equipment; it may also
require funding, at least in the short term, for staff training programs, or for the provision of housing for employees, or for the upgrading of essential services such as power and water supplies. Such needs cannot be met by the enterprise section of the ADC. Meeting them means additional applications to Commonwealth government departments such as the Departments of Aboriginal Affairs, or Employment, Education and Training, and to relevant state and territory authorities. The result is not only a considerable amount of additional bureaucratic work, but also significant problems in co-ordination and often conflict. Delays in obtaining support become even greater.

These problems are compounded by the need for Aboriginal enterprise organisations to use outside accounting and advisory firms with little or no sympathy with the Aboriginal situation. Many of the procedures which they impose on their clients take no account of the special situation in which such businesses function, let alone the problems caused by physical isolation. Some groups of Aboriginal organisations, such as those in Alice Springs, have attempted to set up their own accounting services, but have still encountered problems in obtaining qualified advisors who understand these key differences sufficiently well, and are willing to adapt their skills to fit with Aboriginal needs.

At present the only way in which Aboriginal market enterprises can obtain financial support outside government channels is if they have access to royalty type monies, obtained through agreements for the mining of resources on Aboriginal land. In the Northern Territory the main Aboriginal groups with access to such support are those in the uranium province in the Top End, and those in Central Australia where workable deposits of oil, gas and gold have been discovered. In the case of the Gagudju Association, with an agreement with Ranger Uranium, monies have been used both to purchase local commercial businesses such as the Cooinda Motel and the Border Store, and also to invest in improvements to such businesses. Over $3 million has been spent on the upgrading of the Cooinda motel in the anticipation that it will generate tourist dollars more than sufficient to bring a good return. Additional investments by this group include the development of a new tourist motel at Jabiru. In Central Australia such groups plan to invest some of their monies in tourist development, as at Kings Canyon through partnership with Bill King, and in buying into other ventures. In Yuendumu (see below) monies received from North Flinders gold mines in the Tanami Desert have been used partly to promote the interests of the local Aboriginal mining company. Such possibilities clearly allow Aboriginal market enterprise development a freedom not available through
government support, and factors such as unwillingness to take risks become much less important.

A further important factor is that Aboriginal enterprises are seen as fitting into the conventional view of such development in northern Australia in general. That view is essentially one which favours large-scale operations. While such approaches may well be useful in overcoming some of the high costs arising from physical isolation, they add other burdens to Aboriginal operators. Large scale businesses, whether they are retail stores, motels or pastoral stations, are complex, and the opportunities for Aborigines to gain enough experience to run them successfully are small. Consultants brought in by government agencies to advise on the development of enterprises almost always emphasise the economies of scale, thereby recommending changes which result in the continuing employment of non-Aboriginal staff, and which may well need a large investment of capital to succeed.

Factors Affecting Enterprises in the Subsistence Sector

The discussion so far has centred on market enterprises and the ways in which they have been affected by factors commonly operating in Aboriginal towns in the Northern Territory. However, as stated earlier, enterprises may not focus only on the market, and some enterprises incorporate elements of the subsistence sector. In that case many of those factors detrimental to market operation become much less significant, and the potential for success may be greater.

As far as factors associated with physical disadvantages are concerned, subsistence-based enterprises aiming at local consumption and exchange have a greater chance of succeeding. They are not concerned with locational disadvantage in relation to larger markets in southern parts of Australia, and the existing resource base is more useful to them. Aboriginal use of bush tucker and other locally available resources such as wood for fuel and the construction of shelter decreases dependence on cash, and hence is a form of enterprise of great value in increasing the potential for self-sufficiency. While it must be admitted that the potential of different parts of the Northern Territory for subsistence varies, with the Top End generally being richer than Central Australia, the possibilities are nonetheless there and must be taken into account. Subsistence enterprise similarly is not affected by the disadvantages of a small population, because individual families are responsible for their own provisions, and factors such as unsympathetic overseas ownership are irrelevant. Aboriginal attributes such as kinship
structures, the distribution of goods through reciprocity, and human/land relationships can also be much more easily accommodated in subsistence enterprises. Here the enterprise itself can develop in ways which accord closely with such demands, and the kinds of conflicts affecting commercial operation are unlikely to occur. Finally, because the possible contribution of subsistence-based enterprises has not generally been recognised, they have not been controlled by government agencies and have had little or no influence from non-Aborigines. Their organisation accords with Aboriginal systems of control, and they require neither high investment nor complex financial procedures in administration. Elements such as these are important in considering not only purely subsistence enterprises but also those which combine market and subsistence components. Instead of viewing subsistence as a component to be excluded in enterprise operation it would be more productive to incorporate it wherever practicable.
SECTION TWO

ABORIGINAL LIVELIHOOD AT YUENDUMU

Chapter Five: Introduction and Physical Setting

Chapter Six: The History of Yuendumu and its Contemporary Demographic Characteristics

Chapter Seven: The Yuendumu Economy — Employment and Incomes

Chapter Eight: The Subsistence Economy and its Enterprises

Chapter Nine: The Service Sector in the Economy

Chapter Ten: The Market Economy and its Enterprises
CHAPTER FIVE

INTRODUCTION AND PHYSICAL SETTING

Yuendumu is one of the largest Aboriginal towns in the Northern Territory. With, along with its outstations, a population of well over 1,000, it is a large settlement by any Territory standards. The town itself is situated on the eastern edge of the semi-arid Tanami Desert, 300 kms to the north west of Alice Springs, and its associated outstations, now at least 14 in number, are scattered to the south west, west and north, some over 200 kms away (Fig. 5.1). One outstation, Nyirrpi, has now grown to over 150 people and is now a community in its own right. According to the 1986 Census, Yuendumu's core Aboriginal population was then 687, with about 400 more in the outstations or, periodically, in Ilpili Tyathe, the 'Warlpiri' camp in Alice Springs. Yuendumu, Nyirrpi and all the satellite outstations are situated on land which is held under Aboriginal freehold title. Some of this land was formerly Aboriginal Reserve (Yuendumu and Lake Mackay) while the remainder was unalienated Crown Land.

The physical setting and historical basis of Yuendumu have been summarised elsewhere (Young 1981, 58-62). In bald terms it is an isolated desert town, created by the administration on a piece of land seen to be of little value in resource terms, and with a heterogeneous Aboriginal population drawn from wide parts of Central Australia. That population retains strong links to the land, and in social terms relies strongly on Aboriginal religious beliefs and social structures. Its members, from children to old people, know how to gather the resources of the land and involve themselves in subsistence activities whenever possible. At the same time they are today partly locked into the cash economy, requiring cash to buy food, clothing, tools, fuel for vehicles, entertainment and a host of other purposes which, through contact with non-Aboriginal society, they now see as essential elements in their lives. They also value and need services such as education for their children, health clinics and sporting activities for the young. All of these activities involve some Yuendumu people in wage employment. However the resources which provide that employment are essentially non-local. The service sector is almost entirely government supported. And the business sector of the town also supports itself to a large extent through government inputs. In monetary terms Yuendumu is almost entirely dependent, a town without a local resource base. Perhaps, from a non-Aboriginal perspective, it should not be there at all, and its inhabitants
Figure 5.1 Yuendumu and environs
should move elsewhere, where they would have a better chance of succeeding in the cash economy. After all, such events have occurred before in the Outback, when a mining town has died after the resource has lost its commercial viability. Such a belief, however, completely discounts the strong human reasons for Yuendumu's existence. To its residents, and to other Aborigines with family links to Yuendumu people, it is an important place. It is on Aboriginal land, in the country of Warlpiri and Anmatyerre people, the two groups to which most families belong, and people who live there have access both to the natural resources of that country and to places of religious significance for which they hold responsibility. These factors, together with the strength of family relationships and community feeling, prevent most Yuendumu people from leaving the town on a permanent basis to go and live in places like Alice Springs. The uncertainties of survival outside are too great, when weighed up against some of the economic disadvantages of remaining where they are. It therefore becomes very important to consider the economic basis for Yuendumu in terms of how it can best support its residents.

There is another important factor to be considered. Much of the traditional country of Yuendumu residents is now also Aboriginal freehold land. That, coupled with the social problems from the mixture of family groups in Yuendumu, has led to a large scale movement of people back to their own country, where they have set up small outstations. Here they are expressing very clearly their profound attachment to place. And in economic terms these outstations provide better access to natural resources for subsistence. But in terms of the operation of the market and service sectors outstations may offer extremely limited opportunities. Thus it is not strictly true to say that people do not want to leave Yuendumu. They have clearly demonstrated that they do. But instead of moving to towns to seek for work or recreation, as non-Aborigines would assume they would do when such opportunities are so limited at home, they have moved further away from urban life, back to their own country, where their spiritual and social integrity can be maintained. Such a movement is quite unconventional in non-Aboriginal terms. Indeed outstations, like Aboriginal towns such as Yuendumu, might in terms of a market-oriented economic basis also be judged as having no reason to exist.

The consideration of specific Aboriginal communities in relation to enterprise therefore has to encompass all three sectors within the economy: the subsistence sector; the service sector; and the market oriented sector. These together make up what might be broadly termed enterprise, the way in which a group of people support themselves. These three sectors are influenced by a number of common factors: physical; historical and socio-economic.
Figure 5.2 Aboriginal settlements and land tenure in the Yuendumu region
Physical Factors

From the physical point of view, Yuendumu's location is important (Fig. 5.1). It lies on the edge of country generally acknowledged to have a rainfall regime too unpredictable for agricultural or pastoral development. With the exception of Mt Doreen, immediately to the west of Yuendumu, there are no pastoral properties further west and those to the north and south of Yuendumu - Mt Denison, Mt Barkly, Willowra, Newhaven and Mt Wedge - would normally be described as marginal. Permanent water sources throughout this region are extremely limited although in the case of some adjacent properties they do include major river courses such as the Lander River. Permanent springs, such as that near the current Mt Doreen homestead, are uncommon. The former Yuendumu reserve itself derives its water largely from subsurface sources, dependent on man-made technology, and problems with these supplies limit commercial grazing. In fact, as is evident in documenting the history of the declaration of Yuendumu Reserve, the 2500 sq kms eventually set aside for the settlement in 1952 was an area perceived by non-Aborigines to be of very limited use for cattle because of its water deficiencies. Warlpiri interest in a reserve which included Pikilyi, a highly significant religious site near Mt Doreen homestead, was eventually disregarded because that site included the permanent fresh water springs perceived to be valuable for cattle (Peterson et al., 1978, 17-20). Water shortages have clearly hindered the growth and development of Yuendumu ever since its establishment 40 years ago. In summary, the Yuendumu people may today control a large area of land, exceeding 150000 kms sq., but it is land of very limited use for pastoral enterprises.

As far as the mineral resource base is concerned knowledge would still be incomplete. The Tanami and Granites gold rushes of the early part of the 20th century centred on areas over 200 kms north west of Yuendumu. After payable deposits of gold had been declared at Tanami in 1909 at least 500 miners moved in to try their luck but by the end of 1910 that rush was over (Meggitt 1962, 21/2). In 1932 news of a rich gold strike at Granites drew southern prospectors back to the area but once again dreams of prosperity remained unrealised and by late 1933 only a handful of miners remained (Meggitt 1962, 25/6). These deposits remained untouched until the late 1970s when North Flinders Mines declared an interest in reopening production, using capital intensive measures and assuming continuing favourable gold prices. Since the Granites area was by then Aboriginal Freehold Land, such a development had to await careful negotiation with Aborigines, and the mine has only recently come back into production.
Other minerals found within the vicinity of Yuendumu have included wolfram, tantalite, tin, uranium and copper. Wolfram deposits on Mt Doreen station were mined in the years immediately preceding World War II, when prices for that product were sufficiently high. Older people at Yuendumu still describe how they filled old tin cans with surface deposits of wolfram and exchanged them by weight with Braitling, the Mt Doreen owner, for blankets, rations and tobacco. Tantalite was never mined around Yuendumu itself but was mined on neighbouring Mt Allen in the 1960s. Uranium oxide deposits have been located by a number of companies within the Mt Doreen pastoral lease, but so far no development has occurred. And deposits of copper at Mt Hardy, in the north west corner of the former Yuendumu Reserve have, as discussed below, been a basic factor in establishing the Yuendumu Mining Company. However they have failed to realise any longterm economic benefit. Altogether it could be said that the future mineral potential of the land controlled by Yuendumu people could be quite considerable but its actual contribution to enterprise development still remains uncertain.

Other natural raw materials existing near Yuendumu have included gravel deposits, extracted for airstrip and road construction. While the cash value of these is not high their presence enhances the local self-sufficiency of the community and has reduced the costs of carrying out necessary construction and maintenance.

Although the environment around Yuendumu offers only limited potential for those commercial developments generally seen as vital to the growth of enterprises in that region - pastoralism and mining - it does offer considerable natural resources of interest to Aborigines. Warlpiri, Pintupi, and Anmatyerre, the three main linguistic groups represented in the Yuendumu population, have for countless generations lived off the game - kangaroos, euros, porcupine; the reptiles and grubs - perenti, snake, goannas, witchetty grubs, honey ants and lizards; and the fruits and vegetables - wild yams, solanum, conkerberry and mulga seeds, which abound in various places throughout the region. While the population formerly dependent on such sustenance was never large (Meggitt 1962, 32) estimated that Warlpiri average population densities before contact with Europeans were about one person to 90 sq kms, compared to a north-east Arnhem Land ratio of about one person to 24 sq kms), resources were undoubtedly sufficiently plentiful and varied to ensure survival and it was only during unusually severe drought periods that people were forced to range beyond their country in search of essential food supplies. Such a drought in the 1920s was responsible for conflict between Warlpiri/Anmatyerre and non-Aboriginal pastoralists over the use of the few remaining water sources in the creeks flowing
through Mt Denison and Coniston, a conflict which eventually led to the Coniston massacre of 1928 when over 100 Aborigines were shot by police and cattlemen (Cribben 1984).

Other natural resources of value for Aboriginal material/ceremonial culture included wood, for fire and for making spears, boomerangs, coolamon and other objects; red and white ochres for body and sand painting, which in the case of red ochre were traded well beyond Warlpiri country; feathers and fur for body decoration. Many of these have come to form the foundation of modern day Warlpiri art and craft.

Natural resources such as these are of course spread throughout Warlpiri land and people from different family groups hold rights to exploit such resources within the areas for which they hold traditional responsibility. However others are not completely excluded, although they might seek the permission of traditional owners before foraging outside their own country. Such flexible arrangements for resource use were essential in the desert environment where periodic drought could be life-threatening. Nevertheless people generally prefer to harvest and collect within their own country, where they tend to have more detailed knowledge of where to find certain commodities, and where they can feel completely confident that they are not infringing on places forbidden to them because of religious beliefs. Until the mid 1970s, when Yuendumu was basically a centralised settlement and few Aboriginal families had access to transport, many groups were unable to exercise these preferences. Instead they gathered what they could from around the town, thereby depleting parts of the Yuendumu Reserve to an extent even greater than would have occurred through cattle grazing. The growth of outstations has vastly improved people's access to natural foods in more distant areas, and the use of this component is now of much greater significance to Yuendumu people.

The final physical factor to be mentioned is that of isolation. Although today the road journey from Alice Springs to Yuendumu takes a mere 3 1/2 hours, the town has in the past been inaccessible. Even in 1978, before part of the Tanami road was sealed, the link was often severed after rain. Yuendumu's access to other places to the north, south or west remains precarious and isolation plays an extremely important role in outstation life. Some outstations are 200 kms away from the town, reached by tracks which are serviceable in dry weather with most kinds of vehicles but which may be completely impassable even with four-wheel drive vehicles when it rains. This is an inhibiting factor for outstation stability, particularly for
older people or others who because of their health problems may have to call on assistance from the clinic. Others also find the threat of running out of basic foodstuffs in wet weather sufficiently worrying for them to move to camps in Yuendumu during such periods.

Air transport links are also tenuous, although today the main Yuendumu airstrip has been improved to meet all weather standards. In general the improvements to the Tanami road have cut out the need for air passenger traffic except for medical emergencies, or for visitors with little time to spare. Outstations normally remain outside the air communication network, although Nyirrpi is having its airstrip upgraded in 1987. If emergencies occur at outstations it is possible to bring people out by helicopter, a practice which has occasionally occurred.

Other communications have also been poor. Yuendumu, until recently, has been linked to the outside world by a single overworked radio-telephone and a number of two way radios allowing communication through the Flying Doctor networks. As has been described elsewhere (Heppell and Young 1980, A5-18) the inefficiencies and unreliability of these systems have severely inhibited business management and operation at Yuendumu, causing people to make journeys to Alice Springs solely for the purpose of making essential phone calls. The connection of Yuendumu to the STD microwave telephone link, which occurred in late 1987, should lead to a vast improvement. Thus isolation not only adds to costs of any kind of operation at Yuendumu, but also interfered with the external linkages particularly essential to enterprises. Outstation communications are even more difficult. Some, but not all, have two-way radios which enable them to contact their resource centre in Yuendumu and ask for assistance. This is likely to remain their only form of indirect contact into the future. The alternative - travelling to Yuendumu to see people - means having a vehicle, and the acquisition of outstation trucks through ABTA funding has since the late 1970s been a very important element in the growth of basic communications for such groups. More recent restrictions on the use of ABTA funds for such purposes may well lead to a decline in vital communication links for outstation dwellers.
CHAPTER SIX

THE HISTORY OF YUENDUMU AND ITS CONTEMPORARY
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The Establishment of Yuendumu

Yuendumu's history presents in a microcosm many of the features summarised already. The community, established by the government Native Affairs Branch in 1946, was originally staffed by Baptist Mission workers who even today retain a strong influence on Yuendumu. The Aboriginal residents of Yuendumu came from a wide region, mainly Warlpiri from the south, west and north, but with small numbers of Anmatyerre from the east. Pintupi, from the furthest west regions of the Northern Territory and the Western Desert of Western Australia, arrived later, in the early 1960s. Many Warlpiri families had, prior to the establishment of Yuendumu, been in contact with non-Aborigines. Such contacts initially occurred on cattle stations such as Mt Doreen or Coniston, where Warlpiri and Anmatyerre formed the core of the labour force both with stock and with mining ventures. Later, in the 1940s, Warlpiri met non-Aborigines either at ration camps such as that set up at Tanami in 1944, or in wartime Army camps on the Stuart Highway to which they were transported as labourers between 1942 and 1945 (Berndts 1987). These earlier experiences and disruptions to some extent made the setting up of a Warlpiri government settlement inevitable. The actual location, however, is not in the heartland of Warlpiri territory. It lies on land of interest both to Anmatyerre and Warlpiri. Although these two groups have, despite their linguistic differences, intermarried for generations this does lead to some confusion over control of country immediately around the town, and within the town itself. Such confusion is today important because control of land and resources is a basic element affecting any form of enterprise development and service provision.

Pintupi, the third group associated with Yuendumu, came into contact with non-Aborigines at a much later stage, in the late 1950s following Thomson's expeditions to the Lake Mackay area. By 1962 groups of Pintupi had moved eastwards as far as the homestead of Mt Doreen station and in 1964 they were finally brought by truck to Yuendumu where they remained as the most disadvantaged and least assimilated group, in terms of education, health, cash employment and access to land and resources. Their recent acquisition of control over the former Lake Mackay reserve, and support for the outstation movement have led to them leaving Yuendumu
and moving back to the west, as close to their own country as is possible when service needs are considered. Most now live at Nyirrpi and beyond.

Population

As far as population is concerned, Yuendumu showed a relatively steady growth from its establishment until the development of its outstations in the late 1970s. Meggitt (1962, 29-31) states that in 1946 there were about 400 Aborigines at Yuendumu. Between then and 1955 the population fluctuated, decreasing to only 353 in 1955 following the transfer of some families to the newly established second Warlpiri settlement on the northern edge of the Tanami Desert at Lajamanu (then Hooker Creek). By 1960 Yuendumu's population was, according to Welfare Branch records, 459 and by 1970 had doubled again to over 900 (DAA, File 76/813, Darwin). An estimate from Health Centre records in 1978 was 1300, of which almost 1200 were Aborigines, over 60 of whom were by then already in the five established outstations (Young 1981, Ch.2). However the 1981 Census count provides a figure of only 587 Aborigines, which suggests serious under enumeration as well as the continuing impact of the outstation movement. More recent DCD and DAA estimates indicate a Yuendumu town population of about 800 and a combined outstation population of at least 400. The 1986 Census figure for the town was 754 of whom 687 were Aborigines.

Yuendumu's population structure, like that of the Northern Territory Aboriginal population in general, is youthful and rapidly growing. In 1986 almost 40 per cent of Aborigines were below the age of 15 and only 9 per cent over the age of 60 (Table 6.1). Comparable figures for 1978

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Nos</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Masculinity Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Males/Females X 100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 14</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 59</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 +</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Child Women Ratio (Children 0-14/Women 15-49) = 0.62
Dependency Ratio (Children 0-14+Adults 60+) = 0.94

Source: ABS, Population Census, 1986
(Young 1981, 64) were 37.4 per cent and 6.2 per cent respectively. It seems that Yuendumu’s demographic structure has been significantly affected by the recent outmigration to outstations. The age specific masculinity ratios for 1986 (Table 6.1) suggest a dearth of adults, particularly men; the high child ratio was due primarily to the absence of teenage girls, which might be attributed partly to differential age of marriage but is probably also related to their absence at secondary school in Alice Springs. For a number of reasons discussed elsewhere (for example, Loveday and Young 1984) young women tend to remain in the educational system for longer than their male counterparts.

Although there are no exact figures for Yuendumu’s rate of natural increase, the age structure of the population (Fig. 6.1), coupled with the high child-woman ratio of 0.62, suggests that it is well over the Australian average and is probably about 2.3 per cent per annum. This rapid growth rate, well over twice that of the Australian population as a whole, has important implications for the economic base of the community. It has been a major factor in the shift from subsistence to cash economy, the depletion of subsistence resources around Yuendumu, and it makes the belief that Yuendumu people could return to live off the land quite untenable. Comments such as ‘Nobody could survive – if there were no cash economy on Yuendumu everyone would have starved to death a long time ago’ (Laughren, in Transcripts, Warlpiri and Kartangarurru Land Claim 1978, 1325) indicate not only how assimilation has affected Yuendumu’s subsistence economy, but also the effects of high rates of population growth. A further important characteristic is dependency. Yuendumu’s 1986 dependency ratio of 0.94 (Table 6.1) was considerably higher than that of 1978 (0.78) and extremely high compared to non-Aborigines (0.59 for Australia in 1986). As this suggests, the pressure on the economically productive sector of the population for the support of dependents is considerable. Both non-monetary and monetary sources of income must be widely spread.

The demographic structures of Yuendumu and the outstations differ. Almost all non-Aborigines live in Yuendumu itself. Nyirripi, which now has a school, a shop and where for some years there has been a mission presence, has a non-Aboriginal component, and all other outstations except Ngarliyikirlangu, the base for the Cattle Company, are entirely inhabited by Aborigines. Census statistics are of no value in the study of Yuendumu’s outstations because these were amalgamated with other communities in a number of Collector’s Districts. However some observations can be made. In 1978 (Young 1981, 72/3) Yuendumu’s outstations had a low percentage of children (27, compared with 37 in the town). This reflected parental concern that their school
Figure 6.1 Age and sex composition by percentage of the population of Yuendumu, 1987
age children would be disadvantaged because none of the outstations had schools. Families with young children therefore stayed in Yuendumu. However by 1986 many people had decided that the establishment of outstations was a main priority and had left town regardless of the lack of schooling. It was the growth of the potential school population at Nyirrpi which finally led to the Department of Education agreeing to open a school there in 1985. Conversely, some outstation groups in 1978 were old, when almost 20 per cent of outstation dwellers were over 60, compared to only 6 per cent in Yuendumu. This characteristic again was probably less marked in 1986. The normalisation of the population structure essentially reflects the stabilisation of outstation groups.

Differences in population structure such as these clearly affect the economic base of outstations. A lack of young adults, with physical strength and the skills needed to carry out all sorts of tasks including those related to hunting (shooting kangaroos and emus), and those relating to the market or service economies (teaching, using the radio, keeping accounts, driving trucks etc.) makes it difficult for outstation groups to cope.
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE YUENDUMU ECONOMY - EMPLOYMENT AND INCOMES

Yuendumu, like other Aboriginal towns in the Northern Territory, offers very limited opportunities for wage employment, and as a result a high percentage of its Aboriginal families draw their entire cash income from social security pensions and benefits. This situation has existed for some time. It reflects the poor natural resource base of the town, and its isolated position in relation to other population centres. It also reflects the overwhelming dependence on government money either for wage employment, or for welfare. Table 7.1 summarises Yuendumu's workforce in terms of employer.

In December 1986 only one third of Yuendumu's Aboriginal labour force, defined as those with jobs together with those receiving unemployment benefits, was employed, giving an unemployment rate for the community of 66 per cent. Almost 75 per cent of workers had jobs which existed directly because of government funding, as Council employees, as workers in the school, health clinic and police station, and for other publicly funded bodies such as the Housing Association. The remaining 25 percent of the workers were with enterprise organisations, theoretically independent of government funding for their cash incomes. In practice this did not always occur. Stockmen working for the Cattle Company received no wages because insufficient profits were generated, and effectively carried out their jobs for unemployment benefits. Comparison of the 1986 situation with that in earlier years (1978 and 1983) shows little change in this broad pattern, although total unemployment in Yuendumu has risen markedly in the last eight years. This has occurred both because of a decline in the number of wage jobs, a result partly of cutbacks in real terms in government funding; and also because more people today are judged eligible to claim unemployment benefits, and have therefore in conventional terms become members of the labour force. The labour force participation rate in 1986 was approximately 50 percent, compared to only 30 per cent in 1978.

A breakdown of major employers in Yuendumu shows that in all three years the Council and the school were by far the largest employers, together accounting for well over 50 percent of all workers. But while these two bodies have consistently employed the largest numbers of people, the actual sizes of their labour forces have fluctuated considerably. In 1978 the Council had sufficient funding to employ a number of people, largely women, to clean the town area
Table 7.1
Yuendumu - Aboriginal wage-earning employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1978</th>
<th></th>
<th>1983</th>
<th></th>
<th>1986</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Nos.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Nos.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>33*</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>See Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>See Council</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Club</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining Co.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle Co.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>See Mining</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7**</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employed (% of workforce)

Table: 64  
Labour force: 30  
 participation (%)

* This figure includes people working for groups such as the Warlpiri Media Association, which, although independent of the school, have developed partly through the activities of adult education workers.

** This figure has been increased by 5 to cover payments to artists. Up to 70 people periodically worked as artists, and their annual earnings would be the equivalent of approximately five fulltime positions.

and camps, but subsequently these jobs have not been available. This partly reflects the decreasing number of Yuendumu people living in humpies, where garbage collection is a particular problem. In 1983 the Council faced severe funding problems and had cut back its workforce, but this had recovered somewhat by 1986. The school, in contrast, markedly increased its workforce in recent years, due to efficient tapping of alternative sources of funding mainly used to cover various components of adult education. These numbers also include two women employed at the newly opened school at Nyirrpi. Funding in all cases remains the main reason for changes in the size of the workforce. Recent reductions in the numbers of health staff, a major concern considering the number of outstations now associated with Yuendumu, have been caused by cutbacks within the Northern Territory Department of Health, and the drop in Housing Association employees also reflects funding decline. Because funding has failed to keep pace with rising costs, a higher and higher proportion of money must be spent on materials and equipment each year. Altogether it is important to note that funding reduction inevitably affect Aboriginal rather
than non-Aboriginal employment in places like Yuendumu. Many of the jobs held by Aborigines, such as garbage collection or tree planting, are perceived to be non-essential whereas the skilled positions held by non-Aborigines, such as mechanic or bookkeeper, must be maintained. Ironically this means that funding reductions may actually increase the percentage of non-Aborigines in the wage force of remote Aboriginal towns.

The enterprise workforce has also been affected by lack of funds, although this has at times been accommodated by members of these groups agreeing to work for unemployment benefit. This indicates the long-standing commitment felt by some of the Aborigines associated with these bodies, particularly the Cattle Company. As far as the Social Club, responsible for running the store, are concerned the turn-over in the workforce has been much higher, and the numbers employed depend not only on the profit margin of the business but also on the policy of the current manager. In 1983 the store was still trading itself out of a disastrous financial situation which had arisen two years earlier, and in 1986 the managers were employing a relatively large number of non-Aborigines in supervisory roles which at earlier times had been carried out by Aborigines. At the same time Nyirrpi had opened its own small store and two more jobs had become available there.

Another important characteristic of the workforce is the participation of women. In 1978 48 per cent of workers were women. They outnumbered the men in education, health and the store, and accounted for almost half the Council workforce. By 1986 their share of the workforce had dropped to only 35 percent, with the most marked drop being in the Council. Funding cutbacks tend to affect women first, especially if they are in casual jobs, and recent reductions in health staff are also putting experienced female health-workers out of work. Changes such as these clearly undermine the whole principle of self-management in isolated Aboriginal communities like Yuendumu.

High levels of unemployment, coupled with very limited job opportunities, inevitably lead to low cash incomes. In 1986 Aborigines in Yuendumu had a per capita income of approximately $100 per fortnight (Table 7.2), twice that of 1978 but still only one-third of the Australian average for 1986 ($331). Over 60 per cent of peoples incomes in 1986 came from social security, a proportion considerably higher than in 1978 when pensions and benefits accounted for 43 per cent of cash incomes. A breakdown of the figures shows that the change was largely due to an increase in unemployment benefits, the total face value of which had grown fivefold between 1978 and 1986. This change reflects two factors: better delivery of social security services, particularly
### Table 7.2

Aboriginal per capita incomes

(\$ per fortnight)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1978</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1986</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>31,597</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>46,915</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment benefit</td>
<td>11,650</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>59,795</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions</td>
<td>8,646</td>
<td></td>
<td>17,123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child endowment</td>
<td>3,196</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54,849</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>121,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cash income/capita/fortnight $47 $100

Source: Young, fieldwork 1978 and 1986

unemployment benefits; and the decline in wage employment opportunities. Altogether the high dependence on social security not only ensures the perpetuation of poverty in real terms, but also makes people extremely vulnerable to changes in welfare funding and administration imposed through both Federal and Territory government. While moves to make people work for the dole may sound less controversial in places like Yuendumu, where some people have been doing this for years, than they do within the non-Aboriginal community as a whole, tightening of the regulations on judging eligibility for the dole would have marked effects. Actual proof of active job seeking is hard to provide when everyone knows that the opportunities are not there.

Another important effect of the low income is that people do not have the resources to pay for expensive service provision. Inevitably a high proportion of income must go to buy food, clothing and other material objects, with the latter being the least important for most people, and little is left for rents, electricity, water and other costs. The implementation of a user pays principle will face problems in such a situation, and it may well be that some families decide they must do without the amenities which Yuendumu can now provide, and revert to living as they were previously, in very basic shelters with no power and only a shared water tap.

As the above summary implies, any supplementation of Yuendumu's cash economy by subsistence is potentially of great value. Not only do subsistence activities increase and improve people's diets but other materials obtained from such local resources may decrease dependence on cash. While, lacking CDEP, Yuendumu people do not yet have the freedom to use transfer payments to encourage subsistence, such a situation may well develop in the future.
CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY AND ITS ENTERPRISES

The Subsistence Economy and its Enterprises

Yuendumu's contemporary subsistence economy has changed markedly from pre-contact times in terms of its contribution to sustenance and survival and also in terms of some of the tools and equipment used to gather resources. Today the relative contribution of subsistence activities to Aboriginal diets in Yuendumu, as in other desert Aboriginal towns, is not great. Fisk (1985, 20-21), using data from various sources, estimates that in such towns only about five per cent of people's sustenance was obtained from bush tucker. While the figure for Yuendumu in 1986 is likely to be higher, because of improved access to vehicles and hence to more distant and less depleted country, the contribution is still small. It is, however, likely to be higher in outstations. Cane and Stanley (1985, 178) estimated that bush foods contributed between 20 and 30 per cent of food consumed in Yuendumu outstations and while it must be stressed that this figure is not based on accurate measurement it seems an acceptable estimate. The contribution is certainly much less than that measured by Altman (1987), who in the much more productive environment of inland Arnhem Land calculated that outstation dwellers could obtain up to 70 per cent of their sustenance from the bush. Technology used in foraging has also changed markedly, people now depend heavily on transport, and on the use of rifles and iron crowbars in hunting. But the foods which they obtain include most of those which would have been common before non-Aboriginal settlement, and the ritual and social significance of obtaining these foods is still great.

The Basis for Subsistence

The countryside around Yuendumu and the Tanami Desert to the west offers a wide variety of meat and vegetable foods which undoubtedly provided a varied diet in former times. Carbohydrates used in the past included seeds from grasses, acacia trees and other sources (used to make damper), and wild yams (Ipomoea sp.); fruits such as varieties of solanum, berries, bush plum and quandong; sources of sugar such as honey ants, the honey of wild bees and nectar and lerps found on acacia bushes; reptiles such as snakes, goannas and perenti; and game such as kangaroo, emu, porcupine and bilby. These resources were more plentiful in some areas than others, depending on habitat,
availability of water and other factors. Euro and porcupine
for example, were more commonly found within the rocky range
country than on the open plains, while emu occurred more
frequently in the open areas; honey ants built their nests
within the thick mulga woodland which occurs on all sides of
Yuendumu but is relatively less common to the west in the
Tanami Desert; and wild yams were particularly plentiful in
the Tanami, especially to the west and north where summer
rainfall is more predictable. Inevitably individual groups
of Aborigines ranged widely to obtain supplies of all these
resources and it is probable that some rarely had the chance
to eat yams or honey ants. Major responsibility for
obtaining these foods was split between men and women, with
the men normally concentrating on larger game and the women
on fruits, vegetables and reptiles. Altogether it seems that
women would have provided almost all of the important
vegetable component of the diet, estimated as having
accounted for about 70 to 80 per cent of all food consumed
(Meggitt 1964, 33). Patterns of subsistence activity for
both men and women consisted of ranging within areas close
to camp sites, which could be ephemeral or slightly more
long-lasting, and gathering for the day's needs. People
functioned in a fairly independent way, and it is likely
that women, who would often have young children with them,
might have consumed a high proportion of their collection
before returning to the camp; men, on the other hand, would
be more likely to bring meat back because they were catching
large animals, and also because the camp would often be
situated in the best location for cooking in an earth oven.

Contemporary Subsistence at Yuendumu

Many of the characteristics summarised above can also
be applied to the contemporary subsistence economy. The same
types of foods are obtained from the same physical regions
as before; men and women still involve themselves with
different sectors of food gathering; and the independence of
different food gathering groups, is, as far as consumption
is concerned, maintained. But there are some major
differences, all stemming from changes brought about through
contact with non-Aborigines, and the influence of non-
Aboriginal settlement on the land.

The most important change is that caused by the
relocation of Aborigines from their former homelands to a
large nucleated settlement at Yuendumu. This not only
removed people from areas where subsistence resources must
have been much more plentiful than they proved to be around
Yuendumu itself, but also caused overuse of the resources
around Yuendumu. Moreover, since most families came from
other parts of the Tanami and were not traditional owners of
country in the Yuendumu area, they had to obtain the
agreement of the traditional owners before hunting on that land. Such agreement is unlikely to have caused any problems because desert people are well aware of the need to provide mutual support for others in the harsh environment to which they belong. But it would initially have meant that people had to learn about which places to go, and certainly about the location of certain places taboo to them. The country around Yuendumu today still shows the signs of the influence of increased population. It is very rare for people to go hunting on foot from the town because little bush tucker exists nearby, apart from occasional solanum fruits or mulga apples. And it is only the rocky outcrops, such as Wakurlpu to the north and the ranges to the south, that seem to offer much in the way of game. Expeditions to these places need vehicles anyway. As a result people who live in Yuendumu and only want to make short trips to gain subsistence resources are fairly restricted in what they can do. On Saturdays and Sundays it is quite common for families and friends to spend a few hours at Wakurlpu, usually hunting while there but not optimistic about having much success. In fact people visiting there usually carry steak from the Yuendumu store to cook on the fire because they know that they are unlikely to obtain much bush tucker.

Away from Yuendumu resources are much better. The return to homeland areas to the west and north, and the establishment of outstations has improved access to subsistence resources both for outstation dwellers and for their kin who remain in Yuendumu. For those who live in the outstations hunting and gathering can be a daily activity, and it is possible to reach productive areas on foot. In areas rich with wild yams commonly used purchased staples such as bread become less necessary, and some outstation groups, such as those at Yarripirlangu and Waylilinypa, obtain such large quantities of these vegetables that they give considerable amounts away to other people. It is not uncommon to find yams from this area being cooked by kin in the camp at Mt Allen, some 100 kms. away. Outstation people, however, also need vehicles for hunting, particularly when looking for kangaroos and other larger game, and for the most part the men will only occasionally obtain large supplies of meat if they do not have a vehicle. A rifle is today seen as essential. The richness of resources around outstations, coupled with the much greater ease of access to these resources for outstation people undoubtedly increases the importance of the subsistence economy for them. For their kin in Yuendumu the outstations have also boosted subsistence production. Instead of staying in town at weekends, most Yuendumu people who have transport visit their outstation relatives. They go to see them and check up on their well-being; to go back to their own country, and renew their links and knowledge of those places; and to obtain bush-tucker. While they may obtain some bush-tucker
during the journey, as when the passengers in the truck chase basking goannas from the middle of the road up the trees and catch them, much will be obtained at the outstation, either from surplus already existing there or through trips undertaken as part of the weekend's entertain-
ment. The establishment of outstations in more and more distant locations, one or two hundred kilometres from Yuendumu, and improved access to vehicles has made these trips longer in recent years and people may now go to Tanami or out to the west of Nyirrpi on weekend trips from town.

Other changes introduced by non-Aborigines are those affecting the natural resources of the environment. Both the former Yuendumu reserve and the area within the boundaries of Mt Doreen cattle station have been heavily affected by pastoralism. Cattle have removed much of the ground vegetation, particularly during drought periods, and some types of tucker such as solanum seem to be less plentiful in these areas. Moreover cattle, by congregating around permanent water holes, have fouled water supplies and reduced the locations suitable for camping at by humans. Their hooves have puddled the ground in these areas, cutting them out as places with plentiful supplies of bush tucker. However, on top of these disadvantages, it must be acknowledged that cattle themselves have become a subsistence resource. Although the use of cattle for killers is largely confined to negotiated transactions involving the purchase of an animal by a group of people, people do make use of this resource fairly frequently. Interestingly enough most recent purchases seem to be made from neighbouring pastoral stations, such as Mt Denison, rather than from the Ngarliyikirlangu Cattle Company, the Yuendumu pastoral enterprise, but such patterns of use can change quickly according to prices and other factors. Ngarliyikirlangu do provide killers for their own employees. Outstation people in general do not have good access to killers because most of them live at some distance from where these can easily be obtained. Despite early suggestions that Jila outstation, situated on the former Chilla Well pastoral lease, should develop economic activity based on a small killer herd, this has not occurred. This reflects the poor resources of this land, in the middle of the Tanami Desert, and the problems encountered by this community in establishing itself with constant disruption from passersby on their way to purchase grog at Rabbit Flat (Young 1981, 74, 84-5).

Feral animals introduced by non-Aborigines have also affected the subsistence economy. The two most important ones from a subsistence point of view are the rabbit and the pussy cat. Rabbits are now plentiful in many areas, and certainly contribute noticeably to the diets of people at Nyirrpi and Jurlpungu. Like other small game they are obtained mostly by the women, and when hunting is efficient-
ly organised, by blocking off all access holes into the burrow, large numbers can be killed within a small time. Pussy cats form part of the diet for some outlying outstation groups, and their presence has certainly affected other resources because they have proved to be extremely efficient predators of some of the smaller marsupials. They are responsible for the disappearance of some of the smaller animals which used to be found in the area. The other main feral animals of the region, camels and brumbies, have little effect on subsistence, although at least two outstation groups have in recent years tried to tame camels to sell to tourist organisations in Alice Springs. Neither of these ventures have been successful because people have lacked the right equipment, and, in the case of young people, knowledge to carry the process through to completion.

Another factor which influences contemporary subsistence activity is the change in technology. Introduced equipment such as rifles, iron crowbars and billycans has become essential, and it is only when people find game unexpectedly that they will attempt to use more traditional methods or equipment. Pussy cats, for example, are usually shot but they can be caught without rifles by chasing them up trees, bringing them down with smoke and fire, and relying on camp dogs to run them down. Rabbits similarly can be dug out with wooden digging sticks but these would only be used if people had forgotten to bring their crowbars. By far the most important recent technological change is the use of vehicles, preferably 4WD, for reaching good bush tucker areas and for chasing game such as kangaroos and emu. The last two decades have seen an enormous increase in Aboriginal vehicle ownership at Yuendumu. This reflects a greater involvement in the cash economy, along with the provision of government funding for vehicle purchase associated with the establishment of outstations. Privately owned vehicles, the first category, are almost always secondhand sedans or station wagons, usually fairly old before they even reach Yuendumu and of limited use for off road driving. They are heavily used in the community, both by owners and by kin and friends, and their life in 1978, as Kesteven (1978, 34) comments, was probably no more than eight weeks after arrival. In terms of subsistence these vehicles are remarkably resilient, and are taken along tracks and across the scrub in conditions which would hardly be contemplated elsewhere in Australia. Aboriginal ability in bush mechanics is essential to keep them on the road. The second category of vehicle, 4WD trucks bought with ABTA money for outstation use, are infinitely more valuable for subsistence activity, and are certainly extensively used for hunting. However there is strong competition for them, as they are also needed to go shopping or visit the clinic in Yuendumu, or to collect firewood for the camp. An additional
limitation, particularly for the women, is that not everyone can drive them. Altogether vehicle access is much easier for men than women, even when a woman is the owner or boss of the vehicle, and women would undoubtedly spend far more of their time in bush tucker expeditions if they had the means to get there when they wanted.

A final factor is the effect of introduced purchased foods, and of education, on people's assessment of the importance of subsistence activity. Two purchased foods in particular, bread/flour and sugar, have not only become major components in Aboriginal diets, but have also replaced earlier forms of naturally occurring carbohydrate. Yuendumu people now make very little use of seeds to make damper, eating only some varieties of acacia seed cooked in the embers of the fire. Seed collection and grinding were extremely time-consuming tasks, and the end product, to younger people at least, was probably less palatable than white bread and damper. Moreover, bread and flour is cheap and filling, the basis for a non-Aboriginal diet of poverty. Sugar similarly has become very important, but it could not be said to have replaced bush sources of sugar such as honey. These were never obtained in large supplies anyway, and delicacies such as honey ants and honey are still avidly sought in their own right. Other purchased foods such as fresh meat also today usually form a larger part in the Aboriginal diet than does game. But, although it can be stated that they have partly replaced game, the replacement is not as absolute as sometimes assumed. The ritual and social significance of obtaining game from one's own country, coupled with the fact that it tastes better, is still sufficient incentive to go hunting, and people frequently say that they are very hungry, even when they have just consumed a large piece of steak.

The education of younger people, which has kept them in the classroom at a time when otherwise they would have been learning how to be successful in obtaining bush tucker, has also had an effect. But it would be quite wrong to say that young people in Yuendumu no longer know how to catch goannas, and have no interest in doing so. Those whose mothers are expert foragers learn techniques and signs from an early age, and are likely to pass these on to their own children. But those whose mothers are also strongly committed to life in Yuendumu and who rarely go beyond Wakurlpu when they travel into the countryside are likely to grow up seeing the activity as largely recreational, a Sunday afternoon jaunt which may or may not produce food. On the whole, although there are no data, the latter would still be on the minority. Most people are still strongly interested in subsistence activity, not only for its role in providing food but perhaps more importantly for its role in allowing individuals to identify with the land, and for the
ritual importance attached to this. For this reason, although estimates of the contribution of subsistence to the diet are low, the actual contribution of bush tucker in social and cultural terms is much greater.

Data on subsistence activity at Yuendumu, its seasonal, spatial and gender variations, are not available in detail. However, from a variety of foraging trips undertaken at different times of year and with different groups of people some patterns emerge. Seasons undoubtedly affect foraging, both because certain plants and fruits only occur at certain times of year, game may be in different environments at different times, and also because the hot season is a time when hunting is physically very trying. People are usually more active in winter than in summer, and many would only go out in December or January either early in the morning or late in the afternoon. Spatial variations, whereby people go to particular places for particular types of food, are very important. In general people prefer to forage within their own country, where they not only have the most detailed knowledge of the resources and their habitat, but where they also feel secure in their ritual responsibility for the land. But inevitably this is impossible for many Yuendumu families, whose country may be one or two hundred kms away. They will hunt in the country of others, usually with the full knowledge of those concerned. This is what occurs throughout the former Yuendumu reserve.

Foraging is also affected by temporal variations. For residents of Yuendumu the weekend is the hunting time, fitted in between one week's work and the next. Some will go hunting after work, but the amount of time available is limited by the length of daylight, and usually it would only be the men who would make such trips, depending on whether they had a vehicle. The fact that kangaroos and other large game come out to feed at this time makes it an attractive proposition. Outstation people are of course free to hunt at other times, mainly because very few have wage jobs but also because good hunting territory is more accessible to them.

The involvement of men and women also varies. As indicated above, there is differential access to vehicles, and that, coupled with different methods for hunting and foraging creates problems when both combine. When women have a vehicle they decide carefully where they will go, and when they reach the site set up a temporary 'dinner camp' near the car and then range within nearby areas. Young children and some older women usually remain in the camp, keeping the fire going, making tea, and probably also collecting some foods from nearby. The others sometimes periodically return, refresh themselves, and then go off again; otherwise they may remain away for several hours, coming back only when they are tired, thirsty, and consider that they are not
finding much food. Regardless of which pattern they follow, their small game is cooked at the dinner camp unless there is some urgency about leaving, and much of the food is then eaten before people return to Yuendumu. Commonly very little of this produce ever comes back to the town, a pattern which makes it extremely difficult to observe subsistence production with any degree of accuracy. Men have a different hunting pattern. While some younger men may be content to accompany their wives on such trips provided they themselves have rifles and can go off stalking kangaroos, most would not opt to do so. They leave that kind of hunting to the older men. Younger men want to keep moving in the vehicle, tracking game while on the move and possibly chasing it through the bush. They often shoot from the truck, leaving the engine running to suggest to their quarry that they are driving past. This type of trip would not offer the appropriate opportunities for women.

The contribution of the subsistence economy at Yuendumu is not restricted to obtaining food. It also covers the provision of other items which in some cases would otherwise have to be purchased, and in others are only obtainable in this way. Shelter provides an example of the former. Although the proportion of Yuendumu people now living in humpies constructed of brushwood, timber, cardboard and old iron is smaller than in the past, a considerable number of families still camp in this way. Their meagre cash incomes therefore do not have to cover housing, and their reliance on this component is less. While many camping families are people with no wage-earners this is by no means universal as some groups prefer to camp for customary reasons. The west camp at Yuendumu, for example, still houses many people from the western parts of the Tanami, as it has now done for three or four decades, and those of this group who have jobs prefer this location because it allows them to remain close to their kin. The recent construction of some permanent shelters in the west camp will go some way towards meeting their needs. In the outstations a higher proportion of people live in temporary shelters, although most of these communities now have a nucleus of small basic shelters, with no power or interior running water, at least sufficient for storage if not for providing adequate sleeping space. In effect most people still prefer to sleep outside in fine weather.

Other important items obtained as part of the subsistence economy include materials used to make decorations and implements both for ceremonial and everyday use. Coolamons, parajas, boomerangs, spears, nulla nullas, shields and ceremonial boards all require certain types of timber, sometimes only found in particular areas, and considerable effort may be needed to collect supplies. For example, in December 1986, old men living at Nyirrpi requested transport
to go and cut young mulga trunks to make spears for initiation ceremonies to be held during the next few months, a journey which involved two to three hours travelling through thick scrub to a particular location. They had been waiting for suitable transport for some time, and were very relieved when the researchers' truck arrived from Yuendumu. Other important items include ochres, red, yellow and white, used in body painting, sand painting and for decorating ceremonial boards. Supplies of red and white ochre are found within the lands held by Yuendumu people, and people requiring supplies negotiate with the traditional owners of these sites for access. Both the white ochre site near the western boundary of Mt Allen and the red ochre site on Mt Stanley near Nyirripi are particularly valuable, the latter because the ochre comes from a vivid and translucent haematite which creates a particularly good colour in painting. Ochre from this site has obviously been extracted for hundreds and probably thousands of years, and is carefully carried to Yuendumu and beyond by those who have gone to collect it. Feathers, fluff and fur for body decoration, head dresses and making hair string are other commodities in frequent demand.

The ceremonial tradition remains very strong in Yuendumu and until recently many of the materials such as ochres or special timbers were used locally for such activities. Now, however, Yuendumu has an increasingly important artists group, producing paintings for external markets. Although most of these use acrylic paints rather than ochres the existence of this whole segment of life, and associated subsistence activities are the essential basis for the enterprise.

A common theme recurring throughout the above discussion is the articulation of subsistence activity on to the cash economy. Vehicles, rifles, and other tools are all essential for hunting and gathering. Cash itself is used in exchange for knowledge and for the privilege of attending ceremonies organised by others. And the skills which people have developed for producing paintings and artefacts are also marketable in the commercial world. The subsistence sector at Yuendumu therefore has to be considered as an essential part of enterprise. And it is the only part which can in reality help to lessen the burden of dependence on cash which will almost inevitably be brought into this isolated community from elsewhere. While it would today be quite unrealistic to imagine that Yuendumu people could again depend on subsistence for their livelihood, it can make an important economic contribution, particularly in outstations. Its social contribution may in fact be even greater.
CHAPTER NINE

THE SERVICE SECTOR IN THE ECONOMY

As Table 7.2 indicated, the service sector accounts for a very high proportion of wage employment at Yuendumu, 79.0 per cent of the workforce in 1986. The main organisations within this sector are the Council, the school, the health clinic, the police force and the Housing Association, with the first two providing most of the jobs. These organisations are almost entirely dependent on government funding both for their recurrent and capital costs. Only the Council and Housing Association have any involvement or potential scope for generating additional cash income through commercial enterprise. In general dependence on government funding may appear to offer some stability to employees in these organisations, because their wages come from outside Yuendumu rather than being dependent on profits generated privately. In practice this is not the case because fluctuations in government funding allocations have a marked and sometimes unpredictable effect on job availability.

Although Yuendumu is currently administered by its own Community Council, an all Aboriginal body supported by non-Aboriginal staff skilled in dealing with financial matters, other bodies, including Northern Territory government departments exert influence in the town. Enterprise organisations such as the Mining and Cattle companies are also highly significant. There is considerable fragmentation and some overlap which causes a conflict of interests, as well as some healthy competition. And none of these bodies could perform their roles effectively unless they functioned within a framework compatible with that of traditional Aboriginal society. Yuendumu also has a council of elders, the Warnayaka Tribal Assembly, made up of leaders from all the main extended family groups; it has several lands trusts, each responsible for specific areas granted as separate units through the land claims process; it has an outstation council and resource centre, separately funded by DAA and responsible for co-ordinating service provision and funding applications for the 15 or so outstations in the Yuendumu area; and it has a well-defined social structure, in which individual hierarchies and relationships reflect ceremonial and territorial responsibilities. All of these structures influence the composition of bodies such as the Council, or the Boards of Directors of Cattle Company and Social Club; and they also have to be taken into account in the structure of workforces in the school, clinic or any other organisation. If those employed in particular jobs are perceived by the community to be inappropriate, or are not
compatible with each other, then the harmony of the work-
force will be undermined. Decisions also must be made within
the correct Aboriginal authority structure, and attempts to
impose changes without taking these factors into account
will generally fail.

The Council

Yuendumu Community Council traces its origins back to
the establishment of the Village Council in 1962, a body
which came about with the gradual extension of franchise to
Aborigines. That original Council, with Aboriginal and non-
Aboriginal members, speedily became involved in earning some
income through contracting, starting with the clearing of
the airstrip (NTWBR 1962-63, 21). In the following year the
Village Council was granted the prospecting lease at Mt
Hardy and thereafter devoted all its energies to the mining
venture (NTWBR 1963-4, 39). Three years later, in 1966 the
Yuendumu Advisory Council was established, mainly because of
the growing interest in civic and administrative affairs and
the realisation that Aborigines had to be involved in these,
but also because the only existing body had in fact become a
mining company rather than a village council (NTWBR 1966-7,
162). The new Advisory Council had 12 members, all male.
In 1967 Yuendumu women, keen to get a voice in the
administration of the settlement, set up a women's council,
with a representative of each of the eight Warlpiri groups.
A year later the two groups combined to form the Yuendumu
Town Council, with 12 members, two of whom were women. This
structure has been preserved ever since.

Yuendumu Community Council has depended on government
funding, and has essentially had a service role. Its main
function has been the provision of town services - running
the council garage and workshop, keeping the power house
operating, employing a general staff collecting garbage,
cleaning the public areas, administering social security
payments, and a host of other services essential to the
community. Although that service role has remained
paramount the Council also does have skills within its
workforce and plant and equipment which enable it to carry
out jobs on contract. Examples of these have included
contracts to provide essential town services such as power
(from NTEC) and water, and grading new tracks to
outstations, funding for which come from DAA. The Council
therefore, unlike the school or clinic, straddles the
service and market sectors of the enterprise economy. Its
contract activities are discussed below.

Yuendumu Community Council has always been the major
employer in the community, providing, in 1978, as much as 50
per cent of the workforce (Table 7.2). Although that share
had by 1986 dropped to 38 per cent it still remained very substantial. Work carried out by council employees includes jobs requiring high levels of skill, as in clerical and supervisory roles in the office, jobs such as mechanics in the garage and operators in the power house; and unskilled jobs such as the collection of firewood for camps, garbage collection and general town cleaning. Decline in the number of positions generally affects the latter component much more severely than the former, and has had a particularly severe effect on women's employment. In 1978, when Yuendumu Council had five distinct camping/wood collection gangs operating for each main humpy camp, almost half the council workers were women, mainly in town cleaning. By 1986, when very few people were employed in such jobs, only a quarter of the council workforce were women.

The decline in Council employment, and hence in council money as a contributor to the cash needed for individual and family survival in the community, can undoubtedly be attributed to marked overall reductions in real funding over the years. Table 9.1 and Figure 9.1 presents a funding summary for Yuendumu during the last decade.

As the table shows, incomes and expenditure for the Yuendumu Council have fluctuated markedly during the last ten years or so, and budgets during the last two financial years have declined to levels closer to the mid-1970s than to those of the early 1980s. As Fig. 9.1 illustrates the value of the Council's grant in 1986-87 was in real terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gov. Grant Total Inc.</td>
<td>Recurrent Capital Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975/6</td>
<td>450,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976/7</td>
<td>426,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977/8</td>
<td>644,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978/9</td>
<td>678,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>742,947</td>
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<td>751,610</td>
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<td>1982/3</td>
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<td>517,492</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985/6</td>
<td>483,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986/7*</td>
<td>411,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Provisional
Sources: Yuendumu Council Record Files
Figure 9.1 Yuendumu Council: government grants, 1986–87 prices
only one third of that received in 1975-6. These changes do not entirely reflect changes in direct government grants. Before 1981/2 essential services were provided directly by the departments concerned, but from that year onwards responsibility went to the Council on contract. This had a marked effect on the income which did not come from a direct government grant. In that year, as Table 9.2 shows, 20 per cent of Council income came from sources other than the grant. An additional factor was contract earnings from other sources, such as the Department of Transport and Works. In 1981/2 Yuendumu Council successfully tendered for contracts for minor road construction, and the provision of gravel for more major road and airstrip work. Its success in this field, coupled with a suspicion on the part of the Northern Territory government that it was saving on other Council funding for purposes such as rebuilding the Council offices, led to a reduction in the total government grant to Yuendumu in subsequent years. This is another reason why non-grant income came to form a larger component of the total income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Non-Grant Income (% Total)</th>
<th>Wages/Salaries (% Expenditure)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976/7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977/8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978/9</td>
<td>[comparable figures not available]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979/80</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>78.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980/81</td>
<td>5.6</td>
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<td>20.6</td>
<td>48.7</td>
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<td>1982/3</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>56.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1983/4</td>
<td>29.6</td>
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<td>1984/5</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985/6</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986/7*</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Provisional

The reduction in Yuendumu Council's income has had a marked effect on employment, and hence on the Council's role within the service sector of the community. As Table 9.2 shows, a high proportion of expenditure has always gone for wages and salaries. Until 1980 these accounted for around 75 or 80 per cent of that component, and Council funds could therefore be described as contributing largely to the individual cash incomes of Yuendumu people, principally Aboriginal incomes. From then onwards the percentage of
expenditure on this component has dropped to below 50. This reflects both the rising recurrent costs on items such as equipment, repair and maintenance of vehicles etc., and the overall decline in funding.

Yuendumu Housing Association

Although Yuendumu was established in 1946 the first houses for Aborigines were not started until 1962-63. Until then all Aboriginal families, with a total population of 650, lived in humpies made of brushwood, timber and sheets of corrugated iron. Plans for house construction had been discussed earlier, around 1957, and local bricks were manufactured at this stage. These were used for specific purpose buildings, such as the hospital, and in 1962 the first three Aboriginal houses, constructed to a large extent from these locally produced materials, were completed. At that time Yuendumu's housing for non-Aborigines included 11 dwellings, a stark contrast in provision in population terms.

In 1964 Aboriginal housing at Yuendumu expanded rapidly with the construction of 23 aluminium 'Kingstrand' shelters, very basic buildings with unlined walls and roof, and earthen floors. These were considered to be suitable in the first stages of training Aborigines to become conventional house dwellers. All these houses were built by outside contractors. In the following year a contract for 70 Stage II houses, still referred to today as the concrete 'dog-boxes' was let, and six communal ablution blocks were erected to provide basic services. These houses were scarcely better than the Kingstrands for Aboriginal families - one roomed, and therefore too small for extended families; no verandahs; internal fireplaces inappropriate for cooking in the Aboriginal manner; no toilets; and still too hot in hot weather and far too cold in the winter. However, according to contemporary reports, people were initially delighted with them and took pride in keeping surrounding areas clean. By the end of 1966 all houses were complete and occupied, and much, if not all of Yuendumu's population of around 900 provided with shelter. Some families preferred to remain in humpies, which could be shifted in accordance to customary laws, and extended to house different sized groups; and the Pintupi, then very new arrivals in the town, insisted on sleeping outside the buildings and using the rooms only for storage. As a result, since government people inspecting the new housing areas were only interested in the interiors of the dwellings, the Pintupi village was described as the tidiest in Yuendumu. Housing construction for the 1960s was then virtually complete, except for the addition of three slightly more sophisticated cottages, whose tenants were specially selected as people ready to cope with reticulated
power and water, and furniture which they had to promise to make themselves.

In the 1970s Yuendumu saw a marked increase in houses and flats for non-Aboriginal staff, such as school teachers and hospital workers, and the addition of a few more houses for Aborigines. The latter were of very different design, in one case a group of small townhouses with patios and in another Aputula houses, a design specifically used by the Aboriginal Aputula association from Finke, a small ex-railway town to the south of Alice Springs. At the same time shifts in house occupation began, particularly after DAA withdrew its resident superintendent in 1978 and the functions of town administration came more into Aboriginal hands. Aboriginal council employees with supervisory roles, school teachers and other workers became eligible for improved houses and many buildings formerly constructed for non-Aborigines acquired Aboriginal residents. The two populations as a consequence began to intermingle physically, and the central part of Yuendumu became much more strongly integrated with the rest of the town, rather than being an exclusive non-Aboriginal enclave.

Aboriginal involvement in the construction of this housing stock has been minimal. But as the stock grew repair and maintenance took on greater and greater importance, and it is in this field that Aboriginal workers began to acquire skills as carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers and electrical assistants. The group of workers in these jobs formed the core of the Yuendumu Housing Association, set up in the 1970s as the incorporated body responsible for the use of Yuendumu's government housing grants. Grant allocations were never large, totalling only $182,800 in 1977/8 for example; almost three quarters of this was used to pay wages and salaries, a relatively large component because the nature of the tasks involved led to a need for a number of skilled tradesmen, all of whom were non-Aboriginal. Clearly the remainder of the money would not go far in new construction, and hence the Housing Association concentrated on extensions and renovations to the stage II houses, adding another room, a verandah, a shower/toilet and reticulated power and water. This effectively changed these residences from unattractive dwellings, invariably abandoned after a death and rarely reoccupied, to habitable houses which most families felt to be acceptable.

Yuendumu Housing Association's present operations are markedly affected by the particular circumstances of its setting. Its function as a service organisation is to provide, repair and maintain shelter and facilities for a population of about 1200 Aborigines and 100 non-Aborigines. Today this population is no longer centralised, but is scattered between the town of Yuendumu and about 16 out-
stations. People frequently move between these settlements, perhaps maintaining a toehold in each and following a system of bilocal residence (Young and Doohan, forthcoming). Their housing needs and priorities differ, according to whether they live in the outstations, where power and reticulated water are generally not available, and whether they live in Yuendumu, where most families would hope to have access to such facilities today. Support for housing in these two different types of situation varies, and while ADC and the NT Housing Commission in general allocate funds to the Housing Association for spending in the town, outstation housing funds can come from ADC and DAA and are not channelled through the Association. However because the Association's clientele live in both situations it does become involved, mainly through applying to carry out some of the outstation work by contract. Less directly, it is affected by the outstation movement because some of its tenants may spend much of their time out of Yuendumu, perhaps causing problems of rent collection in the town. Another basic factor affecting the Association is the collection of house rentals, difficult to extract from people who are mostly dependent on welfare payments, and whose incomes are inadequate.

The Housing Association's current responsibility in Yuendumu covers 70 houses, mostly renovated concrete Kingstrands, converted under the programme which has been in operation for 13 years. They also maintain a number of larger houses, some of which were built for specific groups of employees such as teachers, but have subsequently been handed over to Housing Association control. Houses which still belong to departments such as Education or Health may also be maintained by the Housing Association workforce on a contract basis. New housing construction in Yuendumu has recently been very limited. In 1986/87 about nine Nomad shelters with verandahs (slightly larger versions of the standard outstation houses) were being built on the periphery of Yuendumu, in the West Camp where families wished to remain because of a need to preserve social groupings, and because they had lived there for many years. This decision had been a source of conflict with other Yuendumu people, who saw these shelters as substandard and degrading, and who felt that the erection of two large, modern houses, using the same funds, was infinitely preferable. This illustrates some of the dilemmas faced by organisations such as housing, who with the limited funds available would certainly not be able to please all clients. Arguments also focus on political factional within the community, in this case on the needs of a group living in humpies with no basic facilities, compared to the needs of a relatively sophisticated group, in positions of power within the council, and committed to achieving equality with non-Aborigines in living standards.
The Housing Association workforce of 10 includes seven Aborigines and three non-Aborigines. The Aboriginal workforce has been remarkably stable over the years, including some individuals who have been there since the early 1970s. Some of the Aboriginal staff are now skilled in a number of fields — bricklaying, plumbing, painting — but most lack any formal trade training. The non-Aboriginal staff also includes some long-standing tradesmen, and this stability has been a very important factor in the success of the whole operation over the years. The Association has a board of Aboriginal directors, some of whom are also employees, and decisions about work priorities, allocation of houses, problems with debtors etc. are discussed within this group. Most of the time this system seems to operate effectively, although in 1986 the Association was accused of not consulting carefully enough with the rest of the community about priorities, and deliberately held an open meeting to allow other people to have their say. This related specifically to the conflict described above.

Government funding (DAA and ADC) of the Housing Association for the last decade has been as follows (Table 9.3 and Fig. 9.2). As this indicates, the Association, like the Council has suffered a large reduction in real terms and in 1986–7 received grants equivalent to only 57 per cent of that received a decade ago. While it could be argued that this partly reflects the success of the housing program, with a much higher proportion of Aboriginal families now having fairly satisfactory shelter, the funding reductions undoubtedly make it difficult for adequate repair and maintenance. They have also affected Aboriginal employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Funding, 1976–1987$</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976/7</td>
<td>162,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977/8</td>
<td>182,800</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2,379,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 9.2 Yuendumu Housing Association funding, 1986-87 prices
The Housing Association also receives income from rents and contracts and from grants from other bodies, such as the Northern Territory Housing Commission in 1986/7 which paid for the Nomad shelters erected in the camps. Rental income has increased markedly over the decade, from only $875 in 1976/7 to over $26,000 in 1985/86. This reflects a number of factors; the need to charge rental for the converted Kingstrands, when no rents were collected on them before; and the fact that the Housing Associations stock now includes buildings which used to belong to Education and other public bodies. Rent collection is a problem. Rents of those in the workforce can be taken directly from their pay packets, a process which is straightforward for the Housing Association itself but which can be complicated for other groups because it requires administrative co-operation. When the conversions started all were allocated to families with at least one wage earner. Now with over 70 completed many are occupied by people on pensions and unemployment benefit and rents have to be individually collected. Suggestions about deducting rents from social security payments when the cheques are cashed have so far led nowhere, and the process is fraught with problems because it can be seen as an infringement of people's rights. If, on the other hand, people chose to deposit the necessary cash themselves when they cash cheques then that seems acceptable. Such practices are carried out by Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs. On the whole, while the Housing Association has never managed to collect all its rents, it does cope fairly well with this problem, usually providing about 80 per cent of what is expected.

A joint DAA/ADC housing survey in 1984 has identified the need for additional houses at Yuendumu, at a probable cost of about $5 million. This was based on an estimate of 160 families in Yuendumu, then living in 65 houses thought to be in reasonable condition. Progress since then is another 10 or so conversions so it is clear that with that plus the 1987 shelters the housing problem is still acute. Costs of the new houses needed, all 2 bedroom, were $56,000 each. Earlier surveys suggested that Yuendumu's needs were for 140 additional houses, but the movement of people to outstations has reduced this figure somewhat.

The Housing Association provides a very important pool of skills in the community, a pool that has been extended in size over the years as younger people are brought into training. It has also demonstrated that with determination self-help is possible, and Yuendumu has not in recent times been confronted with the depressing spectacle of outside contractors being brought in lock, stock and barrel to build shelters without consulting Aboriginal people. Such practices have been all too common elsewhere, and decisions to build a small number of expensive houses have taken
priority over a large number of cheap ones, often the desire of most of the people. Yuendumu Housing Association did erect five shelters at Nyirripi in 1985. Apart from getting adequate funding, future problems facing the Housing Association include continuing hassles after rents and resultant conflict with other community organisations, including the Council; and, of immediate worry, covering the costs of power and water on a user pays basis. While responsibility for this is most likely to fall on the Council, the Housing Association is inevitably going to be involved. For a start, proper metering systems will have to be put in at an estimated cost of $30,000 before collection of electricity charges is possible.

Outstation Resource Centre

In 1984, when Yuendumu outstations had become firmly established and it was clear that their specific service needs required co-ordination, the community finally received funding for an outstation resource centre. This centre consisted of a small office in the town itself, staffed by a co-ordinator and two or three field staff, and basic equipment such as vehicles. Funding, through DAA, not only covered the wages of resource centre employees, but could also be used for projects such as providing materials for fencing of living areas. In recent years total allocations have been as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985/6</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986/7</td>
<td>$94,880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main function of the resource centre is that of co-ordination. Requests from different outstation groups are for assistance in obtaining services such as health, education, or shelter, or for submitting funding applications for vehicles or other needs. Staff of the centre then channel these through the relevant departments, assist outstation applicants to complete the necessary paperwork, and provide advice on what sources of assistance are available. A major responsibility is that of maintaining contact with DAA field staff in Alice Springs. Resource centre staff also spend much of their time travelling to the 15 or so groups for which they are responsible, a considerable drain on both time and resources considering that distances of over 200 kms are sometimes involved. While the designation of a separate outstation service organisation has been important for the general stabilisation of the groups, there are some problems of co-ordination. In particular, outstation people sometimes feel that some of the funds allocated to Yuendumu as a whole are not being dispersed beyond the town proper, and that their
needs are ignored. Several areas of responsibility, such as housing or road maintenance are not clearly defined.

The School

Yuendumu school, established in the 1950s under the auspices of the Baptist Mission, has until 1987 been a primary school with a post-primary section for older children unable or unwilling to go to Yirara College, the Aboriginal secondary school in Alice Springs. Associated with it was an adult education section, providing a variety of training opportunities requested by Yuendumu people - driving instruction, batik making, literacy for clerical staff in the Council, store and other such offices, RATE (Remote Area Teacher Education) for school staff, literacy support for health workers, and other courses as needed. In 1987 it began to develop the new concept of a Community Education Centre, an organisation which combines educational provision for the whole community, with, hopefully, easier transfer from one sector to another and better interaction between all groups. This change, still in its pilot stage, reflects a frequently voiced need for Aboriginal children to be able to go to secondary school within their own community, and also the need for much better integration within the whole system.

The school at the end of 1986 employed 30 per cent of Yuendumu's Aboriginal workers, a higher proportion than at any time in the past. However only 54 per cent of these (18 people) were actually employed by the Education Department, as teachers, clerical assistants and cleaners. The others, mostly involved in adult education, were paid out of a variety of different government funding sources - CEP, DEIR money etc. They worked for the Media Association, for Warlukurlangu Artists Association and on other special adult education courses. Their employment situation was decidedly unstable, depending on finite funds which were not guaranteed from year to year, and which could only be obtained after painstaking and lengthy application to the appropriate bodies. In earlier years this group was virtually non-existent, hence the reason why education has in the past been a much less prominent employer. However even those working directly for the Department of Education face some insecurity, associated both with government funding cut-backs and a change in educational demand at Yuendumu caused by outstation development. In 1978 the school employed the same number of Aboriginal teachers as in 1986. But numbers have always fluctuated, partly because Aboriginal trainee teachers have periodically been absent at Batchelor College. In the past they were paid a full salary while attending courses, and thus the school could
not replace them in Yuendumu. Today, since they receive Abstudy grants, their salaries should theoretically be available for the employment of replacements. There have also on several occasions been discussions about reducing Yuendumu's staff because the population of the town had dropped as the outstations had grown. Until 1985 these discussions made little allowance for the development of Nyirrpi into a community of more than 100 people, a considerable number of whom by then were school age children receiving no education. The opening of Nyirrpi school, which employs two Aboriginal teachers, has now resolved this situation. Another outstation school, at Wayilinypa, opened in 1987 with 15 children and an Aboriginal assistant teacher, and it seems likely that others will be requested. While such a redistribution of resources will obviously be more appropriate to the needs of the community as a whole (see Young and Doohan, forthcoming; Loveday and Young, 1984), it may ultimately lead to the school playing a less prominent role in the economic component of the service sector in the town itself.

The Health Clinic

Yuendumu Health Centre, as Table 1 shows, employed fewer people in 1986 than in either of the two periods covered. Four Aboriginal health workers is a miserly number compared to previous years when there have been attempts to train people for permanent jobs at the outstations, as well as for more specialised jobs in the clinic (e.g. dental assistant). Another major concern is that in 1986 there were no Aboriginal men working in the clinic. This effectively means that adult Aboriginal men will have difficulty in using the facilities offered. They will often, for customary reasons, be unable to consult the women healthworkers, and although on most occasions the non-Aboriginal staff may be able to provide for their needs this will not always be appropriate. Moreover it removes a vital link between members of the Aboriginal community and conventional non-Aboriginal health services, a link which has been stressed frequently as essential for people to use the facilities to the full (e.g. Nathan and Leichliter, 1983 etc.).

The main reason for the decline in clinic jobs, and hence of the Health and Community Service Department's role as a contributor to community wages through the service sector, appears to be reductions in funding. This reflects a retraction in the service occurring throughout the Northern Territory, as costs for transport, equipment and other needs grow and a reduction in Departmental funds as a result of cuts in Commonwealth funds. But the effects on places like Yuendumu are particularly severe, because of the chronic
health problems faced by many of the community, and because of the scattered nature of the population. In December 1986 all outstation services, with the exception of Nyirrpi which had its own resident Aboriginal healthworker, were being provided by periodic visiting. This not only put some strain on the staff, forced to carry out weekly visits to two outlying centres some considerable driving distance away. It also meant that outstation people generally had to come into Yuendumu frequently if they were sick, and probably forced some who were chronically ill to move back to the town on a permanent basis. Non-Aboriginal staff at the clinic at that time felt that Yuendumu needed at least six Aboriginal health workers if the community were to receive the service it needed.

Another factor which has affected Aboriginal clinic staffing is the requirement for all to be literate before they undertake training. This was not a requirement in the past. In a community such as Yuendumu where many adults have very limited formal education such rules cut out a large percentage of the population. Moreover they cut out older women whose lack of literacy may be more than offset by their experience, their standing in the community, and the confidence which others have in them. While some of the older, only semi-literate health workers were still employed in 1986, others had left the service and might not come back in.

Warlpiri Media Association

Since 1983 Yuendumu people have become increasingly interested in developing their own input into the media, initially through local video production and later through the establishment of their own local TV network. This interest reflects a desire to use media in ways most appropriate to the community, allied to some anxiety over the possible impact of commercial TV relayed by AUSSAT. Supported by an external media researcher and adult education staff, a number of people at Yuendumu have become skilled video producers and the recording of day to day events, such as community meetings or hunting expeditions, and occasional ceremonies is now expected. Until the local TV network was established in 1985 people wanting to look at the Media Association's films had to come to the adult education centre to do so, and large groups frequently gathered, particularly when there were new films of special events such as the Yuendumu Sports Day. By late 1986 about 12 receivers were set up within the community and daily lunchtime video broadcast sessions were held. In August 1987 Yuendumu was linked into the satellite system, using the scheme promoted by DAA which is specially designed to allow for local programme input as well as commercial
broadcasting. This scheme has been preferred to that promoted by the Department of Communications because the latter is not as flexible as far as local input is concerned. By channelling ABC programmes through the Warlpiri Media Association, a measure of content control is possible and Warlpiri language programmes have been inserted.

While the Media Association's function in Yuendumu is primarily that of a service organisation, it already has an input into the local economy through employment, and may in future develop a market enterprise function. In late 1986 it employed one person on a full time basis but, because of its position as a shareholder in Imparja, the Alice Springs Aboriginal Broadcasting Association, that was likely to increase. Imparja has won the contract to provide commercial TV in Central Australia and plans to carry this out with contributions from a number of outlying regional centres, one of which is Yuendumu. Staff at these centres, perhaps about four or five at Yuendumu, will produce sufficient local material for 1/2 hour program per week. These programmes will have to be both high quality and suitable for the whole Central Australian audience, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Imparja's input to the Warlpiri Media Association for this service is expected to be about $250,000, which includes about $20,000 of equipment as well as the employment funding. In return the Association in its first year should earn about $78,000 by selling about 25 hours of high quality programs. In late 1987 two full time traineeships, funded through Imparja for three years, were due to start and prospects also included two further positions funded through the Department of Education, Employment and Training. As far as the Warlpiri Media Association are concerned there are additional possibilities. Not only may they find themselves selling programmes to other outlets, but they also hope to extend their earnings by freelancing. This could mean the local production of films which are then offered to other distributors. This kind of business is already established in a small way because video films from Yuendumu have been purchased by other Aboriginal communities, by Aboriginal resource organisations and by others. In 1986 the Association earned about $1,000 through such sales.

While the market enterprise potential of the Warlpiri Media Association is at present mainly a subject for speculation, it is a development which could have a considerable impact on the community. Its impact both as a service organisation and as a vehicle for stimulating interest in the media and in positive ways of using it has already been considerable. Its products meet some important criteria for business success in remote towns like Yuendumu
- uniqueness, high value in relation to cost, use of local (human) resources and others.

Other Service Organisations: Police, Mission

As far as employment is concerned, few other service organisations make any contribution to Yuendumu's economy. The police station, located on the periphery of the town, has for many years employed an Aboriginal tracker, and more recently has had one or two Aboriginal police aides on its staff. The latter have, like the health workers, had basic training which enables them to take greater responsibility for law and order within the community, including limited powers of arrest, and which also enhances their status within the department. However they are as yet still not co-ordinated with the conventional career structure of the police force, and would be unlikely to gain employment outside Yuendumu. Their contribution within the town is invaluable because of their role as liaison officers between police and people.

The Baptist Mission, which performs a number of roles in addition to its evangelical function, is also instrumental in providing some employment, and hence contributing to the service sector. In addition to employing at least one person within the mission itself, the minister has normally acted as the co-ordinator of funds to support some of the cultural organisations such as the Men's and Women's museums. These funds provide for part-time Aboriginal curators, people who not only take responsibility for the preservation of local collections of artefacts, but who also supervise some communal types of ceremonial activity.
Yuendumu's market economy has been adversely affected by physical, economic, social and political factors summarised earlier. Today, in terms of employment, or in terms of its contribution to the income of the community, it plays a relatively minor role, and its place has never been important. But it has lengthy antecedents, which are vital to an understanding of present market enterprises. As residents of a government/mission settlement central to the assimilation process in Central Australia, Yuendumu people were from the beginning introduced to a wide diversity of activities designed to wean them away from a lifestyle dominated by Aboriginal custom and practice. These included basic experiences such as living in houses, sending their children to school, consulting the non-Aboriginal nurse, going to church and eating non-Aboriginal foods. They also included work, in the school and clinic, in the store, as town cleaners, as cooks and bakers in the communal kitchens, as stockmen on the cattle project, as house-builders, as gardeners, as seamstresses and as miners and prospectors. While some of these activities are specifically tied to service provision, others had the potential for enterprise development. It is from these - the cattle project, horticulture and livestock production, poultry and egg production, the manufacture of clothing, mining, the construction of houses - that Yuendumu's contemporary market economy has developed. In every case these activities were primarily designed to aid the process of assimilation, with training, the promotion of the non-Aboriginal work ethic and self-sufficiency taking precedence over commercial practice. Intrusive events, such as Aboriginal religious ceremonies extending for periods sufficiently long to disrupt work attendance, were strongly discouraged. Other contemporary components of the market sector, such as art and craft production, owe nothing to the earlier assimilationist base but have grown primarily through Aboriginal interest. This distinction between enterprises imposed under non-Aboriginal auspices and those developed by Aborigines is extremely important and may well be a key factor in ultimate success.

Enterprises in the contemporary market economy at Yuendumu include the following:

Ngarlyikirlangu Cattle Company
Yuendumu Mining Company
Yuendumu Social Club (store), Nyirripi Store
Yuendumu Community Council
Yuendumu Housing Association
Warlukurlangu Artists Association

Of these organisations the Council and the Housing Association play primarily service roles, and in terms of overall wage employment should be classified mainly to the service sector. And most people who work for the Artists Association do so on a part-time basis, being paid by piece work. Therefore, when the conventional Aboriginal wage force structure is considered the contribution of the market and service sectors is as follows (Table 10.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the proportional representation of men and women in market and service jobs varies only slightly, the organisations with whom they work do show some differences. More than half the men in the market sector work for the cattle company, while the Social Club Store is by far the most important organisation employing women. Detailed breakdown is as follows (Table 10.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Club</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining Company</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle Company</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artists Association</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparisons with Aboriginal employment at Yuendumu in earlier years show that the relative share in the market and service economy has not radically changed. In 1978 19 percent of Aboriginal workers were in the market sector, 81 percent of workers were in the service sector, and the
breakdowns for men and women respectively were 22:78 and 15:85. In 1983 the percentage shares of the workforce by the two sectors were in total identical to 1978. These figures do not suggest a marked change over the years in the importance of the market and service components in the workforce, although fluctuations have certainly occurred from time to time. In 1981, when the shop was threatened with bankruptcy most store-workers, predominantly women, lost their jobs and the size of the market workforce notably declined. At other times, when the Council has run into financial difficulties, the service workforce has dropped. The Council's workforce in 1986 was only 60 per cent as great as that in 1978, mainly because of real overall cuts in funding; however the school workforce, through well-organised and vigorous applications for additional funding through CEP and other employment assistance schemes, had increased by 65 per cent between 1978 and 1986. Altogether, the 1986 workforce was 20 per cent below that of 1978.

Cattle at Yuendumu

Yuendumu's cattle project, initiated in 1958 in order to train people in all practical aspects of stock and station work, was aimed at developing the Reserve as a cattle project and resettling the native population in order to establish them as small-holders (NT Welfare Branch Report 1960-1, 33). Its relevance to assimilation is clear. But, for a number of reasons, this aim was never realised. Apart from the obvious incompatibility between the structure of a small-holder economy and society and that of semi-nomadic Warlpiri, the reserve has always suffered from severe water problems. In 1960, when the herd was in the establishment phase, droves of cattle brought in from Haasts Bluff, Jay Creek and Alice Springs brought stock numbers up to 680. From then onwards boundary fencing, the construction of stockyards and bore maintenance occupied the pastoral workers and Yuendumu began to produce meat for its own settlement kitchens, over 76,000 lbs in the peak years of 1962/3 (NTWBR, 104). Thereafter severe drought set in, forcing the project into the doldrums. Stock numbers in 1964/65 were only about 560 and feed was so short that the administration were concerned that the animals might have to be sold off altogether. Meat production in the 1964-67 period was virtually at a standstill (NTWBR 1964/65/66/67). Activity picked up again with the return of the rains in 1967/68 and two killers per week were supplied to the communal kitchen. But by this time, with rising cash incomes, housing and a growing retail store most Aborigines purchased their own food and the kitchens/dining rooms were used at far below capacity. Because of health regulations killers from the Yuendumu cattle could not be butchered for sale in the shop and hence a major purpose of the project,
to increase local self-sufficiency in meat, could not be realised. This has remained a 'bone' of contention ever since.

By 1970 cattle numbers on the Yuendumu reserve had reached over 1,300 and more than 13,000 lbs of beef per year was produced for local consumption. Approximately 12 Aboriginal men and a non-Aboriginal project manager were employed, by then on Pastoral Award Wages. The project remained strictly under non-Aboriginal government control, although within three years comments about handing it over to an Aboriginal company were made (DAA 77/5, Pt I, 18/9/73). No moves were made and, as interest in the commercial potential of the project grew, it was pointed out that economic viability, in terms of earning sufficient from profits to pay all wages and other costs, was extremely unlikely. In other words, if the Aborigines were to take over without government assistance the venture would fail and stockworkers would lose their jobs.

The issue of local killers as a meat supply for the store also continued. In 1975 it was estimated that Yuendumu shop sold 1,000 lbs of fresh meat per day, all imported frozen and pre-packaged from Alice Springs. The idea of establishing a small local abattoir was discussed but abandoned, partly because the existing arrangements were simpler to deal with, and the social club store felt that the Cattle Project might not be a reliable producer.

Following that period the issue of control of the cattle came into new focus with the implementation of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the conversion of the Reserve to Aboriginal Freehold tenure. By the end of 1977, nine months before the Reserve officially came under Aboriginal control, agreement was reached with DAA that the project be transferred to an incorporated Aboriginal body in mid 1978. In the event delays over the change in land tenure, coupled with negotiations about the extent of DAA funding to the new company, and about whether the Aborigines should compensate the government for the stock and the assets, held up the completion of the deal. The Ngarliyikirlangu Cattle Company, the new Aboriginal body, did not come officially into being until mid 1979. Frustrations in the final months actually culminated in the Yuendumu people writing to DAA to point out that, since the Reserve was now Aboriginal land, these government owned beasts were on agistment on Aboriginal grass and might be charged accordingly. The deal was speedily completed.

The Ngarliyikirlangu Cattle Company, responsible for running cattle within the 2,500 km sq of the former Yuendumu Reserve, was formed in 1979 when DAA finally handed control of the former Yuendumu Cattle Project over to the
Aborigines. Most of its directors are individuals who worked with the earlier project, men who for the most part held traditional ritual responsibility for sites within the northern part of the former Yuendumu Reserve. This happy coincidence of recognised Aboriginal authority over land and the use of that land for running cattle was not fortuitous. In the early days of the project volunteers to work with the stock came primarily from the appropriate land-owning group. It has made for easy relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal systems of land use and ownership. At the time of the handover in 1979 DAA, not fully recognising the importance of the coincidence between traditional land ownership and enterprise control, suggested that the company structure might be changed so that everyone in Yuendumu could become shareholders. To them this signified a fair distribution of resources. Yuendumu people were not enthusiastic about this essentially non-Aboriginal concept of sharing, and preferred to maintain the status quo. The present 60 shareholders are thus drawn mainly from the land owning families.

Ngarliyikirlangu Company, during the main mustering season from March to November, can employ up to 25 people at times although that would include some teenage boys there for work experience. The core workforce consists of about 11 Aboriginal workers, a non-Aboriginal advisor/project-manager and his wife who is the part time book-keeper. This couple have been with the company since DAA times and before coming to Yuendumu worked at Mt Doreen so they are well-known and accepted in the Yuendumu community. This has helped the stability of the organisation. While discussion about what day to day work is done, and about long term plans involve all the core workers, the financial side of the business still tends to fall heavily on the non-Aboriginal workers and as yet there does not seem to have been much opportunity to train some of the younger, more literate Aborigines in these aspects. To some extent this reflects the age of the core workers, some of whom have been involved with Yuendumu cattle since the beginning almost 30 years ago.

Work carried out by the company includes basic bore maintenance, yard construction and fencing as well as mustering for sale and disease control. With the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign (BTEC) the latter has been an important focus in recent years. Ngarliyikirlangu undertook the testing programme rather than destock because the numbers of reactors were not large, and this has involved considerable fencing and yard work in order to control herd movements. Much of this activity also reflects the lack of investment in earlier times. The boundary fence with Mt Doreen on the western side of the old reserve is only now being completed and the northern fence,
separating it from Mt Denison and from Aboriginal land in the Tanami Desert, was completed in 1986 with funds of $309,446 from a CEP project, over half of which went in wages. BTEC activities should be complete by the end of 1987 when it is expected that testing will show the herd to be clean.

Current stock numbers held by the Company are probably around 3,000, close to those held in 1979 when the project was handed over by DAA. Because of water problems this is probably the preferred maximum size of the herd and numbers have often been below this. At one time during BTEC testing they fell below 2,000. Recent droughts, from 1983-86, partly explain current relatively high numbers because few beasts have been sold. Yuendumu, unlike some of its neighbours, did relatively well during the drought and lost only a few cattle; in fact considerable numbers of stock came into the northern end of the area from Mt Doreen seeking better water supplies on the Yuendumu side. This was a main reason for working on the fence, but there has been a hold-up in funding because the owner of Mt Doreen has to agree to pay half. Cattle sales by Ngarliyikirlangu started again at the end of the 1986 season and $58,000 of beasts were sold in Alice, at a probable profit of $40,000. Gross takings during the three years of the drought period have apparently been only about $138,000.

In financial terms, therefore, the Company has not been markedly successful. High costs of improving the infrastructure, of BTEC and the vagaries of the rainfall have created grave uncertainties. As a result the company has had to rely to some extent on funds from sources other than its own profits. Wages of Aboriginal employees have often consisted of unemployment benefit and in 1986 came from DEIR in a designated training program for stock workers. It is ironic that some of the 'trainees' were stockmen with about 40 years of experience, including droving herds of cattle in the 1950s through to Camooweal in Queensland. If cattle prices are good then such costs may well be met from sales, but it is unlikely that the company will ever be able to amass sufficient income to cover its costs through difficult periods like those just experienced.

Additional funding has come primarily from ADC. Since 1979 total funding from that source and DAA has been around $435,000, over 70 per cent of which has gone to meet recurrent costs. The main recurrent cost has been the salaries of the non-Aboriginal workers, whose input has clearly been essential. ADC has also provided advice through its rural extension program, and assisted in the administration of the CEP fencing projects.
The Central Australian Aboriginal Pastoralist's Association (CAAPA) has also been involved with Ngarliyikirrangu. Following the completion of BTEC the company plans to upgrade its stock by bringing in new St Gertrudis or Brahman/St Gertrudis bulls, and hence increase the size of beasts. CAAPA in 1985 allocated over $120,000 to Ngarliyikirrangu, primarily for the purchase of new breeding stock. Only about a third of this was spent before CAAPA's money was frozen, and the remaining funds, from ABTA, were only released at the beginning of 1987. CAAPA's future, as the Aboriginal voice in the Central Australian pastoral scene and as a central body which can administer special funds such as CEP, is uncertain as at present it only has the resources to see it through 1987, during which time its main role will be to disburse the remaining $1.1 million ABTA money formerly frozen.

Ngarliyikirrangu's most recent activities include the building of a slaughtering facility, funded as a Community Employment Project in 1987. Following the construction of the abattoir men and women will be trained as butchers and packers, and a butcher's shop will open in Yuendumu. At last this will mean that local meat can be sold in Yuendumu, cutting out middle operators. As the history of the cattle project showed, this plan has long been under discussion and people have commented about the ridiculous kind of situation which enables a family to buy a killer for their own use, but prevents the sale of the same meat through the store. Yuendumu people have often wondered whether the deep frozen packs of beef which they buy in the store, and which appear to be extremely well-travelled, are in fact their own cattle which have been all the way to Adelaide and have returned.

1987 has also seen the move of the central operations of the company from Yuendumu to Ngarliyikirrangu outstation, set up primarily for this purpose about 20 kms to the north of the town. Shifting cattle operations to Ngarliyikirrangu itself reflects a number of factors; the fact that the company is closely interwoven with traditional ownership of that part of the former reserve; and the fact that, in Yuendumu itself, people have felt that continual pressure arises over the use of resources designed to support the company - people try to borrow vehicles and equipment freely, and it is felt that this type of pressure would be less severe if the company were further out. These pressures reflect the conflict of community and enterprise needs. The move to Ngarliyikirrangu has long been planned, but has been hindered by lack of resources, including reliable potable water. Earlier attempts to establish the outstation failed for this reason, but houses earlier erected there can be relocated to the new site where good water has been found. Non-Aboriginal staff of the cattle company have also moved to the outstation.
Discussions over Yuendumu's involvement in the community government scheme caused some concern to the directors of Ngarliyikirlangu Cattle Company. Their main worry was that the designation of the old reserve as the area within which community government would operate might cause conflict over land issues. Mistakenly believing that the Council would gain legal control over the land, they worried that under community government the Council might be able to exert pressure on the cattle company to force it into Council control. As some directors suggested, maybe the Council would start charging them for agistment; or perhaps they could exert other pressures through refusing entry permits to agriculture extension staff who wished to talk to members of the cattle company. Another issue concerned a butcher's shop, a long term interest of the Cattle Company and a natural outcome of the abattoir project. Although Ngarliyikirlangu have from time to time provided such a service when needs were great, i.e. when Yuendumu store virtually ceased to function in 1981, the Council were in fact discussing setting up such a facility on their own without Cattle Company involvement. This illustrates one of the major problems affecting this type of enterprise development in places like Yuendumu. While in some ways an element of competition could be beneficial, for example, in terms of prices, the possibilities are so limited that lack of proper consultation between different interest groups could be very destructive. The whole consultation problem in a community such as Yuendumu is one of the major hurdles.

It is hard to predict the future of the Ngarliyikirlangu Cattle Company. In many ways it is a classic Aboriginal enterprise, established on inadequate assessment of resources, both physical and financial, and involved in an unpredictable business, particularly if oriented towards external markets. But if its focus could be turned inwards towards the needs of the local community, as well as retaining a market component so as to take advantage of price opportunities etc., it can make a valuable contribution in monetary and non-monetary terms. In addition the business on the whole has been able to operate in ways which are highly compatible with Aboriginal values, and relationships with non-Aborigines have been congenial. And for several decades cattle production has provided an employment input very important to Yuendumu people, one which not only perpetuates a set of skills very important to the economy of Central Australia, but also skills which have enabled young Yuendumu men to work elsewhere and gain outside experience. Although it is highly unlikely that the Company can be a big profit earner and may often encounter problems in meeting its costs, its existence is vital in other ways to Yuendumu and its support of great importance.
The Social Club, Store and Related Ventures

From the early days of Yuendumu's development efforts were made to establish fruit and vegetable gardens, poultry runs and a piggery, both as part of the assimilation process and for the production of fresh food for local use. Water supplies have been a continual problem. Thus in 1954 reports stressed the apparent fertility of soils if irrigation were established, and mentioned the beginning of citrus orchards with grape vines as an underlayer, on the site of the settlement. Thereafter efforts continued, although water shortages continually threatened production. In 1958/9 over 2000 lbs of vegetables, and 350 dozen eggs were produced in Yuendumu. The gardens by then were not confined to the area of the settlement, but were being separately established beside newly sunk bores, such as Penhall's Bore, six kms out. This strategy was adopted because of water shortages, in order to maximise use at developed point sources. By 1961 five Aboriginal gardening families had been resettled at two of the outlying bores, a move which was seen as a 'most important achievement ... to foster the belief that ownership of gardens is a worthwhile aim in life' (NTWBR 1960-61, 33). Over six tons of vegetables were produced in that year. The gardeners were reported to be saving money from their wages to buy citrus trees and establish poultry runs.

Thereafter came the drought years. Yuendumu vegetable production was negligible for the next five years, with lack of water for irrigation specified as the main reason. Plans for new developments were however made and in 1966 a piggery was built at Four Mile bore, and families moved out there to run it. In that first year a sow apparently gained first place in the Alice Springs Show (NTWBR 1966-7, 160), and the advantages of adding pork to the Aboriginal diet were emphasised. Unfortunately, as kitchen supervisors found when pork was on the menu, the meat was not highly popular and tended to be left uneaten. By 1969 pig meat production stood at almost 6,000 lbs per year, about 15 per cent of Yuendumu's total meat production. Thereafter it apparently declined. As this situation illustrates, there is little sense in introducing new food supplies without consulting potential consumers about their tastes.

Poultry enterprises have never apparently been important in Yuendumu, although egg production reached 350 dozen in 1958. This is small compared to other communities; in one month, September 1971, Numbulwar produced over 1,700 dozen eggs, 1,000 dozen of which were sold to GEMCO, the Groote Eylandt Mining Company (Young 1981, 174).

Yuendumu Social Club was incorporated in 1962. It was perceived by authorities to be the prototype of a co-
operative society, which would embrace not only consumption but production, and such a society would draw Aboriginal membership from throughout the community. Produce with which they were expected to deal included artefacts and it was anticipated that eventually the settlement piggeries, sawmills and vegetable gardens might come under their control (NTWBR 1964-5, 183-4). Other activities in which these fledgling co-operatives were interested, apart from conventional retail stores, included picture shows, petrol sales and butcheries and bakeries. The Yuendumu Social Club has from time to time carried out many of these functions. While the retail store has been by far its largest operation, it has also occasionally marketed artefacts and has provided entertainment and other facilities for the community. Soon after incorporation it applied for and was granted a Special Purpose Lease on land within the Reserve, a necessary step because like other organisations at Yuendumu it was an authority outside government control.

Yuendumu retail store in fact began trading before the formation of the Social Club and sold over 5000 pounds of goods in its first year of operation in 1959/60. Following transfer to the Social Club it expanded the range of stock traded and as Aboriginal wages rose its turnover increased markedly. By 1964 it had assets of $12,000, commented upon as a 'remarkable achievement considering its beginning just over two years ago with a loan of $100' (NTWBR 65-66, 132). By 1966/67 it was taking $84,700 per year, with a profit of $11,525, and in 1967/68 these figures had reached annual takings of $11,7000, with a profit of $25,000 (NTWBR 1966-7, 163; 1967-8, 199). This growth occurred at the same time that the communal kitchens and dining rooms were becoming less and less popular, an outcome not only of people's increased cash incomes but of other factors such as the provision of houses for all Yuendumu families who wanted them, and the realisation that the arrangements in the dining room did not accord well with customary behaviour which was basic to the Aboriginal social structure. By 1970 the dining room service was restricted only to midday meals and the main customers were school children (Middleton & Francis 1976, 87).

During the 1970s the retail store continued to expand and also began to change in character. A government loan in 1970 enabled the Social Club to replace its old cramped building with a modern supermarket, and the facilities were further upgraded in 1976 when the Aboriginal Loans Commission lent $170,000 to build the present day shopping complex which, in addition to the supermarket houses facilities such as the bank, post office and fast food outlet; the Social Club's community hall was also built at this time. By 1978 the annual turnover of the store exceeded $1 million and profits were between $80,000
and $90,000. By 1983 takings were between $1.5 and 2 million.

As an enterprise the store has had very mixed fortunes. The Social Club was established as a non-profit making body and while the retail store was expected to generate profits, at least large enough to meet contingencies, it was never intended that such profits should be large. Any profits from the store were used for community purposes, such as purchasing buses, or subsidising services for old people. And, as I have argued elsewhere (Young 1984), even this kind of policy is open to question because of the poverty of the Aboriginal customers, and the high costs of basic foodstuffs in the outback. It may be much more beneficial to the community as a whole to keep costs and profits as low as possible for everyone, rather than make enough money to buy a bus used by only a few people.

Low profit margins, coupled with management difficulties and insufficient income to cover such loans as have been accepted have from time to time had a disastrous effect on the store's commercial viability. As described elsewhere (Young 1984, 81-2) Yuendumu store announced a net trading loss of $230,000 in 1980/81 and was threatened with liquidation. Its survival was an artefact of government assistance, in the form of the backing a bankloan to enable the store to buy stock and trade out of its deficit. Such assistance, provided by ADC, reintroduced government control over the Social Club and store, in a way which had not existed since the early 1970s, and for the next few years effectively disrupted progress towards Aboriginal independence.

Yuendumu store, essentially the enterprise arm of the Social Club, today has a structure similar to that set up in its establishment in the 1960s. In terms of earnings it is by far the most important enterprise in the town, taking around $2 mill. per annum, and responsible for the provision of the bulk of the food, clothing and hardware for Yuendumu and most of its outstations. But it also, above all other enterprises, is faced with the dichotomy of being a service at the same time as an enterprise - of providing goods at reasonable prices for people who, in financial terms have very little leeway because of the low level of their incomes (Young 1984).

All members of the Yuendumu community can, and are supposed to be members of the Yuendumu Social Club if they wish to use its facilities. Shares were purchased at 20c. A sub-committee of the Social Club, consisting of Aboriginal representatives from education, health, other enterprise groups and individuals, oversees the operation of the store, holding regular meetings at which financial matters and decisions over use of store facilities are supposedly
discussed. The extent to which genuine information is passed on to the committee members by the store manager or the external accountants varies. In late 1986 the committee clearly had little idea how much the store was taking, let alone its profits. Rumours that $1.5 mill per month was coming through the checkouts (about half of Yuendumu's annual Aboriginal income!) had caused a great deal of acrimony. At a community meeting much of this ill-feeling was voiced and the Chairman asked the accountant to disclose the information. The disclosures indicated that the store had made profits of around $150,000 in the last financial year. Discussions on the use of these funds, the main reason for the request for information, then took place. Such secrecy has not always occurred. In 1982, for example, monthly financial statements were issued to the committee, including some members of the store staff, and were also posted on noticeboards at the entrance to the store. Dissemination of such information is highly important, not only for letting people, here the shareholders, know what is happening but also to counter damaging gossip which can make people very irate.

In December 1986 Yuendumu store had a staff of twelve, half non-Aboriginal and half Aboriginal. While these numbers are similar to those which have existed in the past for example 1978 (Young 1981, 104) they are relatively large and the non-Aboriginal component is particularly large. It reflects the mode of operation followed by the current non-Aboriginal managers who above all were stressing efficiency and service, and saw this as most likely to be achieved with a large literate non-Aboriginal staff. The manageress stated that Aboriginal staff lacked sufficient interest to want responsibility, whether in book-keeping, stock-taking or marketing. She also considered that the pressures exerted on Aboriginal store staff by their relatives were too great to resist, and if they controlled financial matters they would end up by giving goods away virtually free. This high level of day to day control exerted by non-Aboriginal managers has not always been so marked at Yuendumu. In 1982 store staff worked in the office, did ordering, stock-taking and even participated in clothes buying expeditions to capital cities (Young 1984, 17). This retrogression highlights the problems associated with providing management training and handing over responsibility to Aborigines when the trainers have neither the ability nor commitment to do the needful. In addition store managers are notoriously mobile and in today's employment situation are probably less and less willing to train themselves out of their own jobs.

As one of the largest Aboriginal stores in Central Australia, Yuendumu is able to operate relatively independently, ordering most of its stock direct from
southern dealers, and bringing most goods in weekly by road train. Some fresh foods come from Alice Springs wholesalers and the store is also a member of Yanangu Stores, an Aboriginal wholesaler in Alice Springs, which sells hardware, clothing, toys, electrical equipment and bedding. Yanangu was established in 1986 in an attempt to cut wholesale costs to Aboriginal communities. Members each contributed a percentage of their takings to get the company going. While Yuendumu is a member, its use of Yanangu is probably less than that made by smaller stores which unlike Yuendumu, do not have the option of buying in bulk because their turnovers are too small.

Yuendumu's store profits have been used for various purposes, including the purchase of a community old people's bus to bring pensioners in on paydays; funds given to assist youth and recreation activities; funds to buy Xmas presents for every Yuendumu family; and the extension and rearrangement of facilities in the supermarket. Money also has to be set aside for contingencies. Between 1981 and 1986 the store's financial operations were strictly controlled by the ADC who, by backup of a bank loan, effectively saved the operation from bankruptcy. The debts plus loan, amounting to almost $300,000, were paid off in the interim on a monthly basis but this was achieved by the Social Club accepting an ADC appointed manager, and relinquishing control over most aspects of the shop. When all the debts had been paid in early 1986 the store committee voted to resume control, much to the dismay of ADC who saw another collapse as a distinct possibility. They no doubt also wished to retain an important input into market enterprise in one of the most important Aboriginal towns in the Centre.

Yuendumu store does face a number of problems. In December 1986 these included the lack of Aboriginal input in management and the lack of a training component. As history has shown, neither of these problems are necessarily permanent. Another problem, of particular concern to managers, was the belief that the store was a gold mine whose potential was not being realised, and the profits of which were not being fed back to the community. This problem stemmed largely from the secrecy over financial matters, said to be a decision of the committee because they felt it better that non-Aboriginal managers were not informed about the commercial performance of the business. Such a policy seems rather misguided. How can managers, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, be expected to make concerted efforts to improve if they cannot measure their performance?

Other problems reflected a lack of understanding of Aboriginal customary behaviour and the social network on the part of the manager. This led to frequent disagreements
over Social Club asset use. For example the manager wanted to prevent the old people's bus going to Ernabella on initiation business, on the basis that this would disadvantage the pensioners who wanted to shop. This ignored the fact that many of those going to Ernabella were old people anyway, apart from the fact that the bus belonged to the community in any case.

A further concern arose over the proposal to change to Community Government. The Social Club felt threatened by the Council, which they felt wanted to take them over because of their apparent high value. Comments that the Council would terminate the Special Purpose Lease, granted to the Social Club in the 1960s to give it the necessary independence from the government, was another source of worry.

Yuendumu store is no longer the only retail shop in the town or its outstations. It competes for business with the retail outlet run by the Mining Company and also with the shop at Nyirrpi. While the former has existed for many years (e.g. Young 1981, 102) the latter is relatively new and has evolved partly through the support given by the Social Club. In 1982 the resident missionaries at Nyirrpi were not only administering social security payments to the outstation residents; they were also transporting bulk goods purchased at Yuendumu and reselling them at Nyirrpi. This system continued, and by 1985 staff of the Yuendumu store were taking truck loads of goods to sell to Nyirrpi's expanding population. However, since there was no building on site, selling had to be done from the back of a truck not, like most hawker's vans, equipped for the purpose. The result apparently was chaos. Tales are related of people leaping on to the back of the store truck to collect what they wanted while the staff grappled vainly with a poorly set up cash system. Eventually the Yuendumu staff refused to continue the service, knowing that Nyirrpi wanted their own store anyway, and Nyirrpi now runs its own retail business.

Competition in certain goods also comes from secondhand clothes dealers; the Baptist Mission has for many years provided this service in Yuendumu, and another non-Aboriginal women was also running this type of business in late 1986. While the Social Club store has not always been happy about these activities, which undercut their own prices considerably, the Yuendumu people do benefit. New clothing, such as skirts costing $25 or T shirts costing $12 is a significant outlay.

Nyirrpi store, in its present form, was established in 1986 with some assistance from ADC. The initial grant of $39,000 was sufficient only to erect a small tin shed, with
a small generator primarily for the freezer/coolroom, to purchase a caravan for the non-Aboriginal manager to live in, and to buy initial stock. Store turnover, on average $30,000 per month, has been sufficient to generate cash for manager's and shop assistants' salaries and cover other incidental costs. There has been nothing left in reserve.

Nyirrpi store inevitably carries a much more limited range of stock than Yuendumu but appears to cater adequately for most basic needs. It cashes social security cheques and administers a book-down system which enables people to stay at Nyirrpi instead of travelling to Yuendumu frequently. The two young Aboriginal women shop assistants often take full responsibility for the store and in fact probably know more about elements such as pricing, stock-taking and buying than do their counterparts at Yuendumu. Since the store is too small to bring in bulk orders every week, a necessity if fresh foods are to be provided, it combines its wholesale custom with the similarly sized Yuendumu Mining Company store, and they alternate their main orders on a weekly basis. Every second week the truck goes right through to Nyirrpi from Alice Springs, dropping off the Mining Company's fresh foods on the way, and vice versa, with Nyirrpi travelling to Yuendumu to collect their goods. Both stores also make limited use of Yanangu stores for variety goods.

Although Nyirrpi would like to be relatively independent of ADC, and in 1986 had taken on its own financial management because the overheads charged by ADC were felt to be too high, this will not be easy. ADC are now financing a better store building and a manager's house, and with this level of investment their wish to exert control over the running of their investments is going to become even stronger.

Mining at Yuendumu

Copper deposits were located by Braitling, the owner of Mt Doreen, in the north eastern corner of his pastoral lease in 1935. They were never developed. In 1964 the newly established Yuendumu Council, set up the previous year, was encouraged to involve itself in prospecting and was granted a prospecting lease at Mt Hardy, close to Braitling's original finds. Copper ore was located in several sites within the first few months and by mid 1964 about 20 Yuendumu men were camped in the Mt Hardy area, and a pilot processing plant had been set up. Through contributions from wages, sale of alluvial tin and taking on contract jobs in fencing and road maintenance the Council were able to raise funds to buy a tip truck and front end loader. Activity continued in subsequent years, although the
enthusiasm of those concerned dropped off as results were disappointing, lack of water made living at Mt Hardy hard to tolerate and other priorities intervened. In fact in 1965 the mining workforce was imported from Papunya because Yuendumu people reputedly showed a 'total lack of discipline or any recognition of the connection between useful employment and receipt of the material needs of life' (NTWBR 1964/5, 75). The reason for this situation is unclear. The government continued to push mining as a possibility for an economic base for Yuendumu, and permitted additional activity on the reserve in the person of a private prospector operating to the west of Yuendumu. They stressed that prospecting should be encouraged at all costs as they were sure the (mineral) 'vacuum' of the area could be broken. The NT Mines Branch responded by sending in drilling rigs to see if workable deposits could be found below the surface. In 1969 although no marked success had yet occurred, over 500 tones of ore had been stockpiled at Mt Hardy. The Yuendumu Mining Company (YMC) was then finally formed, a no liability body with four Aboriginal shareholders and three non-Aboriginal shareholders (Inspector of Mines, Alice; Asst. Director of Welfare Alice; Settlement Superintendent). The new Company was promised a loan of $16,500 from the Commonwealth Capital Fund to build a copper treatment plant at Yuendumu, with Mines Branch employees providing advice and assistance. By mid 1971, when the plant had been operating for a few months, some 900 tons of copper ore had been broken, two thirds of which had been taken to Yuendumu for concentration, and eight tons of concentrate averaging 65 per cent had gone to Port Kembla. The Mining Company owned three tip trucks and had applied to the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Fund for a loan to buy a 4WD vehicle for prospecting. ABTF had already provided funds for the employment of a non-Aboriginal supervisor.

The copper mining venture at Mt Hardy survived only another three years, eventually failing because the ore proved to be of very low grade and had a high iron content. Reserves were also very small. Alternative electrolytic methods of ore concentration were suggested and a proposal to establish such a plant and redesign the project was accepted by DAA who granted $271,000 for two years to 1976. This grant was also to be used to diversify the activities of the company in an attempt to make it more commercially viable. In the end the new copper project failed and it is these alternative activities which have survived. With the exception of a small amount of wolfram mining on Mt Doreen, which brought in $10,000 in 1977/8, the Yuendumu Mining Company has not actually done any mining of ore since the mid 1970s (DAA 75/1686).

The alternative activities taken up by YMC included artefact sales, running a garage/workshop, a fuel outlet and
a retail store at Yuendumu, mining gravel for local
collection works, collecting mulga seed for sale to agents
in India, and holding the prospecting leases over both large
parts of the reserve, areas of the Ngialia Basin and areas
within Mt Doreen. The latter practice which goes back to
the early years of Yuendumu Village Council, was felt to be
particularly important for an Aboriginal company because it
allowed the Warlpiri some degree of control over mining on
their traditional land, and particularly over those areas
which, because they formed part of the Mt Doreen lease,
they could not claim under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.
In 1978 YMC had entered into Joint Venture agreements with
three companies (AFMECO, Central Pacific Minerals and AGIP)
all operating uranium exploration within Mt Doreen; while
no direct profits then accrued to YMC, who in any case held
only small shares in the venture because they could not
afford anything else, the agreement did include a clause
covering maximum utilisation of YMC's services, and thus led
to over $4,000 earnings by YMC in one month for hire of a
bulldozer and personnel. The costs of maintaining these
lease agreements were, however, high and depleted financial
resources intended for other uses. Funding requests to DAA
stress the need to maintain these interests. YMC could
never accumulate the necessary resources for exploration in
the Ngialia Basin on its own - in 1978 it was estimated that
$2 million was spent on these activities (Baarda's letter to
DAA, 4/5/78). But by farming out leases it kept control.
DAA were sympathetic to the view that holding these leases
was vital for the local people, whether the assets were
realised in commercial terms or not. In June 1978 they
granted YMC $20,000 to keep creditors at bay and allow a
holding operation until other activities could be examined.

Gravel mining, established with DAA's grant in 1974 had
mixed fortunes. Competition with other larger well-equipped
companies, employing workers without considering the
training component and therefore more likely to meet their
contractual obligations, cut YMC out of large projects for
which it tendered. The most notable of these was the
sealing of the Tanami Road. However it did win smaller
contracts, including gravel needed for the upgrading of
Yuendumu airstrip. One of the problems with the gravel
operation, as was pointed out to DAA in late 1978 (Baarda
3/10/78, 6) was that the demand was spasmodic, non-recurring
and, in the case of an Aboriginal community, dependent on
new Government funded construction projects.

These problems with operations directly related to
mining, the 'charter' of the company, forced YMC to seek
alternative means of staying afloat. The most successful of
these was the retail store. This was initially linked to
the operation of a garage/vehicle repair workshop, which
could offer services to the general public as well as
maintain YMC's plant and vehicle fleet. It then traded in spare parts and maintained a fuel outlet. Retailing then extended to selling food at weekends when the Social Club store was closed for business. In 1978 it had an annual turnover of about $90,000. The shop was however under pressure to close down - from DAA and the Aboriginal Loans Commission, on the basis that YMC was a mining company; and from Yuendumu Social Club, on the basis of competition. There was no pressure from Yuendumu residents who saw it as a very useful alternative service, and one which generally operated in ways compatible with Aboriginal needs. It would rarely be possible to persuade the manager of the main store to open up if people were desperately needing out-of-hours service, but such strategies could work with the YMC, operated by Aborigines or non-Aborigines long resident and very well known in the community.

Other activities of the Mining company - selling seeds and artefacts - have been spasmodic, and largely reflect the willingness of the company to help Aborigines to find access to cash. Artefact marketing at Yuendumu has until recently been very haphazard, and the company was sympathetic to requests that it accept objects and paintings to resell, paying small amounts to the producers as ready cash. Unfortunately YMC also failed to organise its marketing outlets, and many of these items languished in the sheds, awaiting the odd tourist who might happen to be passing through. The collection of mulga seeds has from time to time provided another cash earning activity, and when demand was there Aboriginal families quickly responded to requests from the YMC manager and went out on collecting expeditions. However demand has never been continuous and while at some times the YMC shed is full of unsold drums of seeds, at other times requests far exceed local supply.

Yuendumu Mining Company, at the end of 1986, employed seven people, four Aborigines and three non-Aborigines (the manager, mechanic and storeman/book-keeper). The relatively high proportion of non-Aboriginal employment stems from the nature of the enterprise, a feature which has also been noted in organisations such as the Housing Association. The Company had 185 Aboriginal shareholders, with a Board of Directors of whom the most active were younger adult men. Older people were however also involved because some of the company's operations involved the extraction of materials for gravel, and traditional land-owners of quarry sites had to be consulted carefully.

Since the beginning of 1985 the Company has been generating considerable profits and has finally succeeded in paying off all its creditors, some of which had outstanding bills going back for some time. This success has been achieved by a diversity of activities, some of which provide
a continuous cash flow but others of which operate only spasmodically.

Exploration for uranium in the Ngalia Basin is still active and the company holds several leases within the region. It has also purchased uranium deposits within the ground, located and defined by a German exploration team. There is of course no guarantee when or if this will ever be developed, but, particularly in the case of uranium, control over these deposits by the local Aboriginal company was seen to be of great importance. When the Mining Company were initially offered the purchase option they requested funds from ADC but were refused because there was no assured financial return. They then raised the cash themselves, at some risk to the financial viability of the company, but subsequent success has now greatly reduced the risk.

The retail store and fuel outlet is currently the company's main money spinner. In 1985/86 the two together sold almost $600,000 worth of goods, half from the shop and half from fuel. The shop now competes with the Yuendumu Social Club store because it is open seven days a week, rather than only at weekends as before. However, since it is restricted to food and hardware, mainly related to vehicles, the competition covers only part of the custom. Nevertheless the Social Club store has from time to time continued to complain about the Mining Company store although, with a community the size of Yuendumu, there would appear to be plenty room for both. DAA's pressure to close the store also continued and at one time the manager informed them that it would cost them $50,000 in compensation, and the Mining Company would then sell its remaining stock to the Social Club store. Now that the Mining Company no longer depends on government funding it can ignore these pressures.

The fuel outlet is the main one in Yuendumu. Although the Social Club and Council also have outlets these are less frequently used, and in fact are not always stocked. Most fuel is sold to Yuendumu people, or outstation residents, but there is some passing trade, both from mining and exploration companies operating out in the Ngalia Basin and Tanami Desert, from visiting government and other officials from Alice Springs, and from increasing numbers of tourists on their way between Alice Springs and Rabbit Flat. Yuendumu is the only intervening commercial fuel outlet in the 600 kms separating these two places.

The garage/repair workshop, like the shop and bowser, provides a regular income, but profits are harder to ensure, particularly with services to private vehicles. Car owners have sometimes asked the Mining Company to buy in spare parts but have subsequently lacked the cash either to pay
for these or for the labour to complete repairs. This means that the Company has unused parts which, if they are unusual, may never be in demand, and too much of its capital is tied up. They attempt to overcome the problem by asking for some payment in advance but it is hard for an organisation such as this to enforce such a ruling.

The gravel operations fluctuate in terms of their financial contributions, according to demand. In 1985/86, for example, December and June together contributed 71 per cent of the annual takings from gravel, and a similar percentage of takings in the first part of 1986/87 came from only two months. Gravel obtained from the quarries has been sold to Council, used to carry out contracts held by the Mining Company for road or airstrip maintenance, and other money is earned from hiring out the Company's heavy machinery or trucks. Operation of the quarries raises a number of issues relating to land ownership. They all lie within the former Yuendumu Reserve, and traditional owners have agreed to their use through the granting of leases negotiated by the Central Land Council. These leases were to be renewed at the end of 1986, but the Mining Company found that additional claims had been made by Yuendumu Community Council. It has yet to be resolved. The Mining Company suggested that the Council could also be given a lease, but suspected that the Council's interest was essentially tied to its attempts to take over the existing successful enterprise organisations once Community Government was implemented.

Other earnings, normally on a small scale, include mulga seed sales, mainly to India, and artefact sales.

Overall summary of the Mining Company's operations in 1985/86 is as follows:

Table 10.3

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<th></th>
<th>Groceries</th>
<th>Fuel</th>
<th>Garage</th>
<th>Quarry</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<td>16.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Net profit in that year was about $40,000, and for the previous year (1984/5) $80,000. This is clearly an enormous improvement on 1978, when the Company was in the doldrums and the manager was working without salary. It is also a much better performance than in recent years, and vindicates the determination of people to carry on in the face of pressure to sell off assets. At one stage in the early
1980s it was suggested that all assets be sold to other Yuendumu organisations such as the Social Club or Council, and that the Mining Company staff be reduced to the Manager, who would merely supervise the uranium exploration licences, with DAA paying his salary. As people pointed out, this would effectively reduce them to a Mining Company which did nothing, had no workers, and no realisable assets - what would be the point of existing? Commercial viability, according to the Manager is only possible with an annual cash flow of about $500,000, so with current performance the future appears good. Certainly the company no longer has to dissipate its energies in juggling funds, and this has left it with the time to carry out its own business.

As an Aboriginal controlled company, albeit with a very strong input from the non-Aboriginal manager, Yuendumu Mining Company has to function within the Aboriginal social structure. Most of the time people seem to be able to accommodate such demands to the commercial side of the operation. However the nature of the Mining Company's activities can be potential sources of conflict. Ownership of gravel quarries has already been mentioned. Another factor concerns access to Company equipment and vehicles, and particularly repair of vehicles. Directors of the Company occasionally try to exert pressure to have their work done quickly, or to arrange for it without financial security, and this can be a source of tension between the company's employees and the directors.

Yuendumu Mining Company sees a future in which its mining interests may extend beyond these currently held. The establishment of North Flinders gold mine, at Granites, 300 kms to the North West of Yuendumu, has heightened interest in other resources in the region. Production started in mid 1986 and it was expected that the first pay out to members of the Janganpa Association, the traditional owners who were signatories to the agreement with the Company would amount to about $1/2 mill. That was due in January 1987, and was higher than anticipated. The North Flinders agreement combines an annual compensation payment of $50,000 and unspecified additional payments occurring after a certain level of production, up to but not exceeding 2 1/2 per cent. ABTA is not involved because gold, unlike uranium is a Northern Territory concern. It does not include royalties or equity. However the Yuendumu Mining Company has held shares in North Flinders, and profits made on these give it the opportunity for taking up other ventures.

One venture concerns a gold prospect on Aboriginal land to the north east of Willowra, near the Jarrah Jarrah range. Stories of finds in this region dating from the 1930s have more recently been related in the course of evidence
collected for land claims, and samples from these early finds, the locations of which are no longer known, indicate similar levels of deposit to those now being mined at Granites. Geological structures also appear similar. Yuendumu Mining Company have applied for exploration leases in the area, most of which had not yet been taken up, and have been discussing possible ventures with other interested Aboriginal groups including Willowra Community and perhaps, through investment of earnings, the Janganpa Association. Optimism about the venture's possibilities increased following an independent report by a geologist, suggesting that the area would be worth investigation. Funding for the venture obviously had still to be determined but suggested sources included ABTA, the sale of some of Yuendumu Mining Company's North Flinders shares, profits from Willowra shop and the investments of the Janganpa Association.

The history of Yuendumu Mining Company reveals a number of issues of great importance in considering both its contemporary situation and that of other similar groups. First, as the manager of the company, Frank Baarda graphically described in his 1978 submission to DAA, mining is a high risk/high return business and profit is by no means assured. Referring to the YMC's wolfram operations at Mt Doreen, he illustrates that an expenditure of $44,000 realised only $14,000 of wolframite. But, as he stresses, if the bulldozer had exposed a wolframite vein 4m x 15 cm x 1m, costs would have been covered and another such vein, which could well exist in that area, would have yielded a profit of 100 per cent. The uncertainties involved are too great to be borne by small undercapitalised operations like YMC.

Other important issues relate to the perceptions of funding organisations - 'if you are a Mining Company you must mine'. This inflexibility makes people much more vulnerable, and is surely particularly inappropriate for enterprises trying to survive in the isolation of the Tanami Desert. This type of inflexibility has also affected the setting up of such activities in Aboriginal communities in general. Those encouraged belong almost entirely to the conventional perception of what will be good for the development of Australia's north - mining, cattle etc. Such attitudes are still all pervasive.

Yuendumu Mining Company provides a very interesting example of an enterprise group which, while originally established on a poor, unproven resource base, with limited funding and a narrow view of its potential, has diversified so that it has now become an important cash generator and employer in the community. This flexibility has been enormously important in the type of isolation affecting places like Yuendumu, and also because of the uncertainties
involved in this type of industry. But the development of the Company has been difficult. It has depended heavily on the commitment and initiative of one non-Aboriginal manager, now resident in Yuendumu for over 16 years. And it has continually been hassled by government funding organisations with a narrow view of what the company is doing as well as a narrow idea of where Yuendumu is going as a whole. Many of these stem from the assimilation era. They exemplify all the factors mentioned concerning government organisations and Aboriginal enterprises.

Warlukurlangu Artists Association

Yuendumu people, like other Central Australian Aborigines, are skilled artists and craftspeople. Their ground and body paintings express ritual beliefs and human/land relationships central to ceremonies about the country, about initiation and for mourning after death. Their artefacts - spears, boomerangs, coolamons, decorative bead and hairstring ornaments - are used both on ceremonial occasions and as every day tools. Skilled people make items for those less skilled, exchanging their goods for other goods, or for knowledge or to meet obligations. And some make for the market, selling their products to non-Aboriginal residents of the town, or to passing tourists, or to artefact stores in Alice Springs. Until 1984 the latter component of Yuendumu's artefact and art economy was extremely small, and the activity was predominantly subsistence. But in the last three years it has broken through to become an extremely important market oriented enterprise, one which not only generates significant incomes for some of those involved but is also a source of great satisfaction for all concerned.

In 1984 a group of elderly Warlpiri men, in response to suggestions that Yuendumu's school buildings needed to be brightened up, repainted every external door of the school with a sand painting depicting stories of Warlpiri country. Media interest from outside led to a film of the doors being shown in Sydney, and suggestions that the artists and the school might like to sell the doors to art collectors or a museum. The suggestion was rejected. But interest was stimulated and the artists requested canvas and paint so that they could make their creations in a medium which would enable them to be sold in the conventional market place. Finance for materials was obtained from the Aboriginal Arts Board, and purchasing and administration at Yuendumu became the responsibility of the adult education section. Early stimulus came from a non-Aboriginal visitor at Yuendumu, a fine art student who was able to advise people on preparing canvasses and the use of modern paints, materials with which most of the artists were quite unfamiliar. Their earlier
work had primarily used red, yellow and white ochres. Pressure from the market at this time was non-existent so the artists were able to discuss important decisions at length. For example, what name to use for the association; it had to be one which was not contentious, could be openly used, and was important for more than one family group so that no individuals could exert too strong a control. Other topics for discussion included whether to apply for ADC funding or whether to maintain local control — and the latter approach was seen to be the most appropriate; or whether to allow non-Yuendumu artists, such as those living at Mt Allen, to joint the Association and buy materials through them.

Attempts to set up a market began in 1985. An Alice Springs exhibition was followed by one in Darwin but neither was highly successful. Yuendumu artists had no reputation in Alice, where most dealers think that all Central desert painting comes from Papunya; in Darwin, where Yuendumu combined with Papunya to put on the exhibition, the Yuendumu artists sold as many paintings as their Papunya counterparts but only $5,000 worth was sold altogether. The Northern Territory market was too small. It was also not responsive to the kind of products which Yuendumu people were presenting — large canvasses, often in a range of colours which extended beyond the conventional ochre tones to include blues, greens pinks and purples; which were painted not by one individual but by groups of people who held joint responsibility for the country, and hence for the story being depicted — a practice much closer to that of customary Aboriginal painting; and which were relatively expensive. At the end of 1985 Yuendumu artists held their first exhibition outside the Territory and found the market they were seeking. They sold over $25,000 in Sydney. This experience persuaded them that the effort involved in going further afield was well worthwhile and in 1986 further successful sales were held in Perth ($45,000 for about 70 paintings) and Melbourne ($40,000 for only 28 paintings) and, less successfully in Adelaide where the interests of potential customers were perhaps diverted by the Grand Prix. Further attempts to sell in Alice Springs proved once more that the tourist market there was not interested in high cost, good quality goods and did not understand their value. Plans for 1987 included another sale in Perth and the first international exhibition in Paris. Yuendumu artists now have paintings in the National Gallery in Canberra, and in the NT Gallery in Darwin. Total takings for 1985 and 1986 were about $200,000.

Warlukurlangu Artists Association (Inc.) is essentially a market and supply group rather than a co-operative. It does not pay dividends and any profits from sales go to cover incidental expenses. In general artists get about 50
per cent of the eventual price of their works, 15 per cent goes towards the Association and the remainder covers the costs of exhibition, packing, and freight. This is a much better return than artists in Aboriginal communities would often obtain, where only 20 per cent eventually reaches the painter. The organisation of the company is run on a shoe-string, with a grant of $20,000 from the Aboriginal Arts Board to cover the salary of the advisor/co-ordinator; two Aboriginal co-ordinators (one man and one woman) were, in 1986, being paid through CEP funds. Agencies such as DAA and ADC have indicated their desire to add support, but also want to tie production into the ADC funded market outlet, Inanda Holdings, and Yuendumu people were unwilling to restrict themselves in this way. Their concentration on large canvases is in part responsible for this because the government-funded outlet, exemplified by their Alice Springs shop, is really not suitable for this level of the art market. It is geared much more closely to the cheaper, but still authentic, souvenir trade. On the whole the Warlukurlangu Artists have felt that the Arts Marketing boards are too highly politicised and do not provide sufficient returns to the artists. They have found that separate arrangements with specific agents, with definite arrangements on the percentages which artists will obtain, are much better. Most of the time this has been satisfactory, although at the 1986 Melbourne exhibition Yuendumu paintings fetched much higher prices than anticipated and, when the agent realised that the market had been undervalued, the percentage return had to be renegotiated. This sort of situation is rather embarrassing, and hopefully would not often occur.

Some individual dealers do now visit Yuendumu to view works, a situation which has made the group painfully aware of the inadequacy of their display area. Unlike other groups few of the artists actually work in the old building which they share with the Warlpiri Media Association, preferring to paint or make artefacts in their own houses or camps. As the names of individual artists become known in places like Sydney or Melbourne it becomes all the more important for the Yuendumu facilities to be upgraded.

The number of artists now associated with Warlukurlangu is probably about 100, with 70 in Yuendumu and the remainder in Nyirripi, and in outstations associated with Yuendumu and Mt Allen. Two thirds of painters are women. Although there are no strict rules governing membership, and in fact any artist can ask for assistance and can attend meetings of the Association, it is expected that if you obtain your materials there, you will offer your wares for sale. This has not always happened. One of the problems has been that people in some of the outstations and Mt Allen sell their paintings to other dealers, possibly directly to Alice
Springs, without returning anything on the free materials which they obtained from Warlukurlangu. Other problems occur when artists fail to understand that their painting must be sold before they can receive payment. With capital almost non-existent no other practice is possible but sometimes the time-lag is so great that people become very frustrated. In the end they probably do better than their counterparts at Papunya who are paid a certain fixed percentage before sale, but the intervening delay can be difficult to tolerate.

Other problems relate to the uncertainties surrounding the funding of the non-Aboriginal co-ordinator. While eventually the Artists Association might hope to find one of their own group able to cope with these tasks, this is unlikely to happen quickly, particularly with the emphasis of the enterprise on metropolitan and overseas markets.

As an enterprise the Artists Association is at present unique in Yuendumu because it does not originate from the assimilationist phase, and because it is clearly the outcome of the wishes of Aborigines rather than a 'good idea' floated around by non-Aborigines. The enthusiasm with which people of all ages have become involved is noticeable everywhere, and the enterprise has the enormous advantage of involving a large number of people, able to work as they wish to fit in with other activities. It is a prime example of the adaptation of a subsistence form of enterprise.

Yuendumu Housing Association

Yuendumu Housing Association, although primarily concerned with its service role in providing and improving shelter for the Aboriginal population in the community, also has a role in the market sector of the economy. With its skilled workforce, and basic equipment, it can carry out maintenance contracts for bodies, such as the Department of Education, which own houses in Yuendumu. It can also tender for construction contracts financed separately in Yuendumu. At present its involvement in this type of contracting has been on a small scale.

Incomes earned recently by the Housing Association are as shown in Table 10.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Contract Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982/3</td>
<td>$19,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983/4</td>
<td>21,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984/5</td>
<td>15,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985/6</td>
<td>19,726</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the payments are for repair and maintenance of buildings, owned by the school, the Mining Company, the Police, or other bodies, or for work carried out for Department of Transport and Works. Occasionally the Housing Association obtains small construction contracts, as for a school shelter costing $3,000 in 1986/7. With current needs for more shelter at Yuendumu, plus the limited assets and funding of the Association, it is hard to see contract earnings being significantly increased in the short run.

Major limitations on an extension of contract work by the Housing Association include the small size of its workforce, the limited nature of its equipment, and the way in which housing contracts are normally organised. The number of Aboriginal employees with the Association has now shrunk to seven, sufficient for continuing repair and maintenance but probably insufficient for taking on large scale contracts. Equipment would also be too limited for large contract work, and any tenders would have to include additional sums to purchase items not already held. And housing contracts, which until recently have been primarily funded through ADC, have generally been allotted on the basis of 'perceived' efficiency as opposed to self-determination. Because Aboriginal housing associations like that at Yuendumu have to carry the costs of continuing training of partially skilled workers, they may take longer to finish a job than would a non-Aboriginal contract builder, who would probably already own the equipment, and whose workforce would usually be more highly skilled. ADC, on the basis that Aborigines in the community are more interested in getting the houses fast than in extending the spread and level of skill among their own people, have tended to favour the non-Aboriginal contractor. Such a policy not only cuts out the local operator, and removes money from the economy instead of recirculating it within the community for whose benefit it was granted in the first place, but it has also on occasion back-fired. There have been many incidences of contract housing jobs running well beyond their contract times, and of houses being badly built.

Similar problems arise with maintenance contracts for government departments. They tend to use the same contractors for similar jobs in a number of Aboriginal communities in the same area, and carry out maintenance using teams who visit from their Alice Springs base as required. Such practices are costly, involving travel from town and the import of all equipment and raw materials. And they also take money out of places like Yuendumu instead of injecting it into the local economy. In both cases it is necessary for government bodies to rethink their priorities, to place greater stress on the benefit to the local community of granting the contracts locally, and less on
saying money through economies of scale and other such practices.

Yuendumu Community Council

Yuendumu Council also operates in the market sector through its ability to take on outside contracts. This component of its operations has so far been limited. Since 1981 it has been able to gain contracts from the Department of Transport and Works because it has a first option as the locally based Aboriginal body. Table 10.5 presents a summary of the Council's earnings from contracts during the 1980s. In all years except 1981/2 and 1982/3 essential services contracts, for the provision of power and water supplies, accounted for over half of these earnings. In those two years the Council obtained substantial contracts from the Department of Transport and Works, mainly for jobs connected with road construction. This work was associated with improvements in Yuendumu's internal town roads, the core of which were sealed and provided with storm water drains at that time. Subsequent contract earnings have still been largely associated with roadworks, but on a much smaller scale. The major earnings have come from hiring out the Council grader for making basic tracks to newly established outstations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Essential Services</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980/1</td>
<td>37,299</td>
<td>7,043</td>
<td>44,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981/2</td>
<td>37,885</td>
<td>142,028</td>
<td>179,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982/3</td>
<td>61,039</td>
<td>84,257</td>
<td>??????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983/4</td>
<td>55,535</td>
<td>45,925</td>
<td>101,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984/5</td>
<td>68,375</td>
<td>24,050</td>
<td>92,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985/6</td>
<td>45,640</td>
<td>23,800</td>
<td>69,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986/7*</td>
<td>86,128</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>96,128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Provisional

Yuendumu Council sees the extension of its contract work as an essential part of the overall plan to increase self-sufficiency. This would enable them to increase their workforce, and play a more important role in the support of Aboriginal families. However it is severely hampered in achieving these aims. One of its main difficulties lies in its plant and equipment, much of which is old and in need of replacement or expensive maintenance. Items which would be
required include a new front-end loader and new grader, and without these it cannot compete with the terms offered by outside companies. Another problem, especially where larger contracts are concerned, is the lack of skilled staff, particularly of an engineer who would be able to do the costings needed when tenders are being put together. Such a person would be useful not only with larger contracts but also with smaller ones where the Council might be a sub-contractor. Projects such as the recent sealing of the Yuendumu airstrip, or the possible extension of sealing on the Tanami Road, or the provision of a second water storage tank for Yuendumu are all in themselves beyond the scope of the Council, but the Council could share in some components of them and might even be able to undertake the main coordinating role. A skilled overseer would obviously be needed in such cases. The sealing of the airstrip, completed in 1986 at a cost of over $500,000, went entirely to outside contractors, a situation which not only frustrated those in charge of the Council but also the community as a whole. Some people felt that the money would have been much better used for other needs, such as housing, and there was some cynicism about the reason why the airstrip was sealed - perhaps for strategic purposes which had little to do with the needs of the Yuendumu people.

**Survival at Yuendumu: Enterprise, Government and the Future**

As this report reveals, Yuendumu people today survive largely on cash incomes; and cash incomes provide at least 80 per cent of livelihood for all families, and probably around 95 per cent for most. Over 60 per cent of people's incomes come from social security payments which, although indexed to cost of living rises, keep people below the poverty line particularly in such an isolated community where basic food costs alone are at least 50 per cent greater than in metropolitan centres such as Sydney. Increasing the employment opportunities in Yuendumu is clearly the only way to increase cash incomes. Such increases would have to be considered both in relation to the service sector and market sector of the community. Discussions of possible changes have focussed strongly on the operation of the Northern Territory Local Government Act (1986), and how this will affect places like Yuendumu.

As far as the service sector is concerned, the possibilities for increasing employment seem to be quite limited. Problems arise both through the need for skilled personnel for certain key positions; and also because this sector is likely to remain largely dependent on government funding anyway, and therefore likely to contract rather than expand.
Service organisations such as the health clinic, the school, the Council, the Housing Association and the store all need professional or highly skilled staff, people who can deal with complex management and financial operations, people trained as nurses and teachers, and people who are skilled craftsmen. At present very few Aborigines from Yuendumu could carry out these tasks. For example, in the case of education, although an increasing number of younger adults are extending their attendance at training courses and will eventually qualify as teachers, it will inevitably be some time before they are sufficiently numerous to take over all the positions in the school. There, as in the other service organisations, it seems likely that key non-Aboriginal staff will be required for some time to come. This does not mean that the current situation cannot be improved. At present some jobs held by non-Aborigines have in the past been held successfully and efficiently by Aborigines, and there must be scope for redistributing some positions immediately. In the case of the store, for example, supervisory roles, such as looking after the fast food outlet, doing the ordering and stock-taking, and assisting with the book-keeping, were all the responsibility of Aborigines in 1982 and 1983. In 1986 all these jobs were held by non-Aborigines, relatives of the incumbent storekeepers. The change can be attributed to problems in control of managerial staff by the Social Club Committee, and to the paternalistic policies adopted by the managers. Similar changes have periodically occurred in the Council workforce, where Aboriginal town clerks have previously been employed. While it seems inevitable that the Council book-keeper's position will have to remain in non-Aboriginal hands at present, other positions could come more strongly under Aboriginal control. It is through changeovers such as these that the contribution of the service sector to the survival of Yuendumu families could be extended.

Another factor which could increase the contribution of the service sector at Yuendumu is the provision of services by Aborigines rather than by non-Aborigines. Other communities which run their own health services or schools have attempted to increase the workforce to make the organisation more labour intensive than it might otherwise have been. While this practice is clearly of direct benefit to individual families, it does face a number of difficulties. Aboriginal run services still depend on government funding, and although they are relatively free to determine how they will use these funds, any problem to do with total funding usage will lead to strict external supervision of the administration. When that occurs, efficiency is promoted at the expense of jobs, and funds may be terminated. The Aboriginal-run service then disappears and the government service takes over, as happened with the health service at Papunya in 1982.
Another problem concerns the allocation of funds for service activities. As events at Yuendumu have shown, funding for all such organisations has been declining during the 1980s, and there seems little chance that this decline will halt. Money distributed through the Northern Territory Grants Commission from the Commonwealth Government's Financial Assistance Scheme, will not be in addition to existing funds, but will actually be substituted for part of the subsidy earlier allocated through the Northern Territory Department of Community Development. Yuendumu's 1986/87 allocation of $411,500 consisted of $332,624 from the Northern Territory government and $78,876 from Commonwealth Government Financial Assistance. In 1985/86, when all money came from the Northern Territory government, Yuendumu's grant was $483,497. But in effect, as far as both the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments are concerned, basic services - council administration, sanitation and garbage, the mechanical workshop etc. - must be covered and it is only if any funds remain that other activities could be contemplated. With the overall reduction in funds this seems highly unlikely. Altogether the outlook for the extension of service jobs in the community seems gloomy.

The other possibility is the growth of employment in the market sector. Yuendumu Council, during 1986, expressed some interest in assuming a prominent role in this sector. During that year the Council held lengthy discussions about the establishment of community government under the Northern Territory Local Government Act (1986). Yuendumu's community government plan included clauses enabling the new council to undertake contract work, and to engage in commercial enterprises. Businesses under discussion included an abattoir and butcher's shop; a gravel quarry; a petrol and diesel outlet; and fruit and vegetable production. Unfortunately for the Council the first three suggestions all conflicted with the interests of existing independent Aboriginal organisations in Yuendumu, the Ngarliyikirlangu Cattle Company, the Mining Company and the Social Club. Council comments about the inefficiency of these bodies, the perceived dominance of their non-Aboriginal managerial staff, and suggestions that all problems would be solved if all organisations came directly under Council control, were not well received by everyone. It was pointed out, for example, that over the years most of these organisations had functioned more efficiently than the Council; that staff turnover, both for Aborigines and non-Aborigines had generally been lower; that a monopoly of commercial enterprise under one body might cause great danger if financial problems occurred; and that these organisations already had expertise in these fields while the Council would be starting from scratch. Disagreements over these aspects eventually led to Yuendumu delaying their decision
to accept the new Community Government scheme, and as yet, by late 1987, no final decision has been taken.

As far as the fourth suggestion, fruit and vegetable production, is concerned there would be grave doubts about its potential, either as a money generator or as an employer. This type of activity would require considerable capital investment for equipment for both cultivation and irrigation, and for vehicles. Water supplies are not assured. And if fruit and vegetables are to be produced in sufficient quantities to satisfy local demand the workforce would have to be committed to the job on a continuous basis. However fruit trees can contribute to general sustenance, and the cultivation of citrus and some arid adapted varieties of stone fruit in Yuendumu outstations has had some success. These require only intermittent care and will therefore survive even when left to their own devices for short periods.

The main problem with Yuendumu Council's suggestions about new enterprise activities is that they all follow the existing mould, and that the need for more of the same is probably not very great. And because of the isolation of the town and its outstations, the possibilities for export are very limited. The one new development that offers opportunity of real benefit to a large number of people is in the art field. Warlukurlangu Artists Association is going from strength to strength, with the paintings from Yuendumu becoming more and more widely known and the existence of a market which at present seems still to be buoyant.

Although throughout this discussion the components of the Yuendumu economy have been classified into one of the three main sectors - subsistence, service and market - it is clear that these sectors are strongly linked. Recognition of these linkages is vital if this economy is to remain viable. But all too often supporting bodies, such as government funding institutions, have failed to acknowledge this integration. Thus funding for the Housing Association is considered to focus on housing provision (a service) and if Association resources are used to earn contract incomes (in the market sector) the group may be penalised. Similarly the maintenance of a productive subsistence sector now depends heavily on cash to obtain items of new technology, such as vehicles; without these people are too restricted in access to productive habitats. Thus market and subsistence activities become inter-connected. Altogether greater flexibility in the rules of funding bodies, incorporating all segments of the economy where appropriate, is necessary if enterprise, in its broadest sense, is to be promoted in Yuendumu.
SECTION THREE

THE BARUNGA, WUGULARR, EVA VALLEY AND BULMAN

CASE STUDY

Chapter Eleven: Introduction and Physical Setting

Chapter Twelve: History of the Study Area

Chapter Thirteen: A History of Policies Related to Aboriginal Economic Development

Chapter Fourteen: Aboriginal Historical Context

Chapter Fifteen: Historic and Contemporary Population Trends in the Study Area

Chapter Sixteen: The Contemporary Economy

Chapter Seventeen: Economic Development Projects
INTRODUCTION AND PHYSICAL SETTING

The intent of this case study was to examine economic development primarily in the communities of Barunga (previously known as Bamyili) and Wugularr (previously known as Beswick) as well as in the outstation of Eva Valley, the pastoral stations of Mountain Valley and Mainoru and, less in depth, the geographically and socially related community of Bulman and its outstations. From the outset, it was a goal of this case study to look at economic development in light of the Aboriginal sociocultural and sociopolitical context of which it was a part in 1987 as it had been in the past. This included detailed information on community and economic histories and demography and income based on the use of the individual and household as units of analysis. Problems with using the household as the unit of analysis are discussed below, however, and subsequent research must consider the dynamics of intra- and intercommunity social, cultural and economic ties beyond the household unit in greater depth if economic status and development are ever to be meaningfully understood in this area.

The two primary communities — which will henceforth be referred to as Barunga rather than Bamyili, and Wugularr rather than Beswick — are both located in the Beswick Aboriginal Reserve (depicted in Figure 11.1). Beswick Station was bought by the Commonwealth Government in 1947 for the stated purpose of providing training for Aborigines in the region in stock work and to provide a 'buffer zone' between Aborigines of southern Arnhem Land and Katherine. It originally was an area of approximately 3,400 square kms (Maddock 1969, 39). Portions of Mataranka and the old Veldt stations were added, and in 1955 the area as a whole was gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve (Maddock 1969, 39). In 1976 the reserve became Schedule 1 land under the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act and is now owned by Aborigines with its title held by an Aboriginal Land Trust. The approximately 489 Aborigines who resided in Barunga and Wugularr in 1987 (the period of fieldwork in conjunction with this study) came from disparate linguistic, geographically associated tribal and clan backgrounds — a phenomena commented upon as early as the 1960s by Maddock (1969).

In terms of proximity to other communities, Barunga and Wugularr are connected by road and near the regional centre of Katherine to the west. Barunga is approximately 79 kms along a mostly sealed road from Katherine and Wugularr is 30 kms to the east of Barunga. The road from Barunga to Wugularr is mostly unsealed and is temporarily cut off at the bridge over the Waterhouse River during the wet. The roads and tracks throughout the Reserve provide only dry season access. The
proximity of the major study communities to Katherine is advantageous in terms of modern communications, though some local residents see the ease of access to Katherine not to be in the best interest of the communities and the overall well-being of their populations. A trip to Katherine by motor vehicle takes approximately 45 minutes to an hour, and people from the study communities travel there regularly for shopping, medical care, temporary employment, business and recreational activities. Some families, particularly from Wugularr, have children who reside in Katherine some of the time when school is in session for educational purposes. Both communities have telephone access to the outside world. Despite this proximity, as data below demonstrate, there does not seem to have been a large degree of 'urban drift' from either Barunga or Wugularr to permanent residency in Katherine in recent times.

The area included in Beswick Reserve lies in the Top End of the Northern Territory and has the wet-dry dichotomous climate typical of that area. Barunga has an average annual rainfall of 1,050 mm and Wugularr, being slightly drier, an average of 986 mm. However, 85 percent of this rain falls between December and March (during the wet), resulting in a growing season of only 20 weeks per year and times of water shortage for humans and other fauna and flora alike.

The most important physical feature of the reserve for both subsistence and agricultural production is the Waterhouse River. It lies in a wide valley formed to the north, east and west by plateau country. The plateau soils are sandy and include areas of ironstone gravel. The vegetation on the plateaus is composed of open eucalypt forest, with some stands of cyrus and acacia (including mulga). The grasses are mainly native annuals with areas of spinifex. In the dry season, the annuals quickly dry off and, although spinifex remains green, none of the grasses has much nutritive value. These plateau areas are relatively unproductive in terms of native or domestic animals.

The valley soils are richer, composed mainly of loamy red soils associated with dolerite. There are deep red soils on the slopes and these merge with cracking grey and black clay soils on the flats. The flats are broken by sandstone outcrops. The tree cover in the valley is less dense than on the plateaus. It is composed of eucalypts in the drier areas and stands of melaleucas and grevilleas in the wetter areas. The grasses are again mainly native annuals, but they are much denser than on the hills and plateaus. If these are burnt off in the dry season, they are considerably more productive for larger native and domestic grazing animals than are the plateaus. A small area of such country near Wugularr has been subject to pasture improvement.

The Waterhouse River, and other creeks and rivers to a lesser extent, are crucial resources. They flood in the wet season, but they cease to flow in the dry. The Waterhouse
River, particularly, provides a source of water and a great variety of plant and animal life. For most of the year, people can fish for barramundi and other fish and hunt freshwater crocodiles, turtles, goannas and cattle which come down to the river to drink. They also gather mussels and a wide range of plant materials for personal use and for the extensive artefact production to be discussed below. The Waterhouse River is also a major source of recreation for people living at Wugularr.

Surface water in Beswick Reserve is not abundant in the dry season. The main sources, like the Waterhouse River, Beswick Creek, Chambers River and Dook Creek, cease to flow and dry up altogether or become stagnant waterholes. However, there appears to be substantial underground water. The communities rely on it and it has been used for stock purposes.
European Discovery and Early Contact

The reconstruction of the earliest contact between indigenous populations and Europeans in colonized areas of the world is generally difficult because native populations transmitted their histories orally rather than by writing. Complete and thorough reconstructions of such early contact periods, therefore, mandate the use of archaeological, oral historic and early historic (documented) data (Freeman, Ed. 1976). In the case of this project, researchers were limited to the use of early documentation (histories) due to temporal and funding limitations and the focus of the project. Therefore, the reconstruction of contact history within the study area for these purposes is limited by incomplete data and the biases and inadequacies implicit in early historic documentation. From a world wide perspective, the contact history between the Aborigines of the study area and Europeans was relatively late in coming based solely on the evidence of such documentation.

The earliest exploration in the vicinity of the study area apparently resulted in no direct contact with Aboriginal populations. The proximity of Wugularr (Beswick) to the Roper River resulted in early explorers travelling near or through it. Ludwig Leichhardt, during his 1844 to 1845 expedition from the Darling Downs to Victoria, Port Essington, travelled to the north east of Beswick. He ventured to the Roper River, followed Flying Fox Creek to the northwest and then crossed Snowdrop Creek. This route is depicted in Figure 12.1. Leichhardt passed near the present site of Mountain Valley homestead. A. G. Gregory, during his 1855 to 1856 expedition from Pearce Point (now in the Daly River Aboriginal Reserve) to Port Curtis in Queensland, also travelled near Beswick. In that part of his expedition, he travelled east along the Victoria River, then along Dry Creek, southeast until he met Elsey Creek, and followed that creek to the northeast until it joined the Roper River. Gregory then went southeast to meet the Nicholson River. His route was clearly to the south of Beswick.

However, John McDouall Stuart (Stuart 1865) travelled through or possibly just north of Wugularr. He and his party left Moolooloo in South Australia on 20 December 1861 on what was to be his third and successful expedition in attempting to cross Australia from south to north. The success of this expedition, to be described in more detail below, was one of the factors which lead to the annexation of the Northern Territory by South Australia in 1863.
Figure 12.1 Routes of explorers within the study area
By 27 June 1862, Stuart and his party crossed the Roper River to the east of the Chambers River, which he named after his deceased friend, James Chambers, who helped finance his expedition. The country around the Roper had been extensively burned by Aborigines and there were tracks which recorded their presence. He travelled west along the Roper River until it was joined by the Chambers River and then followed it to the northwest. On 30 June, while travelling along the Chambers River, he wrote 'to the east I could see all on fire' (Stuart 1865, 377). Just before sunset that day, a small group of Aborigines, composed of three men, four women and a number of children, visited their camp. Stuart describes them as follows:

One, an old man, presented a very singular appearance -- his legs being about four feet long, and his entire height seven feet, and so remarkable [sic] thin that he appeared to be a perfect shadow . . . [the] young man, seemingly his son, who was a fat, stout fellow, and who was laughing nearly all the time. The other was a middle-aged man of the ordinary height (1865, 378).

They showed interest in a fish hook which Mr. Kekwick, a member of Stuart's party, had stuck in his hat. Stuart ordered that it be given to them. The Aborigines returned next morning, this time totalling 16 in number and carrying small spears. They asked for more fish hooks. They were denied, however, since Stuart and his men had 'none to spare.' The Aborigines followed Stuart's party that morning for a small distance until Mr. Waterhouse, the naturalist on the expedition, shot a pigeon he had not seen before. The Aborigines then left.

One of Stuart's encounters with Aborigines is recounted from the Aboriginal perspective by Buludja, a Mangarayi woman:

[Old Cordil and friends] once followed a party of white men up the Roper River -- burning the ground behind them to kill devil-devil -- in order to ask for fishhooks. When the white men, who were led by a man called John Stuart, refused to give him any, he, and some other natives, crept up to attack the camp. But as they crawled near the tents the horses reared up on their hind legs, beating the air and neighing, and the natives were so frightened that they ran away (Thonemann 1949, 23-24).

On 2 July, while still on the Chambers River, Stuart came across a group of Aborigines at a large waterhole:

[They] ran off at full speed when the rear of the party was passing their camp. One stout fellow came running up, armed with spears, and loaded with fish and bags filled with something to eat. . . . The native held up a green bough as a flag of truce, and
patting his heart with his right hand, pointed in the direction we were going. We then bade him good-bye, and proceeded on our journey (1865, 380).

Next day while still on the Chambers River, they met another few Aborigines who 'ran off.'

Stuart continued to follow the Chambers River to the northwest. He left the river, travelled westerly over stony dry ground until he struck a creek, then travelled to the north and ascended a high stony 'tent hill' which he called Mount Shillinglaw. He then travelled at 325 degrees for four miles and came to a river running from the northeast which he named the Waterhouse River after a member of his party. This happened on 5 July 1862. He camped early that day and remained there the following day to rest his horses. He describes the country as:

of the very best description and well grassed. The hills are stony, but abound with grass; they are composed of sandstone, ironstone, and occasionally a little limestone: the trees are the same as those on the Roper (Stuart 1865, 384).

Unlike the country around the Chambers River, there were apparently few Aborigines around the Waterhouse River and for some distance to the north, as Stuart does not mention any evidence of their presence.

On 7 July Stuart continued his travel in a northwesterly direction on the north side of the west branch of the Waterhouse River, crossed it early in the morning. On 8 July he came to a creek with large waterholes and called it Fanny Creek (on Eva Valley Station) after John Chambers' daughter. After crossing Fanny Creek, he proceeded northwest and on 8 July came to a river which he called the Katherine after John Chambers' second daughter. On 9 July he climbed Mt. Stow.

Thus, from his description it appears that after leaving the Chambers River and crossing the range on the west, Stuart travelled on the east side of the Waterhouse River, past or even through what became Beswick homestead or Wugularr, and camped just north of it on 5 and 6 July 1862. The camp was probably only three to six kilometres north of Wugularr, although Stuart does not say on which side of the river he camped. He crossed the Waterhouse River just north of the river's junction with the west branch and followed it on its north side until he crossed it (before the river turned north and east, as depicted on the map in Holmes 1963, 58). He then travelled in a northwesterly direction through what is now Eva Valley Station.

It is useful to note that Stuart's observations of July 1862 have been confirmed by oral historic data. That is, while there were groups of Aborigines along the Roper River and the numerous springs and billabongs of the Chambers River,
there was apparently none or few living in the drier areas to
the north. Current understanding of precontact Aboriginal
migration patterns suggests that Aborigines travelled
extensively over the drier parts of their land during the wet
season when water was abundant, but they camped around the
wetter areas of their territory during the dry.

Two decades later -- in 1883 -- David Lindsay (1884) led
a party of four European men (including Cuthbertson) and one
Aboriginal man to explore Arnhem Land. He found ample
evidence of Aboriginal occupation in the areas of our study.
He travelled along the telegraph line to a point south of
Katherine (near the southern boundary of the Beswick Reserve)
and then due east for 16 miles until he crossed Beswick Creek.

From Beswick's Creek to the Waterhouse the country
is patchy, there being some very good flats, some
well-grassed open forest, and again some scrubby,
stony country. We passed a native spearhead quarry.
Three miles before reaching the Waterhouse we
entered good country, scattered timber, good soil,
and fine grasses (Lindsay 1884, 2).

On the way to the Chambers River, he found that 'nearly
all' of the country had been burnt. This was on 26 July 1883.
He then followed the Chambers River and veered four miles
south to water the horses at the swamp on the Roper River near
Mt Caroline. From Mt Caroline they travelled about nine miles
and camped on a lagoon, some one and a half miles north of the
Roper River and near a large vacant Aboriginal camp. He
continued along the river, past Mt Elsie. The next day they
disturbed a group of Aborigines camped near the river. When
they reached the Wilton River, they found that the country
just north along the Wilton had been burnt recently.

On 12 August 1883, Lindsay reached Mt Bray, which is
adjacent to the Wilton River and just south of the boundary of
what is now the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve. From that
hill he saw Mt Catt. Smoke could be seen 14 miles north of
Mt Bray. He then travelled west along the Mainoru River for
a short distance, then north and east to 'three of four
creeks' from the Wilton River. This was probably the
floodplain where the Horse and Jasper creeks join the Wilton
River, just south of Mt Catt. Speaking of that area, he
says:

This open, slightly undulating country is where the
Wilton takes its rise, and is really a grand piece
of grazing country some 2000 square miles in extent.
Country was only recently burnt, leaving patches of
grass here and there. . . (Lindsay 1884, 3).

Content with having found the source of the Wilton River, on
13 August 1883, he started to retrace his trip along the
Wilton towards the Roper River. Early that day, on the Wilton
River and probably just south of the border of the Arnhem Land
Aboriginal Reserve, he came across a large ceremonial ground.
He reports:

When travelling through a patch of fine open forest country (high stringybark and other trees, with good red clayey loamy soil), we came on the site of a very large native encampment, quite a quarter of a mile across. Framework of several large 'humpies,' one having been 12 ft high; small enclosures, as if small game had been yarded and kept alive. The natives had excavated fire holes in the red clay soil, three of which were oval; one I measured 10 ft long, 8 ft wide, and 4 ft deep, with the earth thrown up in a heap on one side; two were semi-circular, 3 ft deep and 3 ft across, with a diameter of 20 ft. The 'humpies' were of a superior description to anything I have seen in the Territory. This camp must have contained quite 500 natives, and have been the scene of some great festival, the corroboree, or dancing grounds, being numerous and well-worn.

About two miles north of the main camp there is the remains of another large camp, with a painted post 4 ft high, 9 in diameter, set firmly in the ground; also about 20 pieces of paperbark, each piece 3 ft long, and bound up with creepers. These pieces were then placed in the form of a star, with the inner ends embedded in the ground.

These evidences of an immense number of natives testify to the excellence of the country (Lindsay 1884, 4).

Although in subsequent years, many of the people from that area (Bulman and environs) left to go to settlements and stations, they returned for ceremonies. In 1987 hundreds of people were reported to have attended ceremonies at Mt Catt, just north of where Lindsay found the ceremonial ground.

Lindsay continued to travel south along the Wilton River until it reached the Roper River again, then east to the coast, along the Rose and Walker rivers, across the Blyth River and finally southwest to Katherine. Neither Stuart nor Lindsay were attacked during their explorations, nor did they mention evidence of hostility between their parties and Aborigines. However, there is verbal evidence of conflicts between Aborigines before the 1870s when Europeans began to settle the area. Further, it was clear that well into this century, Aborigines suffered threat of attack when visiting land owned by neighbouring groups. Intermarriage between different groups was uncommon (Thonemann 1949, 76, Chapter 9).

European Settlement

European settlement rapidly followed exploration,
bringing with it conflicts and contradictions in relationship to traditional Aboriginal social, cultural and economic patterns. In addition, the introduction of diseases to which Aborigines lacked immunity, had demographic impacts which, combined with factors of cultural change, had a synergistic effect to be described below on the Aboriginal populations of the study area.

Aborigines living in the study area experienced somewhat more disruption than those in other parts of the Northern Territory. This was the result of multiple factors. Pastoral development of the Top End commenced in this area, the current site of Maranboy hosted years of tin mining and two European towns, Mataranka and Katherine, developed in close proximity to the study area. In addition, during World War II, a substantial military infrastructure was developed at Katherine. Despite the high expectations people had for each of these areal and temporal developments, with the exception of Katherine which has experienced dramatic growth in the 1980s as a result of the construction of the Tindal Air Force Base, overall the region remained sparsely populated. The pastoral stations have struggled to survive and employ few workers. In 1987 Mataranka was a small town catering largely to travellers. The Maranboy mines and crusher were in ruins.

Pastoral development commenced in the Top End of the Northern Territory in 1876 when an application was made for a pastoral lease of 213 square miles by W. J. Browne of South Australia. This station was located on the Katherine River several miles from the present town and was to be known as Springvale Station. The homestead was built in approximately 1878 and it was the first station in the area to be stocked when sheep and cattle were delivered by Alfred and Arthur Giles, respectively, in June 1879. Glencoe Station, located just north of Katherine and owned by Travers and Gibson of Queensland, was stocked about the same time.

In 1877 a number of pastoral leases along the Roper River, totalling 1,700 square miles, were taken up, but it seems that these properties were never stocked (Bauer 1964, 110). These leases were consolidated and later became the Elsey Station, which was stocked in 1882 (Gleeson and Richards 1985, 1). Country, which included Maranboy and Eva Valley Station, was included in the leases of Fisher, Lyons and Co., taken up in 1881. Wangalara Station, located on the Waterhouse River, was originally owned by Travers, Gibson and Sergison, but later it was taken over by Acres and Sutton. This lease area was never 'firmly established' because 'the blacks were very hostile' (Bauer 1964, 113). Rapid occupation of the remaining areas around the Roper River through the Katherine area to the Victoria River took place. All of this area was stocked by 1899 (Holmes 1963, 158-159 presents these data on a map).

In 1885 the Florida Station was taken up in the Arafura country of present Arnhem Land, with the homestead located 10
miles north of Mt Delight and 20 miles inland. The property originally had an area of 4,000 square miles, but it was later expanded to 5,000 square miles (Berndt and Berndt 1954, 98). Primarily because of the unsuitability of the native pasture, the lessees shifted their stock to the newly formed Auvergne Station to the west, near the mouth of the Victoria River. The Florida lease was taken over by the Eastern and African Cold Storage Co. Ltd., which intended to stock it from properties to the south. These included Elsey and Hodgson Downs stations. From the Roper River to the Arafura Sea, this company engaged in the systematic hunting out of 'wild' Aborigines who had not come in to pastoral properties (Bauer 1963; Merlan 1978). Major effects of these actions included the reduction of the Aboriginal population and the increasing sedentarization of those Aborigines who were not decimated.

Although violence was common between Aborigines and Europeans over land before 1900 and occasional conflicts continued to occur until the 1940s (Gleeson and Richards 1985, 13), Aboriginal peoples became workers on the stations. It was common for an Aboriginal camp to be established near a homestead on a station. Such a camp supplied the labour required to operate the station. In return, the station paid the workers 'pocket money' and helped support the camp by providing a supply of 'killers' (cattle which could be killed by the Aborigines), flour, and other goods. This symbiotic relationship existed in modified form until equal pay was mandated for Aborigines employed in the cattle industry in 1966.

As happened elsewhere in rural Australia, the availability of 'employment' on the stations and elsewhere impacted Aboriginal society and economy. 'Station blacks' were seen to be different from those who resided on missions or those who were unattached to European settlements ('wild blacks'). Those who remained unattached did so out of choice or in the absence of station or mission options. The introduction of western goods changed some aspects of the power structure of Aboriginal society (Sharp 1952). In addition, dependency on western goods contributed to some loss of bush skills and temporal commitments to activities (such as cattle work) which gave access to such non-Aboriginal foods and raw materials.

The 'land boom' of the latter part of the nineteenth century resulted in large part from South Australia's efforts to settle the new territory. Land laws favoured absentee speculation from both Australian and overseas interests. There was negligible permanent improvement and development compared to the total area held under lease. By 1889, 78,000 square miles of land had been leased in the NT. This had increased to 478,000 square miles by 1883, although the total land area of the NT was 520,000 square miles. Most of the leased area was unoccupied by Europeans. By 1890 the area leased had diminished to 196,000 square miles, by 1895 to
98,000 square miles, and by 1900 to 29,000 square miles (Davidson 1965, 66).

Gold was discovered at Pine Creek in 1871. By August 1872, there were approximately 40 miners in the field. By 1874 several ore batteries were operating at Pine Creek and at a field to the north, Yam Creek. Copper was discovered at Pine Creek in 1873 but not exploited until 1889 (Bauer 1964, 78-79, 83, 92). Later mining events to impact the study area at Maranboy are discussed below.

Dr J. A. Gilruth, while Administrator of the Northern Territory from 1912 to 1919, travelled throughout the area and became enthused with the idea of establishing a town near the source of the Roper River, which he hoped would eventually become a major city and even replace Darwin in importance. The site, which he called Mataranka (after Mataranka Springs, called Bitter Springs before 1916), had good soil which he thought was suitable for cultivation and good water. This area was surrounded by good pastoral country and was located on the Overland Telegraph Line.

Gilruth managed to have the Mataranka horse and sheep experimental station established near Mataranka Springs in 1913, for the purpose of demonstrating the feasibility of intensive farming in the area. However, the farm failed and tenders were called, but none received, for the disposal of all remaining stock in 1926. Despite the fact that the experimental farm did not do well, there was interest in small farms. The government released 37 blocks along the Roper River in 1919. Those who took them up did not do well, and they were later abandoned. By 1920 there was little interest in the farms. Of the five small pastoral leases offered to the north of Mataranka and east of Maranboy, only one was taken up. That one adjoined Beswick Station and was taken up by its owner, M. J. Madrill (Gleeson and Richards 1985, 2-7).

The railway reached Mataranka in 1928 and opened on 1 July of that year. A township was also declared in 1928. Despite grand plans and the offering of 60 town blocks, the town remained very small and was initially settled by railway construction workers. In 1929 the population was reported to be 119 Europeans, 9 Asians, 4 'others,' and 20 part-Aborigines (Gleeson and Richards 1985, 7). It was likely that there was a large Aboriginal population as well.

The government released 47 blocks at Mataranka and Katherine in 1930 for unemployed men in Darwin to take up peanut farming. The crops failed and in 1931 many growers abandoned their holdings. Peanut prices also fell and the scheme was abandoned in 1932.

The third event which brought Europeans to the area was the discovery of tin in 1913 by Sharber and Richardson in and around the Maranboy and Beswick creeks. The government declared a 30 square mile area around Maranboy to be a new
'gold field' in 1913. Miners quickly followed the discovery, and in July 1914 there were 80 independent claim holders in the area. Production reached its peak in 1917 when its value was 15,660 pounds. Production declined after that and its value declined to 168 pounds in 1932. It was not a large field, and by 1951 only 30,000 tons of ore had been mined from the area.

The government assisted the miners by building a battery and paying the wages of its staff. It closed in 1946. The miners themselves used little machinery and had to abandon their shafts when they reached 50 feet because of a lack of pumping equipment.

Population at Maranboy fluctuated with tin prices and the availability of ore. The European population was 80 miners (and possibly others) in 1914, 30 miners and 19 others (excluding women and children) in 1915, 47 men and 6 women in 1918, 25 miners and 7 others (plus women and children) in 1925 and 45 miners plus 24 women and children in 1929. No further figures are available until 1943, at which time there were nine miners and four other workers (excluding any women and children).

It is likely that Aborigines always greatly outnumbered Europeans in the field, although population records are sparse. Documentation does show, however, that there were 270 Aborigines there in 1927, 272 in 1929 and 250 in 1930. From the beginning, miners employed Aborigines who were mostly Jawoyn, the traditional land owners of much of the area under discussion. In addition, other Aborigines, many from southern Arnhem Land, came to the area to work and trade didgeridoos for spears and to visit relatives.

Problems between Europeans and Aborigines resulted in the declaration of an area of 4,000 acres, covering most of the field, as being prohibited to Aboriginal access in 1923. Aborigines ignored this prohibition, however. In May 1943, the Aboriginal women were moved to a compound away from the field. This was an unpopular move to everyone working on the field. Overall, however, relations between Aborigines and miners seemed to have remained relatively harmonious.

At its peak, Maranboy had a significant European population, a large Aboriginal population, a government battery private ore treatment plant, a store, hospital and police station. After World War II, operations ceased and all that was left in 1987 was a police station and the rusted remains of sheds, the burnt out remains of the plant and disused shafts and mullock heaps.

Katherine began as a telegraph repeater station and service facility. The original telegraph building was a small four-roomed log hut, erected on the south bank of the river. It housed the telegraphists and linesmen. The land and
undersea cable for the telegraph was completed on 21 October 1872, with transmission commencing at that time. Thenceforth, Katherine Overland Telegraph Station became a focus for drovers and miners travelling in the area.

Despite this, Katherine grew very slowly until the 1960s. In approximately 1888, the Sportsman's Hotel and Pioneer Cash Store were opened near the telegraph station. These complemented the telegraph station and Springvale Station to form a small community. In 1902 the town of Katherine consisted of the telegraph station, a police station and a pub in the Sportsman's Hotel. It had a permanent European population of four men and two women (Powell 1982, 119). The town and river crossing at this time were just upstream of the location of the contemporary Katherine Hospital.

Early in the 1900s, the government reclaimed over 50 acres of Springvale Station near the homestead and subdivided them into blocks for vegetable and fruit gardens. Although these crops could be grown successfully, difficulties in transporting them to Darwin meant that development was restrained. This apparent agricultural success added to pressure for an extension of the railway from Pine Creek to Katherine. Another source of such pressure came from Vestey Brothers, who bought Wave Hill Station in 1914 and decided to build an abattoir and freezing works in Darwin. It was planned that the railway would carry cattle from the Katherine district to Darwin. World War I delayed construction somewhat, but the rail link was completed, terminating north of the Katherine River in April 1917. The railhead and stockyards were referred to as 'Emungalan.' It was not until 21 January 1926 that the railway bridge was built across the Katherine River. This crossing changed the focus of the town. It began to develop at the site of its present location along the railway line on the south side of the river.

Peanut growing began around Katherine in the early 1930s. By 1937 there were 27 blocks of 50 acres in the area, producing 160 tons for export in 1938. Local Aborigines were employed on these farms. The crops ceased to be profitable shortly thereafter and production ceased.

World War II had a dramatic effect on Katherine and the district. Many defence personnel were stationed there, thereby requiring the development of an infrastructure for support. Many Aborigines came to Katherine to work on defence related projects. Older Aborigines today often talk about soldiers they knew, their life in the army camps and droving cattle for sale to the army. The defence forces left at the end of the war. Katherine returned to its role as a small rural service town. Its growth beginning in the 1960s to the present day has resulted largely from this role. The public sector component of the town's function and economy was involved in the administration of matters related to the pastoral industry, social welfare, Aboriginal peoples and tourism.
Figure 12.2 illustrates Katherine's population profile beginning in 1921. Full blooded Aborigines were excluded in the population calculations until and including 1966. This figure illustrates that growth was slow until the early 1960s. There was some depopulation in the 1930s which occurred elsewhere in the Northern Territory as well. Despite the fact that they are not included in the census data, Aborigines have always visited Katherine. From early in Katherine's history, part-Aborigines have formed a significant portion of its total population. However, relatively little demographic detail has been quantified about the early period. Older Aborigines from Barunga, Wugularr, Eva Valley and Bulman often talk about their visits to Katherine in the early days, sometimes during droving trips or to visit friends and to access sources of alcohol which they could not legally obtain until recent years. Figure 12.3 depicts Katherine's Aboriginal population between 1971 and 1987.

The Formation of the Beswick Aboriginal Reserve

It seems that the first suggestion by a government official that an Aboriginal reserve be established in the Katherine area was made in 1936 by C. E. Cook, who was Chief Medical Officer and Chief Protector at the time. He wanted to build a new hospital on the site of the Aboriginal compound in Darwin. Cook's plan involved the establishment of Mataranka Station as a reserve. The Aborigines at the compound were to be sent there where they would be trained in stock work and agriculture. The ultimate aim of this plan was to establish 'a peasant class of Aborigines on small holdings.' In 1937 a new site for the compound was found in Darwin. Thus, this plan was dropped (Gleeson and Richards 1985, 11).

The establishment of Beswick Reserve came out of developments which took place during World War II. After the outbreak of the war with Japan in 1941, the Australian defence forces undertook substantial construction in the north of Australia, including the Pine Creek, Katherine and Maranboy areas. Many local Aborigines worked on these projects and many others moved into these areas to gain employment. The local Aborigines were Jawoyn and the main groups of immigrants were Maiali who came from an area northeast of Pine Creek. By the end of the war, the government decided that there was a need for a reserve to accommodate the people who had moved to the area and who were unlikely, in the opinion of officials, to return to their homelands.

A temporary camp was established at Maranboy (Figure 12.4) early in 1946, but it was moved to King River in July of the same year. The King River camp was east of the Stuart Highway and had a population of approximately 400 people. In the meantime, the government was negotiating to buy Beswick Station, the purchase of which was completed in April 1947. A poor water supply at King River and difficult access resulted in the camp being moved to Beswick Station in 1948.
Figure 12.2 Population of Katherine, 1921-1986

Figure 12.3  Aboriginal population of Katherine, 1971-1987

The first site chosen was Tandangal Spring, about 15 kms west of Beswick homestead (the present community of Wugularr), but it turned out to be unsuitable for 'religious' reasons. Only one-third of the group was willing to stay there. In early 1951, the camp was moved to the east side of Beswick Creek, the site of present day Barunga. About 200 people settled there and the materials from the previous camp were used in its construction (NT Administration, Welfare Branch 1975). Beswick Creek settlement became renamed Bamyili in 1965 and renamed Barunga in 1984. Both Bamyili and Barunga are Jawoyn terms meaning 'a place where people can stay.' It was recently decided that the latter name is more suitable. Beswick Homestead was later called Beswick and is now called Wugularr. This is the Jawoyn name for the Waterhouse River. (The terms Barunga and Wugularr are used throughout most of this report in both historic and contemporary reference for the sake of clarity).

In reference to the purchase of Beswick Station, the Administrator of the Northern Territory (Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory 1946-1947, 16) commented at the time:

In the initial stages the station will produce beef for supply to native settlements in the northern division, but my aim is that ultimately the station will be developed as a training centre for the Aboriginals to fit them for employment in the cattle-raising industry and allied pursuits.

Apart from its function as a training facility (which it has had performed on and off almost to the present time), Beswick was to provide a home for neighbouring Aborigines and a 'buffer zone' to aid in the control of immigration from southern Arnhem Land to Katherine and Maranboy.

Since Katherine, Mataranka and Maranboy were established, Aborigines had been travelling through the land occupied by Beswick Station as they moved between southern Arnhem Land and the west. Their travels had been a cause of complaint for the managers of Beswick Station. In 1936 the manager complained that Aborigines 'walk all through the cattle and burn everywhere. All my country has been burnt right out, including three stock yards' (Gleeson and Richards 1985, 17). This conflict between practices required for traditional land use (involving the use of fire) and those needed for cattle production is still alive today at the site of Wugularr.

Part of Velt Station (which bordered Beswick Station on its west) and part of Mataranka Station were transferred to Beswick Station in the period 1947 to 1948. By February 1953, Beswick was considered to be operating sufficiently well to be declared an Aboriginal reserve.
From the beginning, the communities of the Beswick Aboriginal Reserve were settlements of immigrants. The Jawoyn, who were the traditionally land owners, were in the minority and many preferred to live further west around Katherine. Other major groups living on the Beswick Reserve included the following: Maiali (Kunwinjku), whose country is near Oenpelli; Ngalkbun, from the area around Mainoru Station; Rembarrnga, whose country is in the Bulman area; Mara, who originate to the southeast of Roper River including Cox River; and Mangarayi, whose country was in the vicinity of Elsey Station and Mataranka. Contemporary populations of Barunga, Wugularr, Eva Valley, and Mountain Valley and Mainoru stations and their linguistic and tribal affiliations are presented in Chapter 14. Their homelands are depicted in Figure 12.5.
Figure 12.5 Linguistic homeland affiliations of residents in the study area
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A HISTORY OF POLICIES RELATED TO ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The development of Barunga, Wugularr (and in general terms Bulman as well) must be seen in the broader context of the development of Aboriginal communities generally and of changes in conditions for Aborigines in the pastoral and other industries. Since both communities in their modern form date from the period immediately after World War II, their development in contemporary history was first shaped by the assimilationist policy enunciated in 1951 when (Sir) Paul Hasluck became Minister for the Territories. Not long before he became Minister, Hasluck emphasised in parliament that Aborigines were not a dying race and that the policy of protection, which had prevailed before the war, was no longer appropriate. They no longer needed protection from 'the invading white community,' but 'social advancement' to prevent their degradation from contact with it (Hasluck 1953, 6). At a Native Welfare conference of state and federal ministers soon afterwards in 1951, it was agreed that:

. . . assimilation is the objective of native welfare measures. Assimilation means, in practical terms, that, in the course of time, it is expected that all persons of Aboriginal blood or mixed blood in Australia will live like white Australians do. The acceptance of this policy governs all other aspects of native affairs administration (Hasluck 1953, 16).

The assimilation policy prevailed for the next 20 years and, as the title of the Welfare Ordinance (1953) and the Welfare Branch of the NT administration signify, the first stage is appropriately called the welfare stage.

The Welfare Stage

The welfare stage lasted from first sustained contact with Europeans until the early 1970s. In it, most Aborigines moved in two main directions. Either they moved to stations where they worked as station hands and domestics or they moved (freely or under compulsion) to missions or government settlements. Some Aborigines also moved to European towns, although this was generally discouraged by policy and action. Many of the people moved between stations, missions, and settlements, towns and the bush throughout their lives.

During this period, Aborigines lost ownership and control of all of their land. Apart from a few small groups who
remained in the bush, every aspect of their lives became subject to European influence and control. On the stations, the Aboriginal camps provided the labour required and in return the station provided beef for the camp ('killer' bullocks and some other food, some clothing and services) and paid the actual workers 'pocket money.'

Meanwhile, the missions and settlements, many of which started as food depots -- where food was handed out and some medicine and religion were dispensed -- over a long period of time grew into Aboriginal towns. These became the Aboriginal communities of today. These Aboriginal towns had most of the features of European towns: there was some sort of community government (the mission or superintendent); a clinic, school, store and a farm and workshops; and some rudimentary housing. The main aims of these towns was self-sufficiency and to provide Aborigines with training in European skills. Table 13.1 shows the range of productive activities on missions and settlements in the period 1967 to 1968, when the welfare stage was at its peak.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Number of Communities with Significant Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fruit and vegetables</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dugong</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turtles and oysters</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crabs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fodder crops</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefacts</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete brick making</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of communities</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Every conceivably successful crop and activity was tried and many of the missions and settlements were successful in requiring a minimum of government support. Most of them had large fruit and vegetable gardens. Most had minimally a
killer herd of cattle and some were substantial stations. Most had chicken runs with hundreds or thousands of hens. Finally, most had sewing workshops for women. If the mission or settlement was on the coast or a major river, then there were fishing or gathering activities associated with water. Other activities included forestry, growing fodder crops, the raising of pigs, the production of milk and concrete brick making for local construction. These activities were important in terms of the NT economy. For instance, in the period 1967 to 1968, the missions and settlements produced the following percentages of total production in the NT by weight: fruit and vegetables, 38 per cent; milk, 8.6 per cent; eggs 14.4 per cent (by number); seafood, including dugong, 29.4 per cent and fodder, 12 per cent. Most of the produce was used by the mission or settlement. The foodstuffs were used in the communal kitchen from which people were fed for most meals during the week. However, some of the produce (especially cattle, fodder crops etc.) was 'exported' to other Aboriginal communities or the European economy. Subsistence production continued at this time, but it was at a reduced level by comparison with the traditional stage.

This 'highly productive' period depended on a number of features of these communities. Firstly, the standard of living -- as measured by European criteria such as kind and quantity of food, health care and type and permanency of housing -- was generally higher than during earlier years of the post-contact period. Contact had resulted in an overall degradation of life for Aboriginal peoples and a reduction in their access to and related use of traditional lands. Secondly, payments for activities were mainly in kind. The cash payments were only seen as a supplement to be spent on 'non-essentials.' This meant that Aborigines could not spend much of their real incomes away from the community or station. It also reduced their ability to move about. There were also laws restricting the ability of Aborigines to stay in European towns. Thirdly, the cost of Aboriginal labour was low by comparison with that in the European economy. This meant that many activities could be undertaken in the Aboriginal communities which would not be successful in the neighbouring European economy.

The impact of the welfare stage on the study communities is important to describe in some detail. Table 13.2 shows production data for Barunga and Wugularr from the establishment of the reserve to the end of the welfare period. (Blank spaces in the table should be interpreted as 'no suitable data available' rather than zero production, unless otherwise stated.)

It is clear from the reports, however, that while the Beswick Station (Wugularr) was run predominantly for cattle and training, the settlement (Barunga) was developed along the same lines as most other missions and settlements in the NT at that time. The early years involved the development of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cattle sold or transferred from W</th>
<th>Meat Produced B lbs net</th>
<th>Estimated cattle herd W</th>
<th>Fodder crops</th>
<th>Fruit and vegetables produced B lbs gross</th>
<th>Eggs B dozen</th>
<th>Sewn Items B No.</th>
<th>Milk B pints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>56,594</td>
<td>4,075</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>400 lbs sorghum B</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>81,530</td>
<td>4,305</td>
<td>2,800 bales B</td>
<td>13,891</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,535</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>52,326</td>
<td>247 horses 7 mules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>90,307</td>
<td>350,730 lbs B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,357</td>
<td>1,037</td>
<td>1,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>90,140</td>
<td>3,666 cattle 200 horses B</td>
<td>10,035</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,328</td>
<td>1,605</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>110,510</td>
<td>66,070 lbs B</td>
<td>20,723</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,129</td>
<td>1,232</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>85,615 B 25,250 W</td>
<td>3,000 bales W</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,335</td>
<td>202</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>13,845 B 3,200 W</td>
<td>4,000 lbs B 380 W</td>
<td>3,501 B</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,238</td>
<td>150 W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9,762 B 29,100 W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24,682</td>
<td>300 B</td>
<td>1,429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

physical infrastructure with an emphasis on establishing the production facilities. These were largely completed at the settlement by 1958, although there were substantial improvements after that year. The development of social amenities, including housing, continued long after that.

It is not our intention to give a detailed year-by-year account of developments at the communities. Rather, in the following account, we concentrate on the early period and one year, 1963 to 1964, as an illustration of the welfare period at its peak.

A station manager was appointed for Wugularr in April 1947. In the following year, an airstrip was completed, fencing undertaken, a garden established, some cattle sold and some cattle transferred to Delissaville Settlement (Belyuen). There were problems, including the fact that there were fewer cattle and horses than previously thought, the Waterhouse River had less water than was previously believed and the horse plant was decimated by Kimberley (or 'walkabout') disease. In addition, there weren't enough hands to do the work.

During the period 1953 to 1955, it was reported that up to 500 Aborigines were visiting Barunga for ceremonies and people continued to come to live there from southern and central Arnhem Land. A kitchen-mess, housing for a single teacher and improved water storage systems were built. Provisions were being made for extension of agriculture and pig-raising. In 1955-1956, 30 acres were cleared and planted with sorghum (for animal feed) and peanuts. The piggery, goat yard, milking pens and stockyards were constructed. A canteen was also built. In the period 1956 to 1957, 20 acres of Townsville lucerne were sown for fodder, 48 citrus trees were planted along with 14 other trees including custard apples, avocados and mangos. A recreation room was constructed and town beautification was undertaken. In the years 1957 to 1958, the settlement sold 1,889 lbs of pork to Darwin and the Aboriginal communities. Meanwhile, Wugularr was reported to be employing 15 male and 2 female Aborigines, to have sold 100 head of cattle, to have consumed 64 head and to have supplied 151 head to the settlement.

By 1958-1959, the development of basic production facilities at the settlement was completed and agricultural production was at a substantial level. Some 486 head of cattle were sold, and there was substantial production of fruit and vegetables, meat, pigs and sorghum. The following year was a good one for the station: 584 head of cattle were sold, including 180 for export to Hong Kong, and 220 were transferred, including 20 head to Beatrice Hill Research Station and 200 head to Barunga. At the settlement, more citrus trees were planted, soil rehabilitation was begun and a cypress nursery was established. Meanwhile, two additional residences were completed, a new schoolroom was built and a new water storage tank installed.
In 1960 to 1961, seven Kingstrand houses were built at the settlement. The following year, about 260 cypress and pine trees were planted, and major egg production started in February 1962. Meanwhile at Wugular, pasture improvement was commenced in 1961 to 1962 with the fencing and clearing of 160 acres. This land was sown with cowpea, sudan grass, sorghum, Townsville lucerne and urochlea. By the end of the year, 850 bales and 14 tons of hay were produced. Six young men completed training in all stages of stock work that year, and 5 boys between the ages of 15 and 17 commenced training.

In the year 1962 to 1963, further development of agriculture and social infrastructure took place at the settlement and the station. At the settlement, the citrus trees were producing well -- lime trees, 60 papaw trees and 1700 sisal plants were established; 116 acres were sown to poona cowpea, sweet sudan, sorghum and bulrush millet; and 2 areas of Townsville lucerne were sown, 1 for seed and 1 for pasture. A large quantity of hay was baled. This was also a year of major construction at the settlement -- 6 NACO aluminium huts and 3 Kingstrand houses were completed, and concrete floors were laid for 21 existing Econo huts. At the school, a laundry/ablution/toilet block was completed, and the kitchen dining room, stores block and hygiene stores were painted and improved. A new killing pen and yards were erected and the piggery was extended. Poultry laying cages, water lines and an incubator were installed. Adult education training continued in mechanics/civics and sewing production (involving two experienced ladies and two trainees). One female elder taught pandanus weaving for a short time and her pupils continued to weave enthusiastically. At the station, four miles of fencing was completed at Bishop's Bore. Elsewhere, 13 miles of fence was renewed and drafting yards were near completion. Stockmen's quarters were erected.

The Welfare Branch Annual Report for 1963 to 1964 was particularly informative. It reported at the settlement, for example, that there were 19 European staff positions, but trouble keeping these positions filled was noted. Staff were employed as project manager, a storeman, two kitchen supervisors, a home management instructress, a ganger, a carpenter, a mechanic, a nursing sister, and four teachers. Other positions in areas of nursing, teaching, and hygiene supervision were unfilled. There were 18 Aboriginal men enrolled in a course in mechanics, on-the-job training was given to 20 others and some attended courses in Darwin. There were 24 men and 4 women who found employment on the nearby stations of Delamere, Mountain Valley, Manbulloo, Elsey, Mataranka and Euralba. The report also records that there were 10 houses for staff, a sisters' quarters and quarters for single staff. The 'Aboriginal village' contained 12 aluminum and 27 corrugated iron houses and 1 single men's quarters. Fruit, vegetables, eggs, pork, milk and other local produce was used in the community kitchen. The pig herd increased to 111 and approximately 643 chickens had hatched from the incubator.
This was also a year of extensive building. Three concrete staff houses and a two classroom school with office and a store were erected. Seven aluminium houses and an aluminium single men's quarters were completed. Material was stockpiled for the construction of 14 concrete block houses. A new water tank was installed. In addition, improvements were undertaken to the cattle yards, a small dairy and holding pens were built and deep-litter pens and a new piggery building were constructed. Finally, the village council was reported to be operating successfully and the social club was active in organizing sports events.

Meanwhile at Wugularr (Beswick Station), European staff consisted of a manager, clerical assistant, two head stockmen, a stockman and a cook/matron. There were six trainees on a two year training course in stock work who were reportedly 'doing well.' This was also a year in which considerable capital improvements were undertaken. About 70 miles of fire breaks and fence lines were cleared, a new set of cattle yards was completed and most of the new airstrip was finished.

The account provided above, specific to the study area, was intended to demonstrate the relatively high level of organised activity at the settlement and station during the welfare stage. However, shifts in governmental policy towards Aboriginal peoples was to result in changes in the direction of such 'developments.'

Since the Welfare Stage

The welfare stage was followed by what may be called the integrated stage. This dates from the late 1960s and early 1970s and it was associated with a move to equality with Europeans. In the welfare stage, there were restrictions on the freedoms of Aborigines which are now considered to be appalling by modern standards. They included such practices as a prohibition on drinking by Aborigines and the taking of part-Aboriginal children away from their families. At the economic level, a major change came in 1966 with the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission judgement, which gave equal pay to Aboriginal members of the relevant union for pastoral workers. About the same time, social security pensions became payable directly to Aborigines. Later, Aborigines working on missions and settlements became eligible for wages at the award rate.

Thus, from the early 1970s, the second and third conditions mentioned above, which allowed the welfare system to survive, no longer applied and the welfare system collapsed. This is not to say, however, that 'welfare' ideas ceased to have a place in policy. The transfer payments made in the welfare stage continued, for example, in the form of social security payments and in a variety of grants to communities. Furthermore, the underlying idea of the old assimilation policy that Aborigines would merge into the dominant society remained.
The basic ideas of the integrated stage were sketched in the early 1970s, when Prime Minister Whitlam, leading a new Labor government, announced a new policy of integration, with real and equal opportunities for Aborigines. The policy, described as self determination for Aborigines, included a plan that communities would be incorporated to '... allow groups to achieve their own goals through their own social and economic development programs' (quoted in Cole 1975, 93). It was this notion of 'incorporation,' with a view to economic development, which can be seen in the later community government legislation.

But economic development had a cost. Aboriginal communities had broadly the same cost structures as European communities, and the Aboriginal communities had to compete with European towns for Aboriginal residents. This meant that, without special circumstances and assistance, an activity which could not survive in remote European Australia, could not survive in remote Aboriginal Australia. Thus, the gardens were abandoned, the sewing factories closed, the chicken and pig runs closed and even many of the Aboriginal cattle operations ceased. In the meantime, the European cattle stations shed Aboriginal labour. Unemployment amongst Aborigines emerged and reached high levels. Many European station owners did what they could to encourage Aborigines to leave the land. The Aborigines, in turn, moved to the communities and European towns. In response to these problems, the government introduced a new range of subsidies to help provide income and employment for Aborigines on communities. It bought cattle stations and tried to arrange excisions to provide Aboriginal people with somewhere to live. As a result of these developments, the typical Aboriginal community today has almost no formal employment outside the council, school, clinic, store and housing association. There are very high rates of unemployment and underemployment. In the older communities, this pattern of activity takes place in the physical ruins of the welfare stage economy.

The self determination which was encouraged in the integration phase, and the 'self management' which replaced it when the Whitlam government was replaced by the Fraser non-Labor government in 1983, both provided justification for governments to assist Aborigines who wanted to return to their own land. These Aborigines wanted neither assimilation nor integration; for them, independence, as far as it was possible, was the thing that they sought. The last stage may therefore be called the independence stage. It could just as well be called the 'outstation' stage. Since the early 1970s, but especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a large proportion of people, who once lived in communities, have moved back to their traditional country to establish outstations. Many communities have lost half of their populations to outstations. At the outstations, Aborigines live a more traditional way of life than while they reside in communities. They can escape many of the social problems they now face at these locations. They are apparently much
healthier and make a living from a mixture of social security payments, sporadic employment and traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering. The communities still maintain a large proportion of any given region's population; are major service centres for health, education, stores, and vehicle and plant maintenance and are where the servicing of outstations is organised. Consequently, they provide most of the formal sector jobs. They are also often the centre of politics. This pattern of settlement, composed of a large, central community, surrounded by somewhat dependent outstations, appears to be very successful and is likely to remain indefinitely.

Barunga's and Wugularr's history has followed the pattern described above for the post-welfare period. They had commenced, then, as welfare communities, productive activities initially had greatly declined and then mostly ceased (apart from service activities) in the 1970s, and now they are being affected by the move to outstations in or near southern Arnhem Land. If Aborigines are successful in their land claim on land in the Katherine area, then some of the Jawoyn and their relatives living at Barunga may establish outstations in addition to Eva Valley. The specifics of the post-welfare period for the study area are described below.

Accounts of continued 'development' at Barunga and Beswick Station (Wugularr) continued in the Welfare Branch Annual Reports until 1971 to 1972, when this agency ceased to provide details of activities at the study communities. The DAA NT Division Annual Report, which replaced the Welfare Branch Annual Reports in 1972-1973, was equally uninformative.

Thus, from about 1970, only sketchy information is available. The census data provide the primary source of information for reconstructing data for this period. Table 13.3, in which Barunga and Wugularr were not treated as distinct communities, indicates three major points. First, it is clear that the work force level did not change significantly between 1976 and 1981 and that the unemployment rates, while high, remained about the same. These rates were certainly much lower than they are today. Secondly, employment in agriculture and manufacturing declined significantly (from 36 per cent to 14.5 per cent) (this trend has continued to the present day with the exception of artefact and subsistence production). Thirdly, the decline in employment in those areas was made up for by an expansion in employment in public administration and community service (from 39.2 per cent to 79 per cent). As already described, a decline in employment in agriculture and manufacture and a concurrent growth of service sector employment was typical of Aboriginal communities in the integration stage.

One activity for which some data are available during this period is the cattle operation based at Wugularr. Although the Welfare Reports suggested that the station was running satisfactorily, some people had their doubts.
## Table 13.3
Aboriginal Employment from the Barunga-Wugularr Census, 1976, 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1976</th>
<th>1981</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, water, gas</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale and retail trade</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, storage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration and defence</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community services</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal services</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not classified, not stated</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total per cent</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total no.</strong></td>
<td>125</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unemployed no. (per cent)</strong></td>
<td>23(15.5)</td>
<td>24(16.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labour force no.</strong></td>
<td>148</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aboriginal population no.</strong></td>
<td>566</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Census 1976, 1981, microfiche.

As early as 1956, the Director of Welfare recommended that the station be sold because it was not a financial success. In 1966, an Investigation Officer for the Welfare Branch, Mr T. Jilek, came to the conclusion that the station was losing money at an increasing rate. He estimated the loss to be 32,000 pounds in that year. Jilek recommended that the station be run by a statutory authority or corporation, so that it would be free from the inefficiencies caused by 'Public Services red tape.' In fact, cattle operations were run by DAA until 1 July 1980, when a company of local Aborigines called Nagadgoli Cattle Company Pty Ltd, which was formed for the purpose of taking over the operations, assumed control.

Three major studies of the economic inability of Beswick Station were conducted since 1970, two by AACH and one by FACTS (AACM 1973, 1982; FACTS 1983). These reports contain information about the operations of the station. It is generally agreed that the station could potentially carry a herd of 6,000 to 7,000 cattle under open range management,
although it is likely that the herd has never exceeded 4,000. The 1973 study found evidence that the herd was being worked. It was estimated that there were 3,000 head of branded cattle and only 1,000 head of unbranded animals. By 1983, however, FACTS estimated that there were 3,000 uncontrolled cattle, 900 brumbies and 2,000 donkeys.

Figures for the numbers of cattle sold are incomplete but nonetheless useful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(FACTS 1983, 13)

The cattle, however, were generally in poor conditions and could command only low prices. These turnoff figures were, of course, insufficient for the operations to be viable. In recent years, the following subsidies had been paid by DAA and ADC to the Nagadgoli Cattle Company:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Subsidy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>$204,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>$135,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-83</td>
<td>$98,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When operating, however, the company provided substantial employment, especially for people at Wugularr. In 1973, it employed 12 Aboriginal men in the stock camp, 2 men as plant operatives and 6 working on fencing. In 1983, and for a few years before that, it employed 18 Aboriginal men, although they were paid very low wages subsidised by the NEATS training scheme. Like most Aboriginal cattle stations, there was strong pressure to employ more workers than was justified financially. The excessive numbers of employees placed financial strains on the company.

By 1983, approximately 250 sq km of land was enclosed by 160 km of fencing, forming 15 paddocks. Much of the fencing, however, had been damaged by fire and was not stockproof. There were 14 sets of yards -- mostly bronco yards -- in poor condition. The company also had 76 steel panels to form portable yards. It also had a range of buildings and a vehicular plant. The company seemed to be reasonable well equipped in this regard. However, the horse plant of only 12 animals was clearly inadequate.

Aboriginal commitment to the cattle project has varied. The AACM study in 1973 recommended that an Aboriginal-owned cattle company be established to run the cattle operations at Wugularr. When AACM employees suggested it to the three Aboriginal councillors travelling with them, the report notes that ‘... it was obvious that such a possibility had never
been considered by the group' (AACM 1973, 9). The report explained that the councillors talked about the project to people at Barunga and residents discussed the possibility of Barunga and Wugularr working harmoniously together on this and other projects. . . . Several Aborigines representing different tribes spoke quite forcibly in favour of working together as a group on projects proposed for the Beswick and Bamyili communities in order to get something started, but recognised the possibility that some members might decide to leave and become associated with a project on their own country, e.g. Ngalkbun may wish to return to the Bulman area (AACM 1973, 9).

Outstations were being keenly discussed at that stage.

The 1983 report by FACTS devoted some discussion to attitudes towards the project. It found that the company directors thought that the aims of the project should be the establishment of a self-maintaining herd that would provide cash from sales and beef for Barunga and Wugularr and employment and training as well. The community overall was divided, however. Some people were concerned about others leaving gates open, cutting fences and burning the paddocks. Others who were doing these things as part of their subsistence activities were not concerned, of course. These actions hampered production throughout the entire period Beswick has been a reserve and even before. In 1987 many older people, and some younger ones, remained keen on the idea of having the cattle operations reviewed. Other, however, were indifferent.

None of the studies described above could find a realistic program which could make the cattle operations profitable. In the 1973 study by AACM, they recommended undertaking substantial improvements, including increased fencing and bores, improved pasture and the purchase of cattle and horses to increase the herd to 10,000 head. The project, as projected, would have employed 21 Aborigines in station work, but required funding of $811,400 over a three year period (including $215,000 for the purchase of existing government assets on the station). The report also mentioned pig and poultry operations at Barunga and said that they were running efficiently at the time -- efficiently enough to suggest expansion. The market garden was limited to two or three acres because of the lack of water. The report made no recommendation about this project. However, it did mention that at Wugularr ' . . . most family groups are participating in a home garden project' (AACM 1973, 8). This garden project was initiated by the manager's wife. Prizes were awarded for the best three gardens. It is interesting to note that there were three or four small vegetable gardens at Wugularr in 1987, although none existed at Barunga where the large community garden had been cultivated.
In their 1982 report, AACM recommended that fencing and other improvements be undertaken (partly to meet BTEC requirements) to hold 4,000 head of cattle. They also recommended that surplus plant be sold, cattle be purchased and the number of employees be reduced. Even if this were accomplished, they concluded that 'there is no prospect of long-term economic viability' (AACM 1982, 15). Under their scheme, the company would make operating loss equal to $932,000 over the first 6 years of operation and then make losses equal to $59,595 per annum from that time on.

The FACTS study the following year was intended to see if these long-term operating losses predicted by AACM could be eliminated by introducing a small buffalo domestication enterprise, a butchering operation to supply meat to Barunga and Wugularr and a hay selling enterprise. The interest in buffalo domestication was prompted by high export prices for buffalo at Wugularr and the availability of tuberculosis-free buffalo from Bulman. The butcher shop proposal involved the company killing about two animals per week. The meat was to be sold at Barunga and Wugularr stores. The report also suggested that Wugularr be developed again as an educational resource for Aborigines interested in stock work. 'Nagadgoli could conceivably be integrated with Katherine Rural College by providing an extension of facilities available at the college' (FACTS 1983, 34). Two cattle build-up plans were examined. Plan I involved a slow build-up of the herd to the long term limit of about 4,000 head. Plan II involved a rapid build-up. BTEC requirements involve the need to hold cattle behind fences. Therefore, destocking the rest of the property made 4,000 head the practical limit for the property.

The FACTS study came to the same general conclusions as did the earlier studies -- that is, that the station was not viable, although the diversification suggested helped reduce the losses. It found that from 1983 to 1984 and from 1991 to 1992, Plan I resulted in a cumulative deficit (including capital outlays) of $1,125,230 and $29,530 respectively. Under Plan II, the company would have a cumulative deficit of $1,107,860 over the period 1983-1984 to 1991-1992 and would be running an operating deficit of $29,730 in 1991-1992. Thus, there was very little difference between the slow and fast stock build-up programs. FACTS leaned toward Plan I, because it felt that the community would be able to handle the slow build-up better. Both of these programs were better than the AACM cattle-only proposal, which resulted in larger operating deficits and a cumulative deficit of $1,111,170 over the period 1983-1984 to 1991-1992.

Thus, the review of these studies suggests the following conclusions. Firstly, Beswick Station has never been a profitable cattle operation, at least since its purchase by the government in 1947. Secondly, no program of large scale cattle operation suggested so far is likely to be profitable. Thirdly, if the government is prepared to spend the resources to cover the losses, then an integrated program involving
cattle, buffalo, hay selling and a butchery would help to reduce these losses. One cannot conclude from these studies, however, that a small killer herd, of the type common in Aboriginal communities today and discussed in Barunga in recent years, would not be a worthwhile project. This will be discussed in more detail below.

Nagadgoli Cattle Company ceased operations at Wugularr in October 1984. Although there was some interest in reviving the project in 1987, to do so on a large scale would require considerable investment. In 1987 there appeared to be few cattle and many of the fences were no longer stockproof.

The suggestion that a training centre for Aborigines interested in stock work be established was taken up and the course began in April 1984, operated by Technical and Further Education (TAFE) of the Department of Education, at Bishop's Bore located close to Wugularr. Young men from places as distant as Wave Hill and about six men from Wugularr attended the course, which many outsiders regarded as being successful. At the end of the dry season in 1986, however, TAFE moved the operations to Mataranka. The visits to Wugularr by the young men in the course were said to be very disruptive to the community.

Additional Relevant Economic History

Another important development was the purchase of Eva Valley Station by Kronus Pty Ltd in 1984. This was a company set up for the ADC for the purposes of purchasing that station for Aborigines to live on. It is now subject to an Aboriginal land claim by its Jawoyn traditional owners and is included in the Barunga community government area.

The station is underdeveloped and has never been run successfully. It was originally part of the vast grazing property taken up by C. B. Fisher and J. M. Lyons of Victoria in 1883. This property was later broken up and the land, which is now Eva Valley Station, became parts of various Grazing Licenses. Robert Thompson held the Grazing License on the property for some years after the World War II. His stocking numbers from 1960 to 1964 were 1,058, 1,201, 1,288, 1,500 and 1,527 respectively.

On 27 May 1964 the government advertised Eva Valley as a Pastoral Lease (Portion No. 860), of 1,130 sq miles. Thompson was granted the lease for a rental of three shillings per sq mile. The Commonwealth Gazette (19 November 1964), which announced the granting of the lease, listed its improvements as consisting of buildings, yards and 15 miles of fencing, to a total value of 8,620 pounds. It had an estimated carrying capacity of 3,500 head of cattle. Certain requirements were placed on the lessee. They were that he stock the land at a minimum rate of two head of cattle per sq mile, that he erect 25 miles of stockproof fence in the first 5 years and another
25 miles in the second 5 years, that in the first 2 years he erect a cattle drafting yard with a dip or spray attached and that he fence an area of at least 5 acres of improved pastures in the first 5 years and another area of 75 acres in the following 5 years. Evidence could not be found as to how closely Thompson followed these requirements, excepting that he had difficulty achieving the requiring stocking numbers of 2,260 head.

Thompson sold (transferred) Eva Valley Station to M. V. Johnston Motors Party Ltd in 1968 and they sold it in 1971 to Bryce G. L. Killen, who also owned Florina, St Vigeon and Willeroo Stations. Even Killen had difficulty meeting the stocking requirements. The lease was eventually forfeited for non-compliance with lease conditions. In 1984 Johnston Holdings Pty Ltd, the mortgagee in possession for Killen, applied for the lease to be transferred to Kronus Pty Ltd (personal correspondence, NT Department of Lands and Housing, 3 July 1987).

As its history suggests, Eva Valley Station is poor country for grazing purposes. The Gazette estimate of the station's carrying capacity of 3,500 head of cattle is almost certainly too high without substantial (and in these days uneconomic) improvements. About half of the station is composed of tablelands with sandy laterite and stony soils, growing coarse grasses of little nutritive value. The rest of the station is valley country with sandy soils and occasional areas of black soil.

In 1987 the property was not currently worked as a station, and the animals on it included a small number of wild cattle, many horses and a large number of donkeys. The station, however, supported 22 Aborigines living a semi-traditional way of life. There were plans for limited development of parts of the property for grazing and tourism, to be discussed in more detail below. The station was then 2,927 sq km in size and constituted a substantial resource for non-grazing purposes.

Given that grazing operations in the past were largely unsuccessful and that the Aborigines living on Eva Valley would have to be housed and supported by the social welfare, health and education systems anyway, it is likely that the value added from the station under subsistence production and leisure activities exceeds that of its previous use.

An Aboriginal land claim was originally lodged on Eva Valley Station by the Northern Land Council on 10 June 1981. However, in September 1982 this was held to be not an 'application' and a subsequent application was made on 20 February 1985, when the station was owned by Kronus Pty Ltd. There are other land claims in the area, which are important to people living at Eva Valley Station, Barunga and Wugularr. The first is the Jawoyn Land Claim. This was lodged with the Aboriginal Land Commissioner by the Northern Land Council on
13 March 1978 and was awaiting a decision by the Commonwealth Government in 1987. The area under claim is depicted in Figure 13.1. It is composed of Katherine Gorge National Park, a large area of crown land within the park, some small areas, including one on each of Gimbat and Goodparla stations and the Maranboy Commonage on the western border of Beswick. The area is about 6,000 sq km. In addition, Gimbat and Goodparla stations are likely to be transferred to their traditional owners as part of the establishment of Stage III of Kakadu National Park.

The resolution of these claims in favour of Aborigines is likely to affect people living at Barunga, Wugularr and Eva Valley. Many of the 324 claimants for the Jawoyn Land Claim and claimants for other areas live in these communities. Thus, in the future they may receive mining or other royalties, develop enterprises and establish outstations in these areas.

Developments at Bulman, 238 km by road to the northeast of Barunga, have had, and will continue to have, some important effects on Barunga and Wugularr. Evidence from the explorer, Lindsay, quoted above, suggests that many Aborigines lived around or visited the headwaters of the Wilton River in southern Arnhem Land or on Mainoru Station. There is evidence from earlier in this century of them leaving that area both temporarily and permanently. There are reports of them visiting friends and relatives at the Maranboy mines. It also appears that the Rembarrnga, who came from southern Arnhem Land, were leaving their homes more or less permanently from at least World War II. For instance, Berndt and Berndt (1987), in their survey of army camps in 1945, found that there were nine Rembarrnga men at a Mataranka army camp and one Rembarrnga man at Larrimah army camp. However, there were none at army camps at Adelaide River or at Manbulloo (Berndt and Berndt 1987, 158, 160-161). They also found that there were 16 Rembarrnga females (including female children) at Mataranka, 4 at Larrimah, 1 at Adelaide River, and 2 at Manbulloo (Berndt and Berndt 1987, 292-294). Further, early government reports concerning the Beswick Creek settlement mention Rembarrnga as one of the resident groups.

Some time before 1949, Jack and Sandy McKay became owners of Mainoru Station. From at least that time, Mainoru Station had a large Aboriginal population and many of the Aborigines living at Wugularr and Bulman were born there. Indeed, by the early 1960s, there were minimally 160 to 200 Aborigines living there. There was a school, run by McKay's sister. The men worked as station hands and the women as domestics. When Jack McKay died in 1965 or 1966, the station passed to Mrs. Dodd, who, in turn, sold it in 1969. American interests bought the station and the neighbouring Mountain Valley Station, and Aborigines began to leave Mainoru. Some went to Bulman, but many went to Wugularr. Now Rembarrnga account for a large percentage of Wugularr's population (to be discussed below). Older people at Wugularr talked about their
Figure 13.1 Jawoyn land claims area
jobs and experiences at Mainoru Station. Their excellent English is said to be the result of Mrs Dodd's teaching (NT News 3 October 1987, 12).

At one stage, interest was expressed in developing pastoral excisions on Mainoru and Mountain Valley stations, but the focus of attention has moved to Bulman. DAA Outstation Profiles show that in 1983 there were 44 Aborigines living on Mainoru Station. Since 1985, there have been no Aborigines living at Mainoru. Mainoru Station is now jointly owned and operated with Mountain Valley Station by Australians and Mountain Valley Station is the centre of the cattle operations. In July 1987, there were about 20 Aborigines living there, all of whom were working for the station or were dependents of employees. Only a European couple now live on Mainoru Station.

While most of the people from southern Arnhem Land had moved to stations and communities, many returned there for ceremonies, which were often held in the wet season. From 1955 to 1972, a mining company, Western Nuclear, had mining leases in the area. It constructed some buildings at Bulman in the course of its exploration. The remains of the camp can still be seen. Over the years, many cattle and buffalo had moved into the area. About 1970 a cattle project was started by the Maningrida Progress Association and the Bamyili Social Club. Some fencing, yards and buildings were erected, 300 cattle branded (including 103 which were sent to Beswick Station), and 2 bulls were introduced -- a Brahman and Santa Gertrudis. The project lapsed in 1971 when the Maningrida Progress Association withdrew its support and Barunga could not carry on alone (AACM 1973, 4). Since then, the project has been revived and developed primarily as a buffalo project. Buffalos have proven to be much more suitable for that country than are cattle. There were 3 buffalo extraction operators employing a total of approximately 10 local Aborigines in 1987. In 1987 these operators were paying royalties to residents of Bulman and the near outstations of the area--Weemol, Mt. Catt and Momob.

Bulman's population in 1986 included 70 Aborigines and 9 Europeans (ABS Census June 1986). The Barunga clinic records indicated an Aboriginal population for Bulman and its outstations of 183 in 1987, although everyone commented on the fluctuating level of the population of this area. In 1987, Bulman was the local service centre for the outstations. It had a store, clinic and school. As outstations continue to develop further to the north and east, the Bulman infrastructure may be expected to provide services further afield.

The developments at Bulman have two important effects on Barunga and Wugularr. Firstly, there are close ties between the communities of Wugularr, Bulman and Bulman's outstations. Many people from Barunga and Wugularr go to Bulman for ceremonies. People from each of the communities visit each
other and remain for considerable periods of time. There have been discussions of joint enterprise development, especially concerning buffalos, between these communities. Secondly, Bulman is a service centre for its neighbouring outstations and more are being developed in southern Arnhemland by people living mainly at Wugularr. In 1987 a number of families at Wugularr, mainly Rembarrnga, had been visiting their outstations north of Bulman in the dry season as a preliminary for moving there on a more permanent basis. It is common for Aborigines to go through a process of short visits, then longer stays, to an area where they wish to establish an outstation. This may continue for a number of years until people remain throughout the wet season and the outstation becomes their home. Some of these outstations are a long way north of Bulman. Moorundji, for instance, is on the Blyth River near Ramingining. Its owner wants the outstation to be serviced from Bulman, however. This kind of plan may not be a practical option.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ABORIGINAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It was not the goal of this research project to document the pre-contact, traditional ethnography of the Aborigines of the study area. However, since economic development and perceptions of what the concept of 'development' imply, only can be meaningfully considered in light of Aboriginal social and cultural differences that exist today from that of European, western society, some succinct comments on the Aboriginal cultural context are mandated for purposes of this report. This discussion is limited to what have been identified as primary factors of Aboriginal culture which persist in the contemporary period which most directly influence Aboriginal decisions regarding production, distribution and consumption -- the key facets of any economy. These include the relationship of Aborigines to land and resources, the relatively egalitarian nature of hunter-gatherer societies, the role of kinship and religion or world view in the distribution and consumption of food and raw materials (including market commodities today), factors of sociopolitical organization which influence economic behavior and cultural values regarding the quality of life.

As in the case of all known human societies which depended upon hunting-gathering-fishing for their livelihood, the organization of production, distribution and consumption was structured and integrally connected to the land and renewable and non-renewable resources on which such populations depended. Such was the case for Australian Aborigines as well. They did not wander aimlessly over vast territories in search of food and raw materials, as is commonly assumed by those untutored about hunter-gatherer societies, but rather developed specific patterns of seasonal moves key to resource availability (including water), land tenure, the social makeup of production units and ideologies which provided connecting links between the human and other aspects of the 'natural world' (including the nonempirical elements of the Aboriginal environment often termed 'supernatural' in western cultural perspectives).

The concept of outright ownership and exclusive use of land and resources was not found in most hunting and gathering society. Rather, usufruct rights provided the principles by which certain populations were associated with particular areas of land. This system of land tenure provided the means for the population to accommodate annual and seasonal variation in resource availability. In the Aboriginal case, the main economic unit was the band, which could and did undergo processes of fission and fusion depending on resource availability, ceremonialism and other social and cultural factors. The clan was the land 'owning' group, but the band had usufruct rights to land for productive purposes. Access
to land was patterned within the Aboriginal kinship system, with reciprocal rights and responsibilities between kinship groups related to the land and resources being specifically defined. During normal years, Aboriginal bands could meet their subsistence needs from lands to which they had traditional usufruct rights. However, environmental fluctuations sometimes required that they expand into the territory normally used by a neighboring group. Such conditions necessitated that Aboriginal productive groups or bands maintain social relations with neighboring populations -- links which had kinship, economic and related ceremonial (ritual) dimensions. In specific, as Aboriginal ethnographic data specifies in some detail (for the study area, see Maddock 1969), inter clan obligations and benefits were very complex and detailed regarding care and use of the land, resources and the nonempirical aspects of that overall environment. Because traditional 'owners' of the land had a special relationship with it, it was thought that hunting and gathering activities were more productive on one's own land than on that of others, even if one had permission to forage outside of one's own territory. This reflected the view that there were also reciprocal obligations between the land and those who were the traditional 'owners' -- that is, both elements cared for one another. These relationships between humans, land and resources from multiple perspectives have largely persisted in the study area to the present day.

The relatively egalitarian nature of hunting-gathering societies, including Aborigines, has been attested in a world wide perspective (Lee and DeVore, Eds. 1968; Schrire, Ed. 1984). The division of labour in hunting-gathering economies was based traditionally upon sex and age, with all adults normally expected to successfully undertake production in line with these criteria unless debilitated. Specialization was limited, and individual variations in skills or abilities in making certain items of technology, hunting more successfully than others, gathering in greater quantity than others, or performing ritualistic activities with greater efficacy because of relationships with the spirit world generally did not allow one to live off the production of others.

In reality, some productive units were more successful than others, and Aboriginal society had mechanism by which wealth within a society was leveled. Basically, intraband distribution among Aborigines involved very defined sharing patterns between kinsmen. In fact, most members of Aboriginal bands were real or classificatory kin and food was distributed from producers to the young, elderly, or debilitated who were basically non-producers. That absence of effective food preservation techniques in Aboriginal society made the amassing of wealth in the form of surplus food or raw materials futile as well a socially unacceptable. Although some accumulation of durables was possible on the part of elder males with multiple wives, the necessity for seasonal nomadism and kinship obligations checked stratification based upon unequal distribution of wealth. In addition, stinginess
was considered to be socially unacceptable and invoked internal means of social control such as gossip and ridicule. Interband economic exchange was usually connected with the extension of kinship and ceremonial ties with neighboring groups, thereby improving productive possibilities in years in which bands found it necessary to expand their normal range.

By way of contrast, it should be noted that western economic systems are based on individual specialization and the ability of individuals or households to amass wealth for purposes of both consumption and reinvestment. Ownership of the means of production is unequally distributed among members of the society. Market distribution in relationship to supply and demand rather than kinship based obligations drive the distributive aspects of western economic systems. In western societies, social status is directly correlated with the ability of individuals and small family groups to amass material wealth. Lastly, governmental agencies are responsible for the care of non-productive or poor segments of populations in such economies. The contrasts of western economic systems with those of traditional Aborigines are dramatic. The assumption that all aspects of traditional Aboriginal economic systems have been dissolved in the face of historic contact is both unfounded in fact and indicative of colonial assimilationist perspectives.

Although traditional Aboriginal ceremonialism and related mythology has not remained static since contact, its adaptive and dynamic nature in the absence of European intrusion has been documented (for example, see Maddock 1969). The persistence of ceremonialism and oral history in contemporary Aboriginal society is well known and documented. The adaptive nature of Aboriginal ceremonialism focuses on maintaining a harmonious balance between humans, the empirical aspects of the natural world (land and resources) and the nonempirical aspects the Aboriginal environment (totems, spirits, souls of the deceased, etc.). In the absence of the ability to continue to participate in such ceremonialism, the well-being of those contemporary Aboriginal populations would be in great jeopardy as would be the existence of those who lived before and those who will live in the future. The symbolic, social, economic and political functions of such ceremonialism have been widely documented by Australian anthropological research. The economic implications of the persistence of this aspect of traditional Aboriginal culture in the face of 'development,' which could potentially disrupt temporal commitments to participation in necessary ritual, access to or the disruption or destruction of sacred sites, or social obligations and solidarity related to ceremonial unity and the fulfillment of reciprocal obligations, can not be ignored. Such ceremonial participation bespeaks, of course, of Aboriginal world views which are not consistent with that of the larger western nation-state in which they exist. Although this perceptual side of the human equation is difficult to identify in a study of this type, it has been elsewhere documented and should not be ignored in this context.
The temporal depth of historic demography for the study area is rather limited. In large part because of individual and family seasonal and annual mobility, the remoteness and expanse of territory occupied by Aborigines in the NT, and variations in methodologies used by agencies and/or researchers in gathering demographic data over the years, these data have been difficult to collect and vary greatly in quality and therefore reliability. For these reasons, NT Welfare Branch Annual Reports, the ABS Censuses, and field survey data for 1987 were used for purposes of this study. The methodology for data gathering in 1987 is presented in Appendix 1. In all cases, dry season (approximately June and early July) data were utilized. Based on what is known about early contact and recent Aboriginal settlement patterns, dry season settlement varied significantly from that of the wet, including greater concentration around standing surface water sources in the former and dispersion in the latter. However, because of the more common availability of permanent housing in European-modeled settlements, there is some evidence that movement into more permanent communities also may occur during the wet season in more recent years and in particular areas (for example, Altman 1987 regarding Maningrida).

The population data for the study communities spans the period 1950 to 1987, with the exception of a population count for the King River compound in 1946 of in excess of 400 individuals and the Maranboy data presented above in conjunction with mining history. Table 15.1 depicts these data for the period 1950 to 1987 for Barunga (Bewick Creek or Banyili), Wugularr (Bewick Homestead or Bewick), Eva Valley, and Mountain Valley and Mainoru stations.

Figure 15.1 graphs the population fluctuations for Barunga and Wugularr and the total population of both communities.

The most striking characteristic of the data presented in Table 15.1 and Figure 15.1 is the high degree of fluctuation from year to year. Because of this fact, interpretation of these data is problematical. One explanation of this phenomenon relates to the high degree of mobility of Aborigines in this area described in the literature and observed during the 1987 fieldwork period. Another potential explanation for such variation is the employment of diverse methodologies for gathering census data. Additionally, the use of the geographic community rather than the social community for purposes of enumeration undoubtedly yields variation between years due to the temporary presence or absence of members who identify with particular Aboriginal
Table 15.1

Documented Population Totals for the Study Communities, 1950 to 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Barunga</th>
<th>Wugularra</th>
<th>Eva Valley</th>
<th>Mountain</th>
<th>Mainoru</th>
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<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
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<td>67</td>
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<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
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<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>613f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983d</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985d</td>
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<td>284</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986c</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>30g</td>
<td>707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987e</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a  NT Administrator's Report, 30 June.

b  NT Welfare Branch Annual Report, 30 June.

c  ABS Census, 30 June.

d  DAA Community Profiles.

e  NARU household survey.

f  This figures reflects totals for Barunga and Wugularra only.

g  DCD Aboriginal communities, 30/9/86.

nd Refers to the absence of documented data.
Figure 15.1 Populations of Wugularr and Barunga, 1950-1987
societies. In reality, all of these factors in addition to others, such as ecological and ceremonial variation from year to year, make interpretation of demographic trends for the study communities based on these data extremely speculative.

The only definitive interpretations which can be made from these data in conjunction with commentary gathered in the field in 1987 are the following. The community of Wugular has grown from a pastoral homestead to a relatively large sized settlement during the period recorded in the data. The population decline noted in Table 15.1 between 1986 and 1987 was explained to the researchers by community residents as primarily resultant from the move of extended families to outstations in the Bulman area or further north in Arnhem Land. The same trend may be suggested for Barunga, but such conclusions were not reiterated by residents of this community during the field period of the study. Informant data reported considerable past participation in pastoral activities at Mainorou Station, resulting in residence of large numbers of Aborigines at that location. Today, no Aborigines reside on Mainorou Station. The diversity of tribal origins of residents of the entire study area has been documented in the literature (e.g. see Maddock 1969) and remains a fact in the demography of 1987. Multiple tribal origins, in fact, may be a major factor in the dynamic nature of the populations of the study communities, as residents come from and return to tribal homelands on a regular basis. The role of Katherine as a regional centre in contributing to population fluctuations is also discussed below.

Important in this context is that mere population totals for the study communities composed of highly seasonally and annually nomadic Aboriginal populations, gathered by multiple sources and through the application of variable methodologies, contribute negligibly to evaluating the viability of particular economic enterprises in the study area. Market and human resource assessments can not be projected accurately on the basis of census data in isolation from other relevant demographic information to be discussed below.

It is essential to note that the data from this study provide demographic information for the study communities at one point in the annual seasonal cycle (that is, during the dry season) during a single year (1987). These data suggest several points which must be made as preliminary to a discussion of the content of the field data. Firstly, the changing nature of the composition of community and household social units in Aboriginal communities is obviously different from that of non-Aboriginal communities and households in either urban or rural Australia. That is, the household and community data gathered during the field period were so variable even within the two months of the dry (June and July) season of 1987 and, according to informants, vastly different from what would be recorded during the wet, that intricate statistical manipulations of these data and related
conclusions would be useful only if comparative data at different seasons and/or years were available and gathered using the same methodology. Whereas these data provide a synchronic demographic profile or configuration for rural Aboriginal communities in the study area, the need for diachronic patterns and configurations is essential to the ultimate understanding of community stability and change. This should be carried one step further in this context by saying that the success and failure of economic development schemes can only be evaluated meaningfully and completely on the basis of longitudinal data, since the relationships between demographic and economic variables are so interconnected.

Secondly, though we identify demographic and related social patterns that existed in the study community in 1987 as they relate to economics, it is not possible to say that the patterns which are identified have continuity through time and space. Therefore, the relationships of demographic, social and economic variables in rural Aboriginal communities also may vary through time and space and ultimately should be explored diachronically.

Lastly, with these qualifiers in mind, the demography and related social characteristics of the study communities are discussed below. However, the statistical generalities should not be used out of context or assumed to portray a higher degree of reality than the nonstatistical or narrative discussion, as the latter may lend more insight into the dynamic nature of both community and household characteristics of Aboriginal settlements than does the former in the absence of diachronic comparative data.

The age and sex structure of the communities in June and July, 1987 are presented in Table 15.2 and Figures 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, and 15.5. The data for Mountain Valley reflect European owned and operated station housing and are temporary in nature, since residents may not stay for the whole mustering year and may not return in subsequent years. Overall, populations in the study communities were relatively young, with the exception of Eva Valley, it is common for outstations to have a higher average age than communities (Cane and Stanley 1985), since there are often no schools for children. Also, older people are especially keen to return to their land and this fact is reflected in the composition of outstation populations. Although we have no quantitative mortality data, narrative accounts of high infant and young adult mortality suggest high fertility rates. In comparison to some contemporary hunter-gatherer populations (Ellanna 1983), there are relatively few people over the age of 60 and only 1 over the age of 70. Such a population profile is decidedly different from that of non-Aboriginal Australian society, suggesting a much lower life expectancy for rural Aborigines. With the exception of Mountain Valley Station -- a non-Aboriginal owned and operated property -- the ratio of males to females for the total population is above one in all
cases, with Wugularr having almost a balanced number of males and females. The variation on the Mountain Valley Station relates to the fact that only employees and their dependents are allowed to live on the property.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Cohort</th>
<th>Barunga</th>
<th>Wugularr</th>
<th>Mountain Valley</th>
<th>Eva Valley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.3)²</td>
<td>(10.7)</td>
<td>(4.3)</td>
<td>(8.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9.8)</td>
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<td>10-14</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.6)</td>
<td>(2.5)</td>
<td>(7.4)</td>
<td>(6.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(7.4)</td>
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<td>20-24</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>(8.0)</td>
<td>(7.7)</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
<td>(3.7)</td>
</tr>
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<td>25-29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(5.2)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
<td>(4.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.5)</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>(6.1)</td>
<td>(3.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.1)</td>
<td>(2.8)</td>
<td>(1.8)</td>
<td>(1.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>(2.5)</td>
<td>(2.5)</td>
<td>(2.5)</td>
<td>(1.8)</td>
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<td>45-49</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>(1.2)</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>(1.8)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>(.9)</td>
<td>(.6)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
<td>(.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>(.6)</td>
<td>(.6)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>(2.5)</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>(0)</td>
<td>(.6)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-85</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.3)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(54.6)</td>
<td>(45.5)</td>
<td>(50.3)</td>
<td>(49.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Percentage of total community population.
Figure 15.2 Age and sex composition by percentage of the population of Barunga, 1987
Figure 15.3 Age and sex composition by percentage of the population of Wugularr, 1987
Figure 15.4 Age and sex composition by percentage of the population of Eva Valley, 1987
Figure 15.5 Age and sex composition by percentage of the population of Mountain Valley Station, 1987
Table 15.3 presents the population data organised differently in order to analyse for child-woman and dependency ratios. The data presented above were derived from field data gathered in 1987, with a methodology described in Appendix 1. Although the methodologies differ significantly, it may be useful to present the same data as that in Table 15.3 for 1986 data gathered by the ABS Census. These data are presented in Table 15.4.

Comparisons of these data provide some insight into the Aboriginal demography of this area. The population of Wugularr is considerably larger in 1986 (by 132 people) than it was in 1987, despite the fact that both populations were enumerated in July and the 1987 data could be expected to be more accurate because is involved survey (house to house) methodology. This is accounted for in part by the involvement of Wugularr people in ceremonies in Bulman during the dry season in 1987 and in part by outmigration to outstations, described in some detail by residents. The percentage of males to females for Barunga in both years remained similar, while there was a greater number of males in relationship to females in Wugularr in 1986 than there was in 1987. This is reflected in calculated masculinity ratios.

The percentages of the population by aggregated age cohort (0-14, 15-59, and 60+) remained similar between the two years data despite the difference in overall population size for Wugularr. Masculinity ratios were higher for Barunga in comparison to Wugularr for both years. They were greater in 1987 than 1986 for Barunga and greater in 1986 than 1987 for Wugularr. Again, this may be associated with the participation of more males than females at ceremonialism in the Mt Catt area near Bulman in 1987 and the absence of males from Wugularr who were setting up outstations in 1987.

Child-woman ratios for Barunga suggest somewhat higher fertility than in Wugularr for all periods, with the greatest discrepancy in 1987. Dependency ratios were less for Barunga than for Wugularr in all cases, with both showing a higher ratio in 1987 than in 1986. Dependency ratios in all incidences, with the exception of Eva Valley, are higher for the study communities than for non-Aboriginal Australians. In the latter case, the dependency ratio in 1986 was 0.59.

Neither Eva Valley nor Mountain Valley can be viewed as typical demographically of Aboriginal communities. As previously stated, Mountain Valley is specifically inhabited by adults who work on the station and their dependents. It is not an Aboriginal community per se. It would be expected that the ratio of men to women would be greater and fertility lower in this case. In the Eva Valley example, some school age children from Barunga and other locations generally go to stay there during the weekends and holidays, but have to return to Barunga or other home communities during the week. This is reflected in the low dependency ratio and masculinity ratios for this outstation. Low woman-child ratios for Eva Valley
Table 15.3
Population of the Study Communities, 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Nos.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Masculinity Ratio Males/Females x 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barunga</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-59</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>326</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wugularr</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-59</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mountain Valley</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-59</td>
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<td>60.0</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eva Valley</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
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<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Child-women ratio (children 0-4/women 15-44) = 0.76

Barunga: 0.54
Wugularr: 0.50
Mountain Valley: 0.50
Eva Valley: 0.50

Dependency ratio (children 0-14 + adults 60+/adults 15-59) = 0.69

Barunga: 0.77
Wugularr: 0.67
Mountain Valley: 0.29
Eva Valley: 0.29
Table 15.4
Population of the Study Communities, 1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Nos.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Masculinity Ratio Males/Females x 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barunga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-59</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wugularr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-59</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Child-woman ratio (children 0-4/women 15-44) = 0.75 Barunga
0.68 Wugularr

Dependency ratio (children 0-14 + adults 60+/adults 15-59 = 0.63 Barunga
0.72 Wugularr


Total community cohorts, depicted in Figures 15.2, 15.3, 15.4 and 15.5, provide some insightful data. Although the ratio of males to females for the overall community populations were relatively balanced at Wugularr in 1987, such is not the case for Barunga in either 1986 or 1987 or for Wugularr in 1986, both cases of which males were predominant in the populations. Additionally, all population cohorts were not well balanced. Most notably, in Barunga the ratio of males to females is much higher in the cohorts 6-10 and 11-15. This phenomenon was explained by some residents as higher young female mortality and may be related to greater economic and social stress in larger communities (this imbalance was not found in the Wugularr data), not uncommon in populations worldwide which are undergoing stress.

For economic purposes, these data can be used to identify the potential work force for the community. In regards to Aboriginal subsistence economics, young children and older males and females play significant roles in production as defined by the criteria of age and sex. However, European
perceptions of the 'labour force' include only those individuals in the cohorts 15 to 59 in the case of both women and men and have been defined, in previous years, by differential employment and training roles for males and females (females have not always been considered an equal part of the labour force). Based on the data presented in Figures 15.2, 15.3, 15.4 and 15.5 and Table 14.4 for 1986 comparative data, and using the European definition of 'labour force,' the following statistics suggest the numbers and percentages of individuals in each study community that could be employed if wage earning opportunities were available and assuming that everyone was interested in steady wage employment -- an assumption which is misleading because it is based on the view that all Aborigines accept what Europeans define as appropriate 'work' roles and temporal commitments to such activities. Given such qualifiers, however, Barunga had 235 (61.2 per cent) and 193 (59.2 per cent) adults in 1986 and 1987 respectively. These data do not exclude individuals who are considered disabled and therefore incapable of actually holding steady employment. In the Wugularr case, there were 172 (58.3 per cent) and 92 (56.5 per cent) adults in 1986 and 1987 respectively. Eva Valley would be expected to vary because of the age structure of those who have chosen outstation residence. However, in this case in 1987, statistically 17 (77.3 per cent) were adults or potentially a part of the 'labour force.' Mountain Valley Station statistics are really not very significant in relationship to Aboriginal communities in general, as residents are there solely for purposes of wage employment. Nonetheless, data for that station included 12 (60 per cent) adults in 1987.

The significance of such labour force statistics, however, varies significantly from the potential for several reasons. There are many adults who are disabled, to a large extent from disabilities related to diabetes. Others suffer debilitation related to leprosy and other illnesses. Older males and females (60+) and younger (than 15) adults can and do contribute to real production through subsistence, artefact production and sporadic wage employment (in the case of young adults). The majority of females continue to prefer child rearing and domestic roles, especially if they receive transfer payments for dependent children. Lastly, wage employment for all adults in such a theoretically described 'labour force' do not exist in most Aboriginal communities. In terms of the work force, most office jobs are perceived by Aborigines as being primarily roles suitable for females and not for males unless positions are those of authority.

Household composition in the study communities provides some potentially meaningful insights into the study populations. As already noted above, the composition of households and the correspondence of particular domestic units to associated structures changed rapidly during the field period. That is, both visitors and more permanent members entered and left specific households and the community with regularity for shorter and longer periods of time. In
addition, housing units were commonly vacated and reinhabited some time after the death of a family member or when other housing became available, both practices being consistent with Aboriginal beliefs, social organization and adaptations to living in and with permanent structures uncommonly associated with their hunting-gathering economy of the past.

The number of Aboriginal households (domestic units) at Mountain Valley Station was 6 in 1987. These can be seen as somewhat artificial social units, since they are defined by the European owners/managers of the station and include only pastoral employees and their immediate dependents. Such units persist for the duration of pastoral activity and dissolve during weeks and months when such activities basically shut down. Household size and composition at Mountain Valley Station were relatively small and non-Aboriginal in nature because of its European influence and seasonal occupation. The Eva Valley settlement was a relatively new outstation development in 1987 without a school and other facilities with the exception of existing pastoral station buildings. Therefore, it did not depict a 'normal' Aboriginal composition population profile and can be expected to change rapidly if it becomes more permanently occupied by primarily Barunga residents, who commonly moved between the community and the outstation during weekends, holidays and other periods of short duration. There were seven identified households at Eva Valley, with an average household size of three and a range of one to eight individuals.

The more permanent communities, Barunga and Wugularr, portrayed decidedly different household characteristics. The total number of households at Barunga was 45, with the mean household size being the largest of the two communities at 7.2 persons per domestic structure, with a range of 1 to 17 (there was only 2 single person dwellings and 2 containing 17 individuals). Housing units at Barunga ranged from small (Kingstrand), garden-style, green sheds, described by younger people as 'where we lived during pioneer days,' to new red brick houses on concrete slabs and elevated, modern steel and aluminum houses. Many of the oldest, least European of the green shed-like dwellings and some of the elevated steel and aluminum sided units were unoccupied except by temporary visitors to the community. Whereas one might conclude that large household size was unrelated to the availability of housing units, choices related to where people resided in the community were clearly related to Aboriginal values and social facts not well understood by Europeans. It can not be assumed that all individuals or family units had equal access to or interest in particular types or kinds of housing facilities. In fact, there was some intracommunity dissatisfaction about the allocation of housing, with tribal/linguistic affiliations potentially affecting community residence decisions and preferences. It is also possible that some housing units which appeared to be 'unoccupied' would be occupied, in fact, during other seasons or important social periods of the year. They only appeared to be unoccupied during the course of the
fieldwork in June and July 1987. The preference for residing in extended family social units was commonly expressed by some Barunga residents.

There were 30 household units in Wugularr in 1987. The average household size was 5.4 persons per unit, with a range of 1 to 11 (there was only a single case of a household unit containing 1 person). There was no apparent abundance of housing units in Wugularr, as indicated by vacant structures, though we were told that some were temporarily vacant because occupants were away visiting, at outstations or attending ceremonies. Housing types included composite concrete block houses surrounding a central area, Kingstrand houses, elevated aluminium houses and some large, modern concrete block homes. As in the case of Barunga, extended family households were not uncommon.

In regards to the relations between individuals who composed domestic units and the sex of those who were designated household heads in 1987, field data reveal patterns which provide useful comparative information for other points in time and other Aboriginal communities. In the Mountain Valley Station case, again the European model prevails. All households were male headed, five were composed of nuclear families, and one was extended. In the Eva Valley case, five were male headed, two were female headed, three were composed of nuclear families and three of extended families and in one case the composition was unknown. As previously stated, the role of Eva Valley as an outstation of Barunga was not yet fully developed in 1987 and reflected the presence of existing pastoral structures available for housing. The Eva Valley case should not be used as a model for outstation demographic composition based on these field data.

In Barunga, 32 households were male headed (71 percent) and 13 were female headed (29 percent). Of these, 32 (71 percent) were composed of extended families and 13 (29 percent) exhibited nuclear family composition. In Wugularr, 29 households were male headed (97 percent) and 1 female headed (3 percent) -- a profile decidedly different from that presented by the Barunga case. Female headed households are sometimes indicators of social and economic stress among indigenous populations located in larger nation-states and in third world countries -- a fact which corresponds to other data presented for Barunga. In the Wugularr case, 15 were composed of extended family units and 15 of nuclear families -- exhibiting a greater degree of westernization in domestic unit composition than is the case in Barunga.

All data indicate that the linguistic and 'tribal' composition of Beswick Aboriginal Reserve was diverse at the time the operation of the reserve commenced and has remained so to the present day. As discussed in the historic chapter of this case study, the need for a settlement and, ultimately, a reserve grew primarily out of the situations created by World War II. Wartime activities created a demand for labour
in this area of the Northern Territory and the employment of previously nomadic Aborigines resulted in a relatively large scale migrations. As previously described, the creation of the reserve was seen as providing a buffer between the more 'urban' and non-Aboriginal communities of Katherine and Mataranka and the migrant Aborigines who had left their homelands in Arnhem Land and surrounding areas primarily to seek employment. It was thought by the government that an Aboriginal centre would protect these Aborigines '... from the more unsavoury aspects of European civilization' (NT Administration 1975, 5). The governmental intent was to control the Aborigines as well as prepare them for entry into the general economy and society of Australia (Maddock 1977, 15). The settlements were seen by the administration of the Northern Territory in the following terms:

... controlling drift of natives from Arnhem Land Reserve to town and military centres along the North-South road ... preventing contact of natives with miners and Australian Works Council camps in the Maranboy district ... as a dispersal depot for natives when they were discharged from Army native settlements at Larimah, Mataranka and Katherine.

Before the War no supervised depot existed in this area and abuses of native employment and undeterred drift to town centres were rife. At Katherine uncontrolled native elements were addicted to opium and methylated spirits drinking and undesirable contact with Europeans was rampant. These abuses have been entirely eliminated by the establishment of this depot (Maddock 1977, 15 quoting the Northern Territory Administration's Annual Report [1945/46, 27])

As previously mentioned, the King River settlement was the first attempt to solve the 'Aboriginal problem' in this area, involving individuals from many different homelands and linguistic groups. Its closure due to water shortages and an outbreak of disease resulted in the opening of the Tandangal Compound, a few miles to the east of present day Barunga. This site was unacceptable to Aborigines for religious reasons and water problems, and it is estimated that no more than 30 percent of the population ever went to this site (NT Administration 1975, 5). The formation of the Beswick Creek (now Barunga) settlement in 1951 originally included, again, these multiple groups. There is contradictory documentation as to the number of languages and 'tribes' represented there. The term 'tribe,' used in this context, refers to both a linguistic group and the area inhabited by those who speak that language (it does not imply political unity in the traditional anthropological sense of the term). A NT Administration, Welfare Branch report (1975, 7) stated that there were 'five main tribal groups living harmoniously on, or in the vicinity of, the Reserve,' including the 'Jauans' who were in their traditional country but numerically the third largest group; the 'Maiali', whose homeland extended from Pine
Creek to the East Alligator district and who were the second largest group; the 'Ngalkbun,' whose tribal country formerly lay to the north of Mainoru Station in the vicinity of the Bulman waterhole and who were the largest numerically of the people on the reserve; the 'Rembarrnga,' whose country included much of the Liverpool River district in north-central Arnhem Land and the 'Mara,' normally from an area south and southeast of the Roper River, but not a numerically significant group in the area. Maddock (1977, 16) states that Beswick Creek had members of 24 'tribes' and Beswick Station representatives of 10 'tribes' in the 1950s, but he fails to list these groups by name in this document. Lastly, the Bamyili Housing Association, in an undated document from the 1970s, stated that there were 10 language groups brought together in the original settlement: Gunwinggu and Maiala from Oenpelli; Gurei; Jawoyn from the local area and Katherine; Dalabon and Ngalkbun from Mainoru and Bulman; Rembarrnga from the Liverpool and Wilton river areas; Wagaman from Daly River; Dagaman from Katherine; Jangaman from the Elsey Station area and Mangarai from Upper Roper River.

Based on field data gathered in the study communities in June and July 1987, there were 20 linguistic/tribal groups represented in the study populations. The distribution of these groups by community, number, and percentage of total community population are presented in Table 15.5 and in Figure 12.5.

The largest single linguistic/tribal group (33 per cent of the total community population) represented in Barunga is Jawoyn -- not surprising since they are the traditional owners of that area and they are residing in their homeland. If Eva Valley, Barunga's outstation, is included in the calculation, 96 percent of all Jawoyns living in the study communities reside in either Barunga or Eva Valley. In 1987, Jawoyns were the single largest group (22.4 percent) of the entire study area. It is interesting to note that in the 1950s, the Jawoyns were the third largest group on Beswick Aboriginal Reserve. Either they have increased in population through greater relative fertility or there has been a return migration to some segments of the Jawoyn homeland. The researchers suspect that both have occurred.

The primary linguistic population of Wugularr (41 percent) is Rembarrnga, whose original homeland is in the Wilton and Liverpool river areas. Of the entire study area, 71 percent of all residents identifying as Rembarrnga reside in Wugularr. In addition, Rembarrnga represents the second single largest linguistic group (17.7 percent) within the entirety of the study area. Although Ngalkbun was the numerically largest population of the Beswick Creek settlement during the 1950s, in 1987 it was the third largest group representing 16.8 percent of the total areal population. Of all Ngalkbun, most (72 percent) resided in Barunga and Eva Valley. In the 1970s, Ngalkbun became the official Aboriginal language used in the Bamyili (Barunga) school along with standard English and
### Table 15.5
**Populations of the Study Communities by Self-Reported Linguistic Affiliations, 1987**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Barunga</th>
<th>Wugularr</th>
<th>Eva Valley</th>
<th>Mt. Valley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aranda</td>
<td>7 (2.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djingili</td>
<td>1 (.3%)</td>
<td>1 (.6%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garawa</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (.6%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gupapuyngu</td>
<td>1 (.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jawoyn</td>
<td>110 (33.7%)</td>
<td>5 (3.1%)</td>
<td>4 (18.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiali</td>
<td>35 (10.7%)</td>
<td>29 (17.8%)</td>
<td>10 (45.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangarai</td>
<td>8 (2.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mara</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (.6%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndjebbana</td>
<td>2 (.6%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalkbun</td>
<td>62 (19.0%)</td>
<td>25 (15.3%)</td>
<td>2 (9.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nhangu</td>
<td>1 (.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembarrnga</td>
<td>27 (8.3%)</td>
<td>67 (41.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritharngu</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (.6%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres St.</td>
<td>3 (.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waagilak</td>
<td>7 (2.1%)</td>
<td>6 (3.7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagaman</td>
<td>4 (1.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangurri</td>
<td>16 (4.9%)</td>
<td>5 (3.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warndarang</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (3.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warlpiri</td>
<td>1 (.3%)</td>
<td>2 (1.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wogait</td>
<td>40 (12.3%)</td>
<td>15 (9.2%)</td>
<td>6 (27.3%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>326 (100%)</td>
<td>163 (100%)</td>
<td>22 (100%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kriol. Ngalkbun originated in the Bulman/Mainoru Station areas. Maiali, the second largest group in the 1950s, today is the fourth largest (14 percent of the total population of the study area). In 1987 Barunga and Eva Valley were the homes of 61 percent of all Maiali in the study area.

Although research conducted in 1987 was not able to explain the factors affecting linguistic/tribal distribution in the study area at that time, it is clear that this distribution of the populations of Barunga and its outstation, Eva Valley, and Wugularr was not random. Linguistic/tribal affiliations and traditional ownership are factors of considerable importance in any consideration of economic development, particularly if land areas and/or related resources are involved. The relatively frequent occurrence of intermarriage between Jawoyns and non-Jawoyns may be a way in which the latter legitimize their long term presence and participation in developmental schemes on land of which they are not the traditional owners. It is also of interest to note that the few Jawoyns who live at Wugularr are 'caretakers' for land in that area, bestowed upon them by the traditional owners who reside in Barunga. Lastly, as the outstation movement from Wugularr develops, as reported by informants in 1987, it may be that some of the language groups may return to outstations in their original homelands.

Figures 15.6, 15.7, and 15.8 depict the role of language affiliation in marriage patterns for Barunga, Wugularr and Eva Valley respectively. Though no test was done for statistical significance, these figures testify to the fact that there appeared to be no pattern of linguistic endogamy operating within Barunga in 1987. People who identified themselves as Jawoyn and those who identified as Ngalkbun are the two language groups most commonly intermarried based on the data for this community in 1987, although the nine cases included both husband and wives as one of the two language groups. In the case of Wugularr, there appeared to be some degree of linguistic endogamy in the case of Rembarrnga, with 9 or 29.6 per cent of the marriages.

The role of Katherine as a regional centre, in which there may be more employment opportunities for Aborigines from the study area, has been a topic of great interest to researchers concerned with urban (or quasi-urban migration). The question is, given opportunities for employment, more proximal access to medical care, stores, communication, transportation, and recreation and greater participation in European-style living, are residents of the study area participating in an outmigration to Katherine? We were aware that residents of all communities of the study area travelled with relative ease and frequency to Katherine for all of the reasons described above. We did not know, however, to what degree relocation to this community was occurring. Recent research by Taylor (1988) throws light on the role Katherine has been playing in the lives of regional Aborigines during the recent past.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Group</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jawoyn</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembarrnga</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangurri</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangarayi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalkbun</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wogait</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nhangu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagaman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres St</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiali</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warlpiri</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gapapuynyu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aranda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndjebbana</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waagilak</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals, married men by language or group</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15.6 Marriage patterns and linguistic affiliation, Barunga, 1987
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Maiali</th>
<th>Rembarrnga</th>
<th>Ngalkburn</th>
<th>Jawoyn</th>
<th>Waagilak</th>
<th>Wangurri</th>
<th>Ritharrngu</th>
<th>Unstated</th>
<th>Warndarang</th>
<th>Wogait</th>
<th>Married women, total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maiali</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,1x2**</td>
<td>1x1*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembarrnga</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalkburn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1x2*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jawoyn</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waagilak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangurri</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritharrngu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warndarang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wogait</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals, married men, by language group</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31 women &amp; 28 men because of 2 polygamous unions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = 1 polygamous marriage
  1 Ngalkburn man, 3 wives (1 Maiali, 2 Ngalkburn)

** = 2nd polygamous marriage
  1 Rembarrnga man, 2 wives (both Maiali)

Figure 15.7 Marriage patterns and linguistic affiliations, Wugularr, 1987
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Group</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Totals' married men by language group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jawoyn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalkibun</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals'</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15.8 Marriage patterns and linguistic affiliations, Eva Valley 1987
World War II had had a dramatic effect on the growth of Katherine, as previously discussed. When the defence forces left at the end of the war, Katherine returned to its role as a small rural service town. Growth during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s occurred largely because of the public sector component of the town's economy, which was involved in administration in relation to the pastoral industry, social welfare, Aborigines and tourism. Most recently, the construction of Tindal Air Force Base has had a massive effect upon the town. At its peak, the project created 700 jobs directly and has led to considerable indirect expansion in business and building in the community.

Katherine's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population underwent a correspondingly rapid growth (see Figures 12.2 and 12.3). The Aboriginal population increased from 300 in 1971 to 1,130 in 1987 (Taylor 1988). This figure includes both people living in town camps and in the town proper. The increase in population between 1981 and 1984 may have been related to the Tindal Air Force project, although some was related to natural increase. Taylor (1988) found, interestingly, that Aborigines had not migrated to Katherine in large numbers from the Katherine region -- no classic 'urban drift.' In fact, of his sample of 285 Aborigines who moved to Katherine between September 1984 and July 1987, only 77 or 27 per cent had come from the region, and a large proportion of those were Walpiri who came from Lajamanu. By contrast, 37.5 per cent had come from other parts of the NT--mainly urban areas -- and 35.4 per cent had come been interstate immigrants, mainly from urban areas and Queensland.

The overall population of Katherine increased from approximately 3,800 in 1981 to in excess of 5,500 in 1986 (see Figure 12.2). Between August 1987 and August 1988, Tindal reports that the defence forces and their dependents have increased by approximately 520 individuals. As Taylor (1988) states, the definition of Katherine's Aboriginal population is difficult because of the number of such persons who move in and out of the community. Despite the mobility of Katherine's Aboriginal population, however, there has been a net increase and the portion of Aboriginals to non-Aboriginals has been maintained at approximately 16 per cent in recent years (J. Taylor, personal communication 1988). Although one might expect that proportion to decrease with the staffing of Tindal, Taylor anticipates that it will remain between 16 to 20 percent because of a relative decline in the number of non-Aboriginals in the community who were there associated with the construction of Tindal.

Taylor (1988) also asked where people had lived during their previous three moves before residing in Katherine. He found that only 4 (24.2 percent) of the Aboriginal household heads of those living in the town of Katherine had lived at Barunga during their last three moves. None had resided at Wugularr, Eva Valley or Bulman in their last three moves. Of Aboriginal household heads living in town camps, 3 (6.5
percent) had lived at Barunga during their last three moves, 1 (2.1 percent) had resided at Wugularr, none had lived at Eva Valley and 4 (8.7 percent) had lived at Bulman.

Taylor (1988) also surveyed the population living at Barunga, Wugularr and Eva Valley to see how many of these had lived at Katherine during their previous three moves before settling at the present residences. There were 9 (22.5 percent) of Aboriginal household heads in Barunga who had lived in Katherine in the previous three moves, 3 (12.5 percent) in Wugularr and none in Eva Valley.

These observations support our impression of the role of Katherine for people living at Barunga, Wugularr, and Eva Valley. Katherine was an important place for local people as a source of commercial goods and services not available locally. People went to Katherine to give birth and get medical attention in addition to that available at Barunga. They went there for shopping, drinking and other forms of recreation. They went there to visit friends and family members and to attend meetings. However, there seemed to be no great desire to move there permanently. All of the talk about leaving the study communities was concerned with establishing outstations rather than residing in a regional centre.

It is apparent that the communities of the study area portray considerable variation from European models -- that is, the 'Aboriginalness' of these settlements and their populations is apparent from the data derived from a single research period in 1987. It is critical to an understanding of the dynamics of the social, economic, and political components of the study communities that some longitudinal data be gathered in order to identify trends that span different seasons and years -- a diachronic perspective based on data derived from comparable methodologies. This should also include a continued monitoring of the role played by regional centres -- in this case Katherine -- and outstations in the demographic and social dynamics of the study area.
CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE CONTEMPORARY ECONOMY

Introduction

The majority of this section on the economy of the study communities is organized around the different sectors of the economy which we have identified -- namely, the subsistence, market, and service sectors, and income derived from social security or transfer payments. Some of the economic activities of the communities, such as those associated with the Community Development Employment Scheme (CDEP), cross-cut more than one of the sectors described above and therefore are discussed separately. It is important to note, however, that the while we have employed discrete analytical components in our discussion of the economies of the study communities, we recognize that residents function within a single integrated economic system. It is standard procedure to research economic activities in terms of production, distribution (also referred to as exchange) and consumption. While our discussion of discrete analytical sectors of the overall economy in this context is primarily focused on the direction or intent of production or productive activities, the distribution of income, which is also described below, provides some very different perspectives on the operation of the economic systems of the study communities. An understanding of both contemporary and more traditional Aboriginal distribution or exchange networks is essential if one is to comprehend the fate of economic enterprise development in communities such as those of the study area.

It is important to note that the first economic sector under discussion in this context -- the subsistence sector-- in unquestionably under-represented due to the nature of the field time associated with this project. Research in other areas of Aboriginal Australia (for example, Altman 1987 on Maningrida) and in the context of contemporary hunting and gathering societies worldwide suggests that the subsistence sector -- that is, hunting, gathering, fishing or other types of economic production dependent on these activities -- is critical to the economic well-being of modern foraging societies. In fact, this sector provides some of the most optimistic possibilities for local self sufficiency. Therefore, the data indicated here, which are mostly, qualitative rather than quantitative, should not be considered a complete representation of the importance of this sector in the economies of Barunga, Wugularr, Eva Valley, Mountain Valley or Bulman in 1987.

The Subsistence Sector

As discussed above and in the methodology presented in Appendix 1, the temporal framework for this study precluded
the systematic collection of data related to the subsistence sector of the economy of the study communities. Nonetheless, some observations and inferences based on indirectly relevant data are worth noting in this regard. For a complete understanding of the economy of these communities, it will be essential to investigate the subsistence sector in greater detail in future research.

The history of European contact with the study communities which has been described in the context of this report suggests that it would be astounding, indeed, if any aspects of production, distribution and consumption of locally harvested resources had survived to the present time. Although it has been well documented that the Aborigines who were ancestral to the study population depended almost solely on locally harvested (hunting, gathering and fishing) resources until the mid-1800s, factors associated with European contact tended to discourage local self sufficiency in terms of subsistence economic production. For example, centralization of Aboriginal populations in European settlements or at the sites of non-Aboriginal economic activities, such as pastoralism or mining, disrupted the adaptive system of foraging in this habitat. Successful local resource harvest required seasonal mobility in response to resource and water availability and the fissioning and fusion of social groups throughout the year and between years in response to changing factors of the environment. It also required, in the Aboriginal world view, a delicate relationship between the human and non-human components of the overall environment, expressed most overtly in ritual and associated mythology. Centralization stressed the ability of the local environment to provide adequate resources to accommodate the needs of a relatively large and sedentary population.

In addition, rules of Aboriginal land tenure and usufruct rights associated with land and resource use did not permit equal access for all groups to the areas in which they settled voluntarily or involuntarily. Aborigines throughout Australia had very specific rules by which certain individuals and groups had rights to use and obligations to care for land and resources in all areas in which they ranged. Europeans demonstrated little understanding of either the Aboriginal land tenure system which was operative at time of contact or the impacts of centralization on such systems. Because of traditional Aboriginal land tenure systems, segments of heterogeneous populations were precluded from the participation in the local harvest of fish, game and plant resources.

In addition to the impact of centralization, European contact influenced local subsistence economic systems through the introduction of trade goods and the concept of the sale of labour for cash or wages. Involvement in European employment, whether it was on pastoral stations, in mining operations or any other occupation involving wage employment and/or
training, placed temporal and spatial restrictions on the continuance of Aboriginal subsistence economics.

Another factor that is well documented in the case of the study area was the institution of kitchens in Aboriginal settlements such as Barunga, in which primarily European meals were prepared for the Aboriginal residents of the community in question. It was perceived by the government that these kitchens provided not only a more adequate diet for Aboriginal residents, but also played a role in the process of assimilation -- a philosophy that remained fervently and overtly at the centre of governmental policy until very recent years. The provision of prepared meals exacerbated the influence of the other factors described above in discouraging hunting, gathering and fishing for local distribution and consumption in Aboriginal communities.

In 1987 there was both direct and indirect evidence that some level of subsistence production was still ongoing in the study communities. Although the purpose for being on Mountain Valley Station was employment in the pastoral industry, the station owner and manager reported that Aboriginal employees commonly harvested local resources while in residence on the station and during times that they were not engaged in wage activities. In addition, they returned to outstations and home communities during the pastoral off-season, in part specifically for the purpose of participating in hunting, gathering and fishing activities -- events which were highly valued by the individuals and families who resided much of each year on the station.

Residents of Eva Valley were specifically residing at this location in part because of the availability of locally obtainable resources. Although staples (primarily carbohydrates) were purchased at Barunga and in Katherine on a weekly or fortnightly schedule, the eldest male and leader of the community proudly continued to hunt game (including kangaroos, wallabies, cattle as well as smaller game) with traditional technology (including spears) and was in the process of encouraging and teaching his genealogical and classificatory sons and other male relatives to do the same. During one day of our visit, most residents of the community -- adult men and women and children -- were heading out for a day of resource gathering and consumption away from the community's old station housing units. The use of locally gathered raw materials for artefact production was also apparent at this settlement and, in fact, the sale of such artefacts contributed substantially to the cash income of the members of the Eva Valley community. Since food is consumed at kill, fishing or gathering sites, there are problems associated with preservation in northern Australia making quantification of subsistence production difficult in Aboriginal communities (see also Meehan 1982 and Altman 1987 for a discussion of this research problem). More importantly, such activities may be invisible to European bureaucrats and visitors to Aboriginal communities, leading to sweeping
conclusionary statements about the unimportance or non-existence of traditional harvesting activities in rural economic systems.

In the two larger communities -- Barunga and Wugularr -- there was considerable observed evidence of the distribution and consumption of game (including cattle), fish and gathered vegetable and small game resources. Field time and conditions did not allow the frequent observation of actual production, informants reported that individuals away from the community had 'gone hunting,' 'gone fishing,' 'gone collecting plants' or 'gone bush.' Items of technology related to resource harvest were evident in both communities. People frequently complained about having inadequate transportation for getting out bush to carry on subsistence activities -- a common problem among contemporary foragers who reside in relatively large, sedentary communities (Brody 1982; Ellanna and Sherrod 1987). A CDEP proposal to acquire a vehicle and pay wages to both adult males and females for resource harvesting was presented by the Barunga Town Council and generated considerable enthusiasm and interest by members of the community -- a truly innovative use of CDEP funding, according to those who were providing governmental oversight to this program.

Other collaborative data regarding the participation of residents of Barunga and Wugularr in the subsistence sector were provided by the store manager, who suspects that locally gathered protein resources were being utilized in the community based on purchasing patterns of meat at the local store. However, store records are such that it is not possible to determine the amount of meat or other protein sources purchased by household. Additionally, since many community residents also purchase groceries in Katherine, data solely from the local store were not adequate in answering questions about the amount of commercial protein versus that gathered by subsistence which was being used by residents of these communities. Quite obviously, more intensive field research, including accompanying people on hunting, fishing or gathering activities, would lend considerable insight into the role of the subsistence sector in the overall economics of the study communities.

Since traditional and contemporary Aboriginal ceremonialism involved non-market economic exchange within and between linguistic and territorial social groups, the continued intense participation and interest in ceremonial activities (e.g. young men's initiation, mortuary and Kunapipi) suggests that the economic component of these activities may have remained intact albeit changed. In fact, the purpose and desired outcome of many ceremonies was the renewal of human relationships with the land and its resources. The fact that this ceremonialism has not only survived, but seems to have intensified in recent years, suggests minimally the emic importance of assuring the availability of and access to locally available resources
which are the basis of the subsistence sector of the current economic system.

Lastly, Aborigines of the study communities overtly state that part of the perceived improved quality of life provided by outstation residence is related to increased opportunities for self sufficiency through the harvest of local food and raw material resources. This relationship with the land which is facilitated by outstation residence is perceived to be both material and spiritual (valuative) in nature, according to local informants. The trend towards increased interest in 'return to homelands' and related outstation residence showed no evidence of decline in 1987 and, in fact, seemed to be intensifying based on informant information and demographic trends.

In the context of this study, we were not able to estimate the value of subsistence production in the study communities. Its relatively importance, as a contribution to per capita incomes, however, seemed to be greatest at Eva Valley, with Wugularr and then Barunga respectively involved to a lesser degree in these activities. This conclusion was reached on the basis of questioning Aborigines and Europeans, observing people returning from trips, and the observation of camp fires, debris and general activity. The primary animals sought in the area were fish, cattle, buffalo, kangaroos, goannas and turtles. Neither donkeys nor horses were hunted. Most people used firearms, but some people at Eva Valley proudly used spears and woomeras. In season, most of the native fruits were sought and some of these trees, such as the Terminalia ferdinandiana and Nauclea orientalis, had been planted in the communities.

The reasons why there appears to be so relatively little subsistence production undertaken in the communities are, no doubt, complex. However, contributing factors include the poor status of much of the country as a traditional resource, especially in the vicinity of Barunga, primarily related to the centralization of large numbers of people in communities. This type of settlement pattern is not ecologically adaptive for economies reliant on hunting, fishing and gathering, especially in the type of country in which residents of our study communities were located. In addition, the shortage of absence of means of transport to more fertile hunting, fishing and food gathering areas is problematic. Even the Waterhouse River, which is an important resource in the wet and early dry seasons, dries up and becomes a series of stagnant waterholes in the late dry season. The evidence of explorers, already described above, suggests that before European contact, the people were likely to have moved to the permanent swamps on the Roper River or other similar locations during the dry season. Subsistence production has important benefits to residents of these communities described above, including self esteem, reinforcing traditional cultural patterns, improving nutrition and providing exercise. For these reasons as well as those of encouraging a greater degree
of economic self-sufficiency, subsistence production should be encouraged in whatever form it might take.

Employment and Income

Since employment and income data cross cut all sectors of the economy, these are presented first in order that the reader can use them as a point of reference in the discussions of the market and service sectors of the economy and social security below. Table 16.1 below presents Aboriginal employment for Barunga, Wugularr, Eva Valley and Mountain Valley in June 1987. These data exclude CDEP, which cross cuts many sectors of the economy and is discussed separately below. As is typical of Aboriginal communities and evident in the table, almost all employment was provided in the areas of local government, health, education, police work and internal servicing in the form of the store. The only external commercial activity was in artefact production. At the time the research was conducted, there was no formal employment at Eva Valley, although CDEP was scheduled to begin there shortly after July or August 1987. The employment at Mountain Valley resulted from the station's policy of only allowing people to stay on the station if they were workers or dependents of these workers. Most of the station jobs were held by men who worked as stockmen. Approximately 14 Aboriginal women were employed full-time at Barunga -- 32 per cent of the total Aboriginals with wage jobs in the community. Women were employed primarily in the school. One Wugularr woman was employed full-time in the store and one as a domestic at Mountain Valley. European full-time employment in Barunga included 6 men and 15 women, most of whom worked in the school. In the case of Wugularr, there were eight European men and two women with full-time employment. Use of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data for determining Aboriginal employment in the study communities in 1986 was not possible, as the data for Barunga and Wugularr did not distinguish between Aboriginals and Europeans. Additionally, ABS was unsure as to whether individuals receiving CDEP were included as employed or unemployed (personal communication ABS, Darwin, 1988).

Unemployment rates, measured as the percentage of the work force not fully employed, were very high for the two communities and Eva Valley. This is also typical of Aboriginal communities in general. High unemployment rates are important in explaining low per capita incomes discussed below. Because the CDEP program operates at Barunga, most of those Aboriginals who were employed were involved in that program. CDEP is discussed separately below.

Several measures of income are presented for the study communities (Barunga and Wugularr), the outstation, Eva Valley and those Aboriginals employed at Mountain Valley in Table 16.2. These include total income by community (including the outstation and station) and per capita income
Table 16.1
Aboriginal Employment in the Study Communities, June 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment (Excluding CDEP)</th>
<th>Barunga Wugularr</th>
<th>Eva Valley</th>
<th>Mountain Valley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P/T)</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockwork</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic work</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council (non-CDEP)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P/T)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P/T)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P/T)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P/T)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Full-time Employed</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Part-time Employed</td>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Full-time Employed Who Are Women</td>
<td>32.26</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Unemployed and CDEP</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Work Force Not Fully Employed</td>
<td>73.28</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P/T = part-time employees (seasonal full-time employees not included in this category)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Type</th>
<th>Barunga</th>
<th>Wugularr</th>
<th>Eva Valley</th>
<th>Mountain Valley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total income</td>
<td>$1,338,220</td>
<td>$672,372</td>
<td>$90,720</td>
<td>$86,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income PC/fortnight</td>
<td>$158</td>
<td>$159</td>
<td>$159</td>
<td>$165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income PC/annum</td>
<td>$4,105</td>
<td>$4,125</td>
<td>$4,124</td>
<td>$4,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum PC income</td>
<td>$1,041</td>
<td>$1,622</td>
<td>$3,161</td>
<td>$2,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum PC income</td>
<td>$13,500</td>
<td>$7,939</td>
<td>$5,522</td>
<td>$5,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of hhld income/annum</td>
<td>$5,158-90,901</td>
<td>$5,522-59,158</td>
<td>$5,158-29,398</td>
<td>$10,419-25,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hhld income/annum</td>
<td>$29,738</td>
<td>$22,412</td>
<td>$12,960</td>
<td>$14,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total social security</td>
<td>$246,294</td>
<td>$62,200</td>
<td>$17,778</td>
<td>$2,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total student allowance</td>
<td>$4,742</td>
<td>$2,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total CDEP</td>
<td>$487,418</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$63,733</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total UB</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$305,069</td>
<td>$9,209</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total wage (excludes CDEP)</td>
<td>$599,766</td>
<td>$302,503</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$83,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of total income/annum</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which is social security (excluding UB)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

per fortnight and per annum by community. Income is broken down by source into categories of social security (excluding unemployment benefits or UBs), student allowance, CDEP, UB and wage income, all by community. The percentage of total income which is attributable to social security is calculated as are the range and average of per capita and household incomes per annum by community. Per capita incomes were determined by calculating the total household income and then dividing it by the number of people in the household (including children).

Social security payments are not broken down by category in this context.

Total incomes for the study communities, including the station, vary greatly because of the size of the communities. Eva Valley is a very small outstation (20 people) and, in all
cases, the economic data for Mountain Valley Station are
atypical because it is not an Aboriginal community but rather
a working community. Barunga, as the largest community, had by
far the largest total income. Interestingly, it also had the
greatest range of household incomes, suggesting greater
economic stratification and heterogeneity in Barunga than in
Wugular. This is particularly noteworthy since per capita
incomes per fortnight and per annum were almost identical in
Barunga, Wugular and Eva Valley and slightly higher at
Mountain Valley Station -- not unexpected as people were there
to be employed. The similarity of the per capita incomes for
communities which differ so much in range and average of
household incomes results from the leveling effect of
multiplying the total income by the number of people in the
community. The very poor households and individuals balance
out the better off in the overall statistic.

The per capita incomes are low for all places -- not
atypical or unexpected in rural Aboriginal communities. Since
the sale of artefacts was not included in our income data (as
it was not obtainable), the involvement of particularly
Wugular and Eva Valley residents in this type of production
suggests that these two communities were actually better off
than our figures indicate. The very low minimum per capita
household incomes were found in situations in which there were
unemployed single parents (generally women) with many
children. There were a number of such households at Barunga
particularly. At the other extreme, there were a very small
number of households in which the adults were skilled and
employed and there were relatively few children. These were
the households with the largest per capita incomes.

The participation of Barunga in CDEP is reflected in the
largest percentage of residents' income derived from that
program. UBS in Wugular provide a parallel example. Since
both UB and CDEP benefits are excluded from the calculation of
social security, it is possible to say that Eva Valley and
Barunga residents are twice as dependent on social security
benefits as those of Wugular. Not unexpectedly, the
residents of Mountain Valley Station are the least dependent,
precisely because they are employable on the station. Student
allowances were negligible or absent in all cases in the
overall income scheme.

As previously discussed, the distribution of incomes are
as important to understanding economic systems as is
production. Incomes derived from social security minimally
pass through two stages of distribution. The initial stage--
that from the funding agency to the individual recipient -- is
controlled by factors mostly external to the community. The
secondary stage -- from the recipient to others in the
community, stores, etc. -- and any levels of redistribution
that follow are subject to local rules governing economic
exchange. The way in which both the products of subsistence
and cash are distributed in the study communities deserves
additional research outside of the context of this study.
The market sector is not well developed in Barunga, Wugularr or Eva Valley, as is revealed in the employment discussion above. In the case of Mountain Valley Station, of course, this is a commercial cattle operation and all employment of Aborigines who work there as stockmen, mechanics or domestics can be considered within the market sector. Although plans had been made for involving Eva Valley in market ventures in the future, during the time of the study in 1987, there was no wage employment at this outstation. The production of traditional Aboriginal arts and crafts in the case of Eva Valley was ongoing but could not be quantified for purposes of this study. That would be the only example, however, of market sector activities in this small outstation community. Therefore, the communities of Barunga and Wugularr are the only two places in which the market sector of these economies, from the perspective of production, can be analysed.

The stores at Barunga and Wugularr provided an obvious market venture and obvious potential wage employment for residents of the community. At the time of the study in 1987, both stores had European managers. The Barunga store employed two Aboriginal men and two Aboriginal women. The Wugularr store employed one Aboriginal man and one woman full-time and one Aboriginal man part-time in the beer garden. The stores in these communities were the only local sources of groceries, clothes and consumer durables. Most residents of the community apparently purchased the majority of their groceries at these stores, although some groceries, clothes, appliances, other consumer durables and all vehicles were purchased in Katherine or elsewhere non-locally. Both stores were involved in selling small numbers of some appliances locally through acting as an agent in ordering televisions, clothes washers, refrigerators and other items -- some of which were reconditioned. Both stores have had management difficulties in the past but appeared to be operating functionally at the time of the study.

In both communities, the stores were involved in the sale of alcohol. In Barunga beer was sold through the store without limit, although there was talk of imposing a limit towards the end of the field period associated with this study. In the case of Wugularr, the beer club was operated by the store manager. Customers at the club, which was opened only a brief period most days, were able to purchase up to six cans per day per person, although liquor regulations forbade the importation of alcohol into the community. There was considerable discussion about the economic advantages of selling alcohol as opposed to the social and health disadvantages, in the view of many local people. There seemed to be no agreement in the communities about resolution of these conflicting economic and social issues.
Housing was another important area of the market sector. House construction and major repairs at Barunga were undertaken by outside European contractors. The community of Wugularr, however, was involved in constructing its own houses. The Housing Association in Wugularr employed a European manager who was a plumber. His wife worked part-time as a bookkeeper. Three Aboriginal men were employed as labourers. Other tradespeople required for construction and repairs were hired as needed. The Housing Association had adequate plant to function effectively. The Housing Association had a committee of nine, which met once monthly. All residents of Wugularr over the age of 18 years were able to vote. In 1987 to 1987, the association built 7 houses, though work was expected to be cut back after 1987-1988 since the housing backlog would have been met. The construction of some houses in Barunga and Wugularr had been financed by the NT Housing Commission, but most had been financed by ADC. There were no private Aboriginal houses in either community. All tenants in both communities paid rent on their houses.

As discussed above, Aborigines from the study area were active in the production of traditional arts and crafts. It is difficult to estimate how many people were active in such production, but Table 16.1 presents our best guesses after discussing this topic with residents in the communities and noting active artists in outlets in Katherine and Adelaide River. A very wide range of artefacts is made, including didgeridoos (from both eucalyptus trees and bamboo), spears, woomeras, boomerangs and bark paintings. There is also a wide range of styles employed, reflecting the diversity of areas from which local people have originated.

Most arts and crafts were being sold to two distributors in 1987 — MIMI in Katherine and a dealer at Adelaide River. The Adelaide River distributor had greatly reduced MIMI's purchases at Wugularr in 1987, although there was considerable evidence of Wugularr produced art in the MIMI outlet in Katherine in 1988. We were unable to obtain the records of MIMI's purchases from the study area, but it was estimated to be considerable based on what we were told and observed. The Adelaide River distributor purchased $30,000 worth of arts and crafts from Wugularr over a three month period in 1987. He used the purchases to stock his store at Adelaide River and distributed the remainder to stores in Darwin and elsewhere.

Finally, Mountain Valley Station provided employment for eight Aboriginal men (seven stockmen and one mechanic) and one Aboriginal woman as a domestic. Most of these workers were skilled and the manager thought highly of them. The station also employed 10 European workers and a European couple as caretakers on Mainoru Station, which they also own. The stations were managed together. Mountain Valley is highly developed, by NT standards, and is stocked with Brahman cattle. While the station provides a welcome source of employment in work which is commonly desired by Aborigines (that is stockwork), there does not seem to be the potential
for a substantial expansion in the employment of Aboriginal people in this operation in the near future.

The Service Sector

As indicated in Table 16.1, the Barunga-Wugularr Council was a major employer of Aboriginal residents of the study community in 1987. Some discussions of the now joint, and previously separate, council organizations of Barunga and Wugularr are essential to the understanding of the service sector of the economies of these communities. Eva Valley functions as an outstation of Barunga, so therefore does not have a separate council. Mountain Valley, being a place of employment rather than an Aboriginal community, has no relevance to this discussion.

Councils are crucial to the operations of modern Aboriginal communities. As well as performing the usual local government functions, they are the major contact with the outside world. They, in fact, control entry onto Aboriginal land. They are the main employers; organise (or assist in organising) social, cultural, religious and political events; help in the settlement of disputes within the communities; and act as the major catalyst for change. The Barunga-Wugularr Council, and their separate councils in the past, performed all of these functions. Some discussion of recent changes in their organisation is needed.

Until 1986, the Barunga Town Council Incorporated and Beswick Town Council Incorporated (located at Wugularr) were separate bodies. They held their own elections for councillors, had their distinct electorates, set their own policies, established their own administration, and managed their own assets and employees. In July 1987, however, the Beswick Town Council ceased to exist. Wugularr came under the control of the new Barunga-Wugularr Community Government Council. The plan for the new council organisation was approved by the NT government on 16 October 1986.

Figure 16.1 depicts the area included under the local government control of the Barunga-Wugularr Council. It is composed of the Beswick Aboriginal Reserve, Eva Valley Station, the Maranboy Police Common and an area of crown land between the common and reserve in the south and the southern boundary of Eva Valley Station in the north. These last two areas are not Aboriginal land. European police and their families live on the common. The whole area is divided into two wards, Barunga Ward with an area of 3,783 sq km including Barunga, and Wugularr Ward, with an area of 3,185 sq km including Wugularr. The council is composed of nine councillors from the Barunga Ward and six from the Wugularr Ward. Any person can vote in the elections for councillors if they are 18 or more years of age and have ordinarily resided in the local government area for 12 or more months. The President and Vice-President of the council are elected by the councillors.
Figure 16.1  Barunga-Wugularr local government area
The council has taken Part VIII of the Northern Territory Local Government Act. This part of the act gives the council a wide range of powers in addition to those enjoyed by local government councils generally. These include the rights to establish and operate enterprises, to impose special charges and to grant subsidies to organisations and individuals in its area. In the scheme for its incorporation, the council gave itself the powers to undertake all of the usual functions usually assumed by local government and additional powers in relation to:

- the supply of electricity
- provision of adult education and vocational and other training
- provision and maintenance of housing
- promotion and provision of community welfare and care facilities
- maintenance of airstrips
- hiring out of council plant and repairs and maintenance of other equipment not owned by the council
- contracting for projects outside the council area
- establishment and operation of commercial enterprises, including mechanical workshops
- selling petroleum products
- promotion and development of tourist attractions and facilities
- production and selling of artefacts
- management and control of sites of historic interest
- support and encouragement of artistic and cultural activities

In many Aboriginal communities, councillors, as individuals, may exercise more power than they have under the local government legislation. They can accomplish this by being on controlling committees of a number of organisations other than the community council. This was so with the Barunga Town Council, with many of the councillors also serving on the Housing Association, Progress Association (which runs the store) and on the School Committee.

Nevertheless, the amendments to the Local Government Act have allowed councils to acquire more formal power than they had in the past. There can be resistance to this from within the community. Firstly, allowing councils to take over enterprises and other activities can be seen as threatening to people already involved in existing institutions not yet controlled by the council. There appears to be little of this fear in the Barunga-Wugularr area, however. Secondly, people living in a previously independent area may fear domination by other areas when they are incorporated into the wider local government area. Fears of this nature have been expressed by some people at Wugularr. At the first meeting held in Wugularr to consider the joint Barunga-Wugularr community government, the idea was rejected almost unanimously. At a subsequent meeting, it was accepted. Our interviews with
people in organisations and part of the general public at Wugularr showed that this fear still exists to some degree. Some people said that they wanted to 'wait and see' how the new council performed before getting involved in it. Some feared that the council and housing plants and jobs might be concentrated in Barunga, while others thought that consolidation would increase the efficiency in the use of the plants. The resolution of these fears is important if projects affecting both communities are to be successful.

Barunga has been renowned amongst Aboriginal communities for its enterprise in the past. It was the first community to go on the CDEP program, for example. In 1987 it had a well thought-out program for development using CDEP funds (this is discussed further below). It had an enterprising town clerk, although all of the tradesmen were Europeans. The council employed four European men and three European women. The Wugularr (Beswick) Town Council, which was still in existence when we were conducting the fieldwork for this project, was smaller, employing two European men -- one administrator (the deputy town clerk) and one motor mechanic. The Town Maintenance and Public Utilities (TMPU) functions of both communities were functioning well.

Table 16.3 presents the Barunga-Wugularr local government budget for 1987-1988. This provides some information on the direction taken economically by this local government body over this past fiscal year.

As can be seen from the Table 16.1, the provision of education provided many jobs for Aborigines, especially at Barunga. The Barunga school provided high school education for children from Barunga and Wugularr, the latter being brought in by bus daily. Total school enrollment was 115 children (80 boys and 35 girls) of which 20 were high school children from Wugularr (10 boys and 10 girls). There were 10 teachers (2 men and 8 women), and 1 European female literacy production supervisor. The Aboriginal employment included four males -- of which one was a teacher, one a janitor (part-time), one literacy centre assistant and one gardener (part-time) -- and six females -- of which three were part-time teachers' aides, one a secretary, one a cleaner (with two additional on leave) and one literacy centre assistant. In addition, there was one Aboriginal female teacher at Bulman.

The school has a council to discuss matters concerning the school and community. The members include the school principal, adult education officer, the school liaison officer, a school staff representative, the president of the Barunga-Wugularr council and the town clerk. Issues discussed include such matters as traditional cultural programs, behavioural problems and nutrition.
Table 16.3
Barunga-Wugularr 1987-1988 Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other grants</td>
<td>$85,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracts</td>
<td>$346,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$104,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income</td>
<td>$1,082,832</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$1,048,528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grants</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NT (Office of Local Government)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational subsidy</td>
<td>$442,541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial assistance</td>
<td>$104,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total grants</td>
<td>$546,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special purpose grants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 vehicles</td>
<td>$52,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office equipment and phones</td>
<td>$14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>$74,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total special purpose grants</td>
<td>$145,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from its role as a major employer, the school is an important resource for the community. It teaches the convention curriculum for Aboriginal schools, in both Kriol and English, as well as teaching some traditional skills, such as dancing and artefact making, on an irregular basis. The high school component of the school has had difficulty surviving over the years because of its small number of students. At one time it was closed. It is important that it is continued, as the children need this education if they are to be gainfully employed in future years. In addition, closing the high school would cause social disruption by making some young people idle and resulting in others being sent away from the community for boarding school (primarily to Katherine or Darwin). This issue involves not only Barunga but also the surrounding communities at Eva Valley, Wugularr and Bulman. At the time of this study in 1987, some Wugularr families had chosen to send their children to school in Katherine or Darwin, but the majority attended at Barunga.

Barunga also has an adult education program, employing one male European educator and a male Aboriginal assistant.
As discussed above, adult education performs important roles in such communities by providing people with skills to help them in employment and in coping with Aboriginal urban life. Programs being undertaken in 1987 or planned for the immediate future were: driver education, screen printing, welding, macrame, adult literacy and numeracy. The adult educator involves local trades people in the teaching of courses. Finally, Barunga has a preschool, which operates in the mornings on weekdays.

The school at Wugularr was a primary school with 42 children enrolled (60 per cent boys). There was also a preschool with six students. As already mentioned, the high school students travel daily by bus to the school at Barunga. There was an adult education organisation. The school employed one male and two female European teachers. Aboriginal employment was composed of one assistant teacher, one janitor and one part-time cleaner. There was no bilingual program at the school, but on occasions local mothers taught traditional crafts. There was also no school council or parents' and teachers' organisation. The school staff expressed concern about the lack of recreation facilities for children and problems associated with nutrition and petrol sniffing (the latter was not identified as a problem at Barunga). The development of outstations in the vicinity of Bulman had reduced student numbers in recent years.

The clinic at Barunga was the major health facility in the region. It was staffed by two European nursing sisters, two female Aboriginal aides, one full-time and one part-time. The sisters serviced Eva Valley, Wugularr, Mountain Valley and Bulman in addition to Barunga. Wugularr had one full-time male Aboriginal aide and one part-time female aide. The clinic at Bulman, with two Aboriginal aides (a married couple, with at least one of them not being full-time), was under pressure to service outstations further north in Arnhem Land. This would be impractical in the long term unless the clinic at Bulman was greatly expanded. A medical practitioner visited Barunga, Wugularr and Bulman once monthly.

The health problems suffered in these communities and outstations were similar to those found in many other Aboriginal communities. They are associated with poverty, alcohol abuse, idleness, urban living and an increased reliance on non-traditional foods. Health problems identified by members of the community included injuries resulting from accidents and fights, malnutrition (especially amongst children), diabetes, respiratory diseases, heart disease, renal failure and, occasionally, sexually transmitted diseases. Tuberculosis and leprosy were not significant problems (the diseases being dormant in the sufferers). The clinics made attempts to instruct people on hygiene and diet by speaking to individuals and through the schools and to influence the stores in their stocking policy. In Barunga, at least, the health of children had improved substantially in recent years, according to the sisters. Women in the study
communities usually gave birth to their children at Katherine hospital. Patients who are seriously ill were evacuated there. Although the system has been operating satisfactorily, there is a great need to improve the health training for the aides whose only training is given at Katherine over a four week period.

Barunga had an Aboriginal police aide, who operated with a high level of independence from the police station at Maranboy. The police aide patrolled all of the Aboriginal communities in the area including Bulman. An important part of his work was to enforce rules relating to alcohol.

Community Development Employment Scheme

One of the most interesting things about the Barunga-Wugularr Council's operations is its CDEP scheme. As of 1987, however, only Barunga was participating in this program. This scheme is administered by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) and financed by the Department of Social Security (DSS). To join the scheme in 1987, every member of Barunga who was receiving unemployment benefits (UBs) signed away the right to receive them. In exchange, these people worked for the scheme for approximately 20 hours per week and received payment at a rate about equal to their unemployment benefits. In addition, Barunga or any community which was participant received an amount equal to 20 per cent of these payments to individuals for purposes of 'administration.' This additional figure could be used in the way the community wished and it was often used to buy plant. Like most communities on CDEP, Barunga had some difficulties administering the scheme. The main problems in recent times had been that the people who were once part of the program had left the community temporarily, regained their rights to receive unemployment benefits and then returned to Barunga. This problem is not surprising given the mobile nature of Barunga's population. In April 1987, for example, approximately 50 people at Barunga were receiving unemployment benefits, even though the community was on a CDEP scheme. This situation was corrected a couple of months later, with all unemployed being employed under the CDEP scheme.

The CDEP scheme for 1987 to 1988 was the most ambitious yet devised for the community. The program covered Barunga and Eva Valley. Wugularr was not included as there was not community consensus about participating in the scheme. The 1987-1988 plan involved the employment of 102 men and 29 women throughout the year. The Barunga part of the scheme involved the development of a plant nursery, installing barbecue settings and tables throughout Beswick Reserve as part of the tourism project, repairing the Beswick/Mataranka boundary fence, running a creche, establishing and operating a vegetable garden, maintaining the cemetery, operating the homemake centre, conducting driving lessons, employing old people to teach artefact making and employing people to hunt and gather food for the community kitchen. These last two
activities have not been undertaken before as part of any CDEP scheme. The Eva Valley part of the program involved the building of 35 kms of fencing, installing barbecue settings and tables as part of the tourism project, employing 12 men in the cattle company and employing two men in a mechanical workshop. Employment conditions agreed to by the community allow people to leave to attend traditional ceremonies and other important Aboriginal cultural events.

Wugularr's mixed reaction to the CDEP scheme leads to an important point about CDEP. People are not captives in their communities. They are able to leave and go to Katherine, Wugularr, Bulman, outstations in southern Arnhem Land, possibly cattle stations and other places. Thus, conditions at Barunga must be 'competitive' overall or people may leave. Thus, a strictly enforced CDEP program is likely to see some unemployed people leave Barunga to go to places where unemployment benefits can be obtained without working. As stated above, however, the requirements of the CDEP program were undergoing revision in 1988, in part addressing these problems.

Nevertheless, the CDEP scheme in general is a good one in principle and should be encouraged. The benefits include:

- the community receives the benefits of extra labour
- the community receives the 20 per cent on-cost
- people gain some work experience
- people suffer less idleness, which at Wugularr is almost certainly a contributing factor in social problems.

Social Security Benefits

Table 16.2, which presents income by source for the study communities, depicts an aggregate amount and the percentage of total community cash income which comes from social security payments. As stated in that table, neither unemployment benefits nor CDEP benefits were included as social security, since, although they are derived from government sources, they relate to employment. This is particularly true in the case of CDEP in which they are actually wages for employment. As is clear from Table 16.2, even without including unemployment or CDEP benefits, there is a substantial reliance economically on social security or transfer payments in all study communities, particularly Barunga and Eva Valley. The minimal reliance on social security of Mountain Valley Station employees is obvious due to the nature of residence there. Wugularr residents may show less dependency as a result of the greater productivity there of traditional arts and crafts.

Specific social security benefits received by members of the study communities include child endowments, supporting parents' benefits, invalid pensions, age pensions and widow's pensions. Although these were not broken down statistically for purposes of this report, child endowment and supporting
parents' benefits were the single most common type of social security payment. It is not expected that this dependency on social security will decline significantly as long as employment opportunities and the development of skills and education necessary for obtaining wage paying jobs are not locally available. Increased participation, however, in the subsistence sector and the production of artefacts--traditional and non-traditional arts and crafts -- undoubtedly would influence this rate of dependency.
Advantages and Disadvantages

Barunga Council and the newly formed Barunga-Wugularr local government have been remarkably active in designing and trying to initiate enterprise development in the area. In this chapter, we discuss projects which currently are being considered in these communities. Eva Valley is included in the proposals made by the new local government.

History, location and resources have left the Barunga-Wugularr community government area with a number of important characteristics of relevance to the development of economic enterprises. These include the following:

1. There are people in the Council and other organisations in the community who have the interests, dedication and skill required to undertake enterprise development. The Barunga-Wugularr local government is better placed in this regard than are many other Aboriginal communities. The success of large projects, however, requires general community approval and commitment. Entrepreneurs must not get 'too far ahead' of the rest of the community. We found general approval for the projects but were unable to judge the level of commitment of the community overall.

2. Barunga and Wugularr, like other Aboriginal communities, have a range of government sources for financial assistance. These were discussed in detail in Chapter 16 above.

3. Barunga, Wugularr and Eva Valley all have high rates of unemployment. The impact of this on Eva Valley seems to be less than is the case in the other communities, because the people at Eva Valley supplement their social security incomes by subsistence production and the sale of artefacts. Unemployment in Barunga and Wugularr, however, causes considerable hardship. At one extreme, there are many single parent (generally female) families, some with a large number of children, whose per capita incomes are very low. At the other extreme, there are a few families with a small number of children, which include adults with job skills who have employment and whose per capita incomes are high. This inequality in the distribution of income suggests that a preference should be given to enterprises which employ a large number of unskilled workers, especially women, rather than enterprises which employ relatively few and skilled workers -- that is, if a choice need be made
between these two options. The latter type of enterprise is more likely to improve the lot of those in the communities who are relatively well off and is likely to lead to the employment of more Europeans.

4. The older people have had considerable experience in agriculture and in the pastoral industry. This gives them interest and knowledge in these areas of work. The younger people, however, who make up most of the work force for such enterprises, have little or interest in these activities.

5. People at Barunga, Eva Valley and especially Wugularr are major producers of traditional artefacts. They supply MIMI in Katherine and a private distributor at Adelaide River township. Currently, people at Barunga and Eva Valley supply MIMI and those at Wugularr supply mainly the private distributor through the community store. These sales are of considerable value. In the case of Wugularr, early in 1987, for example, the Adelaide River distributor was buying artefacts to the value of $30,000 over a three month period, and there were about 40 people who made artefacts regularly. There is, however, less of this activity at Barunga. Some informants said that there were 8 to 12 people making artefacts regularly. There are some artists in each community who are very well known, such as Paddy Fordin, Djoli and David Blanatji at Wugularr and Dooley Nungulaway at Eva Valley. Apart from being a valuable income-producing resource at the present time, the talents of these people can be further used in the development of tourist related enterprises. There are also people trained in non-traditional art, such as screen printing, who can and have participated in enterprise development and could again do so.

6. The distance a community is located from European towns or major transportation corridors has an important impact on the problems the community has and the sorts of activities that it can sustain. A remote or non-road connected community enjoys natural 'protection.' A close community, on the other hand, can take advantage of a large, relatively wealthy market for distributing its products. Barunga and, to a lesser extent, Wugularr, are in the latter position. Katherine is a large and rapidly growing town and 'close' to Barunga. Local demands for labour, resources and goods and services at Katherine have expanded rapidly in recent years, associated with the development of Tindal Air Force Base. However, the Aboriginal economy of the region is not sufficiently integrated in the European economy for the Aboriginal economy to be caught up in this growth. Rather, with some minor exceptions, this growth can be taken advantage of only through Aboriginal organisations and specific projects and policies designed to do so.
7. People at Ngukurr have been experimenting with a form of incorporation which has had considerable success and has greatly impressed some of the people at Barunga. Three clans at Ngukurr -- the Daniels, Lansens and Joshuas -- have incorporated under the Companies Act and undertaken contracts with the council and housing organisations as private companies. They also use normal commercial services rather than Aboriginal 'aid' type organisations. To date, these have been successful and the Barunga town clerk and some others envisage much of the development in their area as being of the Ngukurr type. They argue that this type of organisation will improve incentives for the effort and overcome many problems such as the unauthorised use of plant. There are clearly strong arguments in favour of experimenting with this 'Ngukurr model.'

8. There are a number of things about the Barunga-Wugularr community government area that are of interest to the tourist industry. The roads in the area are good, even in the wet season. The road from the Barunga road to Eva Valley homestead, while unsealed, is good and open throughout most of the wet season and all of the dry season. The continuation of the road from Barunga through Wugularr and the remainder of the Beswick Reserve follows high ground, where possible, and is in good condition although unsealed. It does, however, get cut at the Waterhouse River at various times during the wet season. Secondly, there are a number of good camping, fishing and picnicking areas. The upper reaches of the Katherine River run through Eva Valley Station and there are large lagoons and billabongs located there. Beswick Creek, Dook Creek and Chambers River and, especially the Waterhouse River, are very attractive. The area overall is a mixture of plateau and flat, swampy (in the wet season) country. As already mentioned, there is a large Aboriginal population who continue to produce traditional art and craft work and can perform traditional dances. Both domestic and foreign tourists are showing increasing interest in traditional and modern Aboriginal culture. Finally, there are events and places of interest in European history within the study area. These include the historic exploration route of Stuart through Beswick and Eva valleys and near Wugularr, the old station buildings in Eva Valley and the remains of mining activity at Maranboy.

9. Beswick and Eva Valley together make up 6,331 sq km (Beswick is 3,404 sq km and Eva Valley is 2,297 sq km). Under open range grazing conditions, it appears that these areas could graze 8,000 to 10,000 head of cattle. Under the BTEC program, this is not permitted, of course, and it appears that the herd would not be much over 4,000 head under controlled conditions. The economic studies of such a situation, already quoted above, suggest that such a herd would not be profitable.
However, it seems likely that parts of Beswick and Eva Valley could be developed satisfactorily to hold small herds for local consumption and some export. There are still substantial plant for the purposes of working cattle.

10. The town council and Barunga-Wugularr and the Housing Association at Wugularr together have substantial vehicular repairs plant. There is an efficiency argument for consolidating or coordinating the use of this plant, subject to people at Wugularr not feeling that they are being 'taken over' by Barunga.

11. The CDEP scheme has many advantages to communities like Barunga and Wugularr which have high rates of unemployment. In 1987 as described above, each person receiving unemployment benefits in the community signed a form stating that he or she wished to join the scheme. The community made up a program of works and, if approved by DAA and there is widespread support amongst the community, the community could join the scheme. The employment of individuals approximately 20 hours a week and the receipt of the council of an amount equal to approximately 20 per cent of the unemployment benefits have already been discussed. As previously noted, Barunga was the first community in the NT to join this benefits program in August 1977. The council viewed the scheme as beneficial because the output of people who would otherwise be unemployed is provided to the community. It was thought that work was likely to reduce some social problems associated with idleness. The community received the extra money for administrative support. However, the scheme has not been without problems, some of which were discussed above in the case study. In 1988 DAA was in the process of revising the conditions of the CDEP scheme. Preliminary plans include changing the condition that 100 per cent of community residents agree and participate in the scheme.

12. Barunga and Wugularr have been developed as separate communities, each having their own council, until October 1986. Further, an analysis of their populations has shown that the people at Barunga have primarily Jawoyn, Ngalkbun and Maiala linguistic affiliation, with their homelands in and around Beswick and to the north. At Wugularr, residents mainly identify as Rembarrnga, Maiala and Ngalkbun, who, apart from the Maiala, have their homelands to the northeast of Beswick. These and other factors have caused some people at Wugularr to fear that community government will result in power developing at Barunga at the expense of the majority of residents of Wugularr. While this fact is not surprising given the heterogeneity of these communities, it is an important factor to consider in enterprise development. Thus, an enterprise involving Wugularr may
have a better chance of success if its control can be
decentralised to Wugularr. In general, there may be
problems with Barunga, Wugularr and Eva Valley residents
working in harmony on large scale projects.

13. Traditional power, at least in relation to land use, is
very strong in all of the study communities. Any
project involving the use of land must have the approval
of the traditional land owners.

14. Many people from Barunga and Wugularr have moved to
homelands in southern Arnhem Land. A number of people
interviewed during the course of this study at Wugularr
intended to go to their outstations to live permanently.
Also, some of our informants at Barunga said that they
and other Jawoyns were likely to establish outstations
in areas currently under land claim. This means that
Barunga and Wugularr may continue to lose population
through outstation outmigration in the long term. If so,
this will reduce unemployment at the communities, but
the communities may lose some important and skilled
people.

15. Because so much attention has been given to Aboriginal
enterprises and not to European enterprises in remote
Australia, there is a tendency to think that the problems
enterprises experience in communities like Barunga and
Wugularr are unique and not shared by European
entrepreneurs in rural Australia. This is not the case.
Many of the problems experienced by Aborigines are
common to European enterprise development as well. These
include shortages of entrepreneurship, managerial skills
and skilled labour; high turnover rates of employees;
susceptibility to changes in the local economy, which, in
a city context, would be diluted and dependence on
government aid, projects and policies. Furthermore, both
small European and Aboriginal enterprises are small
businesses. Small businesses all over the world have
high rates of failure. When a small European business
fails, it is often seen as neither a sign of success or
failure and may be considered insignificant. The failure
of a business in an Aboriginal community, by contrast,
attracts much attention in the community, from the
outside public and especially from government funding
authorities. Aborigines will be perceived of as being
'hopeless' managers of business, even if a European
business in the same context would fail. Enquiries about
the failure of Aboriginal businesses are conducted,
policy positions taken, generalisations made and,
perhaps, even some punitive action undertaken like the
withholding of funds. The main point is that small
businesses anywhere fail regularly and they must be
allowed to fail on occasion if people are to learn how to
run them. Constant propping-up or 'guidance' can be an
inhibitor to the development of entrepreneurship.
Proposals for Economic Enterprise Development

The Barunga-Wugularr Council in 1987, and separate town councils before the formation of a joint local government in 1986, have been discussing a series of proposals for enterprise development. These proposals are now presented and discussed in light of the data were have gathered on the study communities in this context.

1. Tourism

This proposal went through two distinct forms. Firstly, in April 1987 the proposal involved Eva Valley Station only. As a result of discussions between the Barunga-Wugularr Council, the Chief Minister's Department and the RAAF, a plan was developed which would allow RAAF personnel to be stationed at Katherine and their families to use nominated parts of Eva Valley Station for recreation. They would be free to camp and fish in certain areas, local Aborigines would conduct bush tours and a store would be established on Eva Valley to sell artefacts as well as petrol and other supplies. Five young men would be trained by the NT Conservation Commission as rangers. There were some discussions about the RAAF paying a rental fee for the use of the station, and it was suggested that $100,000 would be applied for from the Bicentennial Authority for the development of roads and other tourist facilities. This arrangement was to last about two years and, if successful, parts of Eva Valley Station would then be opened to the public as well and, perhaps, managed by the NT Conservation Commission. This was a novel idea as it would be the first 'private park' in the NT.

By June 1987, the idea had developed considerably and a wide range of government departments were involved in discussions, including the NT Conservation Commission, ADC and the Northern Land Council (NLC). The idea that RAAF personnel and their families would have exclusive access was dropped and the proposal now included Wugularr. While the plans remained fluid, they involved the development of three main areas for use by tourists in general (that is, not limited to RAAF). Access to these areas was to be only by guided bus tours, arranged at and leaving from Katherine. The three areas to be developed were:

(a) Eva Valley Station. The homestead and surrounding buildings were to be restored. General care and some maintenance of them had already been done under the Barunga CDEP scheme. These buildings would then be furnished with traditional-style furniture and meals would be served, along with refreshments from a kiosk. A campsite would be established in the area. Apart from viewing the old buildings, the tourists could watch a corroboree, see the manufacture of artefacts, go on guided four wheel drive historic tours, fish and swim in the Katherine River and participate in wilderness
camping and hunting safaris.

(b) Dotluk Falls. This is an area of falls, rapids and billabongs on Dook Creek, 14 km east of Barunga. The track to Dotluk would be improved, picnic areas established and walking tracks developed. Tourists would be taken on interpretive walks. They could also swim and have lunch.

(c) Beswick Falls. This is a very beautiful area, 15 km north of Wugularr along the Waterhouse River. The Waterhouse River falls over a small cliff, forming a waterfall into a large billabong which is flanked on one side by a beach of sand. It then proceeds south through large paperbark trees. The area is renowned for barramundi fishing. Local people use it frequently for fishing and picnicking. It is also a women's dreaming site, although this does not seem to inhibit access by Aborigines or Europeans. Part of the plan is to improve the access road, undertake some landscaping and build camping and picnic facilities, provide water facilities and make walking trails. Further developments are intended for the future, involving setting up a kiosk

These developments for the three areas, excluding the kiosk at Beswick Falls, were referred to as 'Stage One' and were expected to cost $461,500. That sum was sought by the Barunga-Wugularr Council under the Bicentennial Authority Commemorative Program. In the end, this application was a source of controversy in the two communities and was not funded. Access to the whole area would be controlled through Barunga. Since the whole area is Aboriginal land, permission is required from the NLC. There is confidence on the part of those planning this development that a simple arrangement can be worked out whereby entry permits can be issued from Barunga. A typical tour to Beswick would involve tourists travelling by bus to Barunga, obtaining their permits and perhaps buying arts and craft work, then going to Dotluk Falls for a swim, walk and lunch. They would then go on to Beswick Falls, perhaps then to Wugularr, then to Barunga to watch a corroboree and then return to Katherine.

The employment and financial benefits to Barunga and Wugularr would be likely to be the following if this scheme were implemented. First, it is intended that as much of the capital works (roads, etc.) as possible be undertaken by Barunga and Wugularr. Secondly, in 1987 four young men were in the process of being trained by the NT Conservation Commission to be employed as rangers by the Barunga-Wugularr Council. By mid-year in 1987, they had just completed a three month work experience program and were to commence a two year training program. Thirdly, when the project is operational, local people would be employed in traditional dancing, demonstrating traditional skills, conducting tours, collecting traditional foods, working at the kiosks and making artefacts. This development probably would greatly stimulate a demand for
traditional and non-traditional (such as screen printing, etc.) art and craft work. Finally, the community would receive profits from the kiosks, store trade, rental of camp sites and charges on bus operators for entry.

If this proposed project comes to fruition, what is the likelihood of financial success? Provided it can be organised properly, we think that it could be financially successful. Firstly, there is likely to be ample demand to justify the project. The number of visitors to Katherine Gorge National Park has been growing over recent years. In 1982 to 1983, there were 75,000 visitors, while in 1986 there were 145,000 (NT Tourist Commission, Darwin 1985-1986). This number is likely to continue to grow. The NT Conservation Commission is anxious to find other sites of interest to tourists to take the pressure off Katherine Gorge National Park. Perhaps ironically, Katherine and other urban areas of the NT have a shortage of wilderness areas suitable for the public. Also, there is a growing interest on the part of the public in Aboriginal art, culture and people. Many tourists are keen to visit Aboriginal places. Secondly, for the reasons just mentioned, there is a growing interest in the purchase of traditional and non-traditional Aboriginal art. The project described above is such that it should stimulate demand, creating employment for older people, women, and perhaps younger men. There is also the possibility of establishing pottery, screen printing and batik enterprises. As a point of interest, in 1986 some 2,500 tourists visited Bathurst Island under the guided tours system they have there. These visitors spent $100,000 on art and crafts while on tour. More would have to be purchased by those tourists after they leave Bathurst Island (personal communication, Tiwi Tours, 1987). Finally, many people we spoke to approved of the development, mainly because it would create jobs.

Elaborations of this project exist in some people's minds. One involves the building of a licensed motel at a place called 'jump-up.' This is on the northern side of the road between Barunga and Wugularr, where the road rises from the valley to the plateau. Once it is built, the beer garden at Wugularr would be closed as would beer sales at Barunga. Drinkers would have to drink at the motel or Katherine, both substantial distances from the communities. We would be surprised, however, if closing beer sales at the communities would gain approval. Also, 'jump-up' is unlikely to be a suitable site for a motel, since, although the site has a good view of the valley below, there is nowhere to fish or to engage in other such recreation.

Another suggestion is that Wugularr and Barunga could provide tourists with demonstrations of cattle work and barbecues of local beef. This would almost certainly be popular and successful.

Our doubts about the main project concern the disruption which an invasion of tourists would cause to the communities
and their residents. The people at Eva Valley, who live near the old homestead buildings and who currently live a quiet and semi-traditional and partly self-supportive way of life, potentially could be disturbed to a considerable extent. On questioning, they said that they approved of the project, but they may not realise the extent of potential disruption which tourism can entail. The same is true in relation to Beswick Falls. As already described, local people make frequent use of the area -- a use with which tourism would compete. When questioned about this, one Aboriginal informant from Wugularr said that there are plenty of other good fishing spots available for Aborigines. Nevertheless, we have an uneasy concern about this potential problem. If local people are excessively disturbed, they are likely to leave the communities in question. The Barunga-Wugularr Council is aware of this problem, of course, and expect to carefully monitor the development of this project.

2. Cattle

As already discussed, economic studies of Beswick and past experience with Eva Valley suggest that developing these areas as conventional cattle stations would not be successful. This conclusion is not surprising. Firstly, profit rates are very low for NT cattle stations overall. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE April 1986, March 1987) for, instance, found that average nominal rates of return for cattle stations in the NT, excluding capital gain on the property, in 1983-1984 was -0.8 per cent, in 1984-1985 was 1.8 per cent, in 1985-1986 was 5.3 per cent and in 1986-1987 was 8.8 per cent. Since these percentages are less than the rates of inflation in each of these years, the rates of return were, in fact, negative (involving losses). In addition to these facts, adherence to BTEC requirements concerning fencing and herd management will lead to the abandonment of many stations in the NT. In a recent study, Holmes (1986) found that half of the 26 stations he examined in the Gulf country will not be viable under the BTEC program.

Three sorts of livestock programs are being discussed or being undertaken in Beswick and Eva Valley: small herds, a coordinated buffalo program and feral animals. Each of these are discussed separately.

In order to run cattle today, a community needs to have a BTEC clean herd and the animals must be held behind fences. Barunga has a fenced area of 25 sq km and a large set of cattle yards, built under their CDEP program. They have a clean herd of about 275 head. The original plan involved the cattle being killed in the community and the beef being sold through the stores. It is not usually practical, however, for a community to establish its own abattoir. The current plan involves the cattle being taken to Katherine, killed at the abattoir and the beef returned to be sold at the stores. There are plans to duplicate this scheme at Eva Valley and at Wugularr. The 1987-1988 CDEP program includes plans to employ
11 men for the whole year to construct 35 km of fencing and repair fences at Eva Valley; to employ 12 men for 9 months to rebuild the 35 km of Mataranka/Beswick boundary fence and for Nagadgoli Cattle Company to employ (under CDEP funding) 12 men in cattle work. These projects are expected to work successfully. In fact, preliminary information suggested by Bulman residents in August 1988 indicate that much of the Eva Valley work has been completed as scheduled.

There has been some interest in developing an integrated buffalo extraction and domestication program, using the combined resources of Bulman, Beswick Reserve and Eva Valley Station. The plan involves an annual harvest of buffalo at Bulman of 4,000 head per year. Of these, 2,500 head would be sent to local meatworks, 500 head of bulls would be exported live and 1,000 head would be subject to a domestication program and sold live locally. The yards at Bulman are adequate for holding buffalo to be transported immediately. Pasture and paddocks, however, do not exist at Bulman to hold buffalo for the short- or long-term. Thus, buffalo which need to be held would be moved to Wugularr and Eva Valley. Buffalo required to be held in the short-term include live export animals, those not immediately suitable for local abattoir trade and those for sale to local buffalo growers. Buffalo requiring long-term holding include future breeding stock, buffalo stockpiled for the wet season trade and animals required for special markets. At least 10,000 bales of hay would be required by Bulman a year for feed. These could be supplied by Wugularr by the cutting of about 70 ha of hay. Barunga would supply mechanical support and paddocks. Eva Valley Station would supply paddocks and run the domestication program.

This program has the desirable aim of attempting to make better use of the resources which the three areas have. There are problems with this plan, however. The first two problems concern the planned extraction rate at Bulman of 4,000 head. There is, in fact, considerable doubt as to the number of buffalo in the Bulman area. Some estimates have been as high as 35,000. At this level, an extraction rate of 4,000 head is achievable. However, many people now estimate the numbers as being only 15,000 head. If this is the case, then only a much smaller turn-off rate can be sustained. Secondly, the Bulman community has had internal strife over current extraction operations, which involve two outside operators and one run by the Bulman community. For internal political and social reasons, this high planned turn-off figure may not be achievable and the operation could be taken over by European contractors. Thirdly, the program requires long-term agreements and coordination between Eva Valley, Barunga, Wugularr and Bulman. This will make the operation of this scheme difficult and perhaps impossible. Thus, we have severe doubts as to whether this scheme will be successful.

Finally, there are a large number of donkeys and brumbies on Eva Valley Station and Beswick Reserve. Pet food
contractors, employing local Aborigines if possible, should be engaged to cull the herds. The revenue from this activity will not be great, however.

3. Farm

There were plans to establish a mixed farm at Barunga, which would grow fruit and vegetables and run pigs and hens. As commercial operations, these enterprises are marginal, under the most favourable of conditions, and the success of this project will depend crucially on the personnel involved. The Barunga-Wugularr Council was aware of these problems and has talked about leasing the farm to a European for a few years and requiring him to train local people. It would then be turned over to local producers. This plan changed recently and there is now a scheme to establish a vegetable garden under the CDEP program. The 1987 to 1988 plan involves six women and eight men setting up the garden (three months for fencing) at Barunga, treating the soil and planting. A garden which is established and worked under CDEP should be successful.

4. Transport

There are plans to establish a private transport company, which would provide transport between the various towns in the Barunga area and between them and Katherine. The return taxi fare from Barunga to Katherine costs $150 and return from Wugularr to Katherine costs $170. There is a great need for transport facilities. It would be surprising if a more efficient system than taxi transport could not be organised. This project may provide work for one or two operators.

5. Bakery

Some interest exists in establishing a bakery. This is unlikely to be a success, however. Katherine is close, bakeries are capital intensive and, at best, it would provide employment for one European and two to four Aboriginal assistants.

6. Contract Town Maintenance and Public Facilities (TMPU)

In 1987 there was also some discussion about the possibility of getting TMPU and other community work done by private, local (Aboriginal) contractors employing the Ngukurr model. This may improve efficiency and free council resources to be used elsewhere. Increasing the efficiency will probably reduce employment in these functions, however, so whether this idea creates or reduces employment depends on how the released funds are used.

7. Roadhouse

The success of a roadhouse depends crucially on what happens to the tourism project involving Eva Valley and
Barunga. It would also be influenced by the existence of a permanent, all-weather road from the Stuart Highway to Nhulunbuy through southern and central Arnhem Land and whether or not a roadhouse were opened at Bulman. In 1987 the road from the Stuart Highway to Bulman carried little traffic other than that going to Barunga, Wugularr, Bulman and Mountain Valley and Mainoru stations. Thus, unless there are new developments in terms of either roads or enterprises needing access, a roadhouse built along that road is likely simply to take business away from the stores and other institutions in the communities. However, if Eva Valley and Beswick Reserve were developed as the destinations of tourists, then a roadhouse near the corner of the Barunga and Eva Valley roads or on the hill above Barunga could be a successful outlet for petrol, food, camping and fishing gear and artefacts.

8. **Traditional arts and crafts**

As already discussed, art and craft production is very important to people living at Wugularr and Eva Valley and, to a lesser extent, to those living at Barunga. It provides an important supplement to the low cash incomes being received by women, older people and some younger people. These activities should be encouraged, if possible, by making a vehicle available so that people can get the required bush materials.

9. **Non-traditional art production**

An area of enterprise not discussed with the Barunga-Wugularr Council in the context of this study is that of non-traditional art production, such as screen printing, batik, pottery and clothes making. These activities are labour intensive and employ many women. This form of art work is generally associated with 'useful' things, such as clothes, table cloths, curtains, china, vases, etc. It ultimately has a greater potential market than traditional art, though it is usually sold at lower overall prices. In the long-term, these activities could provide employment for 10 to 30 people. The products could be marketed through MIMI Arts and other usual outlets and directly to tourists. There is already some interest in screen printing. There are four or more people who have reached a reasonable standard of achievement in this technique through Adult Education classes. In 1987 the Barunga people printed T-shirts for their Easter Festival. This discussion is not intended in any way to downplay the importance of traditional art, which has a market that continues to grow and hopefully will provide increasing incomes for residents of the area.

10. **Subsistence production**

There are many people in the communities, especially at Eva Valley, who supplement their cash incomes by subsistence hunting, fishing and gathering. For some people, it is mainly a leisure or recreational activity, while for others -- such as at Eva Valley -- it is almost a full-time occupation. It
is often engaged in jointly with the process of gathering materials for artefact production. There are many benefits associated with subsistence activities, including the encouragement of pride and self-sufficiency; assisting in the maintenance of the modified traditional political, religious and social systems and the improvement of nutrition and provision of exercise, both of which are necessary for good health. The introduction of wage employment, the invasion of European cultural values, the existence of European role models in the schools and elsewhere, and the cheapness or ease of obtaining store food have encouraged Aboriginal people to pursue European activities at the expense of subsistence activities. This imbalance can be redressed in a number of ways. For example, regular hunters, fishers and gatherers can be considered to be employed under the CDEP scheme and thus can be exempt from having to do other kinds of work. This model has been employed with relative success in some parts of the Canadian arctic with Inuit peoples. Vehicles can be made available for hunting, fishing and gathering trips. Experts in subsistence activities can be employed at the school to teach their skills to younger people in the communities. The Barunga CDEP scheme for 1987-1988 includes the employment of eight women and four men in traditional hunting, fishing and gathering activities to supply food for the creche and homemaker centre. There will also be a vehicle made available for these purposes. This is the first time people in the study area will have been employed for conducting such activities under the CDEP scheme. It is a beginning to encourage the practice of such traditional food getting activities within the framework of a European wage economy. In addition, the school at Barunga has had Aboriginal teachers of traditional art and dancing skills.

General Comments

This study of the Barunga-Wugularr community government area, including Eva Valley, suggests that there is the possibility of establishing a number of small enterprises. Barunga is advantaged by its location and resources and by having some people in the community who are very keen on enterprise development. These factors may not be sufficient to produce success, of course. The real concern is that even if these projects are successful, they are unlikely to provide enough employment outside the CDEP program. Ultimately, it is likely that poverty will remain a chronic problem in the area.
SECTION FOUR

Chapter Eighteen: Analysis and Recommendations
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Territory has had a long history of attempting to set up enterprises in Aboriginal communities and, as many places testify, there were once piggeries, chicken runs, fruit and vegetable gardens, sawmills, bakeries and butcheries, brickmaking plants, fishing ventures and cattle operations to name only the most common. As long as these were under non-Aboriginal control and management and had cheap labour, they were productive. To the extent that most of them were designed in the hope that Aborigines would learn 'how' to run them, there was a training element in them which, along with the produce, was taken to justify their cost. Some, though by no means all of them, were probably not justifiable simply in economic terms, especially if the labour had been costed at its contemporary market value.

Few of these early enterprises now survive and those that do are almost all under non-Aboriginal control and skilled management and have an assured market, a fertile plot of land, adequate water or other factors favourable to profitable market oriented production. Explanations for the failure of enterprises vary from one example to another. People will identify the lack of training in a particular activity, the lack of managerial skill, the inadequacy of capital or of assured markets, the poverty of soil, disease or inadequate water and fertilisers and so on as reasons why projects failed. But the explanations can hardly be adequate to account for the almost universal failure of enterprises which were left to the care of Aborigines and Aboriginal community organisations when the assimilationist policy of the 50s and 60s was replaced by selfdetermination and selfmanagement in the 70s.

As in so many other aspects of the interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society, the Aborigines who were supposed to 'learn' from non-Aborigines, learnt very little as long as they were denied a say in and control over the enterprises they were supposed to be learning about. This is amply demonstrated in the study of the failure of the Aboriginal cattle station of Yugul (Thiele 1982).

To have a say, to control, is to be able to manage not merely the enterprise itself but its relations with and its impact on the social fabric and culture of the people undertaking it. To say that the Aborigines failed to learn because they were given no control is merely to scratch the
surface of a very complex set of interactions between two cultures and the economic activities typical of each, subsistence and market, which we have outlined in the first chapter.

Contrary to early expectations Aborigines have maintained much, though not all, of the traditional cultures and, in the communities and the associated outstations, they are attempting to recover some of what has been lost and to reestablish traditional ways. The Land Rights Act (NT) 1976 has greatly strengthened this process, by putting a high value on the identification of the traditional owners of land, on the maintenance of sacred sites and on the identification of traditional patterns of land use. The survival and revival of traditional culture has fundamental implications for economic enterprise in Aboriginal communities.

It means, in the first place, that there is a basis in the society for the development of subsistence enterprise. In the two study areas, Yuendumu and the Barunga/Wugularr/Eva Valley/Bulman, area subsistence activity continues and where resources allow it - typically well away from the larger and older settlements - it is being expanded.

Subsistence enterprise is well worth promoting. In favourable locations it can provide a large part of the food needed by a small group, especially if it is mobile, and even in larger places it can provide a valuable if small supplement. Subsistence enterprises can provide substantial employment, including employment for women and youths, at times and under conditions of the Aborigines' own choosing and compatibly with preferred way of life. Its importance in enabling people to feel pride in cultural regeneration and in being able to overcome feelings of alienation and helplessness, and to control alcohol cannot be overestimated. It contributes to a more healthy life, both by providing exercise and by providing foods more nutritious and varied than those bought from the store. To some extent, subsistence food production and the gathering of traditional materials for art and craft production can go hand in hand, the art and craft production being subsequently available not only for domestic use but also for sale on the market. In both food gathering and in art and craft production there is value added by the labour and skill of the people concerned, even if only a portion of this value added can be realised in a market.

It is therefore economically as well as socially rational to promote subsistence enterprise in Aboriginal communities and it is relatively easy to do so. Contemporary Aboriginal communities must have vehicles and although they will be used for other things as well, to provide money for
the purchase and replacement of vehicles used in subsistence production is a cheap and effective way of promoting it. If the subsistence production is for a community group, such as a creche or for old people, it may be that the community council could be expected to contribute to the cost of vehicles used in subsistence production. In addition, Barunga’s experiment in using CDEP funds to pay workers engaged in subsistence production appears to be a valuable local variant of schemes successfully tested in Canada. To pay people to teach younger people traditional methods, again something being tried at Barunga, is another easy, and inexpensive, way of fostering subsistence production. These things are easy not only because they are cheap but because they are in close conformity with Aboriginal tradition, because they give people a renewed sense of identity and purpose and because they do not call for negotiations with non-Aboriginal people about such things as markets, capital and skilled management.

To provide market oriented enterprises, either for the local market or for the wider market, is a more difficult matter. There are, of course, Aboriginal entrepreneurs who operate small businesses in places like Katherine where they are not subject, or only marginally subject, to the complications arising for market oriented enterprises conducted within Aboriginal communities where the socio-cultural context and its associated politics is all-important. Like all small businesses, these have their failures, but some succeed. These enterprises rarely contribute significantly to market oriented economic activity in the communities, although Aboriginal owned marketing organisations, for example, may help communities with the sale of their products. Any Aboriginal business in a town may also offer some opportunity for employment to people prepared to move away from their home communities in search of work.

As compared with subsistence enterprise, market oriented enterprise in the communities labours under heavy disadvantages. These have been reviewed in general terms in the fourth chapter and examples have been discussed in the following chapters on Yuendumu and Barunga/Wugularr/Eva Valley/Bulman. They are of two kinds: those which affect all small businesses operating in remote locations in northern Australia, and those which are peculiar to Aboriginal owned enterprises. These, in turn, are of two kinds, the socio cultural factors which must be accepted as a ‘given’ by anyone promoting this kind of enterprise, and an assortment of other factors from history and contemporary practice about which something might be done (see Table 4.1).

The assessment of a proposal to set up a profit making, market oriented enterprise in an Aboriginal community is a
far more complex process than assessment of a proposal in a
non-Aboriginal community. The failure to recognise this and
to make assessments simply by normal commercial criteria
instead may well doom a proposal or enterprise to failure
from the outset.

Relevant traditional factors may be considered first.
There are few if any economic activities which can be
carried on in communities which do not call for some use of
land. Normally, the land will be under the control or
oversight of traditional owners and they must be consulted
about and agree to the proposed use of the land before an
enterprise can be set up on it.

This raises the question whether a new use for the land
is compatible with existing uses such as subsistence
activity or ceremonial activities and, assuming the new use
is not rejected, it may well have to be negotiated with the
traditional owners.

Furthermore, traditional land ownership is fundamental
to the social authority of traditional owners and, even if
there is no obvious incompatibility between a new use and
other uses, a traditional leader may see detriment in a new
use and expect some kind of reciprocal compensatory benefit,
not necessarily in monetary terms.

Traditional land ownership has other implications. The
traditional owners may well see themselves, in terms of
traditional values, as the rightful managers of any
enterprise making use of their land, and insist on excluding
anyone else from management. In addition, Aboriginal
leaders, whether traditional owners or not of the land an
enterprise uses, will have obligations to other leaders and
to their own kinsmen to provide a large share of the
employment or of the profits an enterprise generates, to the
exclusion of others in a community. The terms of an
enterprise regarding management, employment and the
distribution of profits should not be laid down in ignorance
of or in opposition to the networks of obligation in a
community.

Finally, it must always be assumed that a commercial
activity in an Aboriginal community may suffer interruptions
to its activity and the temporary absence of staff when
traditional ceremonial business takes precedence.

These traditional aspects of the context in which an
enterprise is proposed cannot be changed and they cannot be
ignored. If it is assumed that an enterprise is being
promoted as an Aboriginal owned enterprise, it is the more
likely that these matters will be given the necessary
attention at the outset. The evidence, for example from
Yuendumu, shows that Aborigines must be given full opportunity to work through the difficulties of fitting an enterprise into a traditional context and that if this is done it increases the likelihood that the enterprise will succeed. At the very least, problems arising from tensions with traditional society are not so likely to bring about its downfall.

To say that an enterprise is Aboriginal owned and controlled is not to say that all problems arising from the inability of non-Aborigines to understand traditional society have vanished. Aboriginal owners will still have a need for skilled staff of various kinds, the most important being managerial staff, and as a result they will often have to employ non-Aborigines.

The complications which may arise from the employment of non-Aborigines must be borne in mind in assessing any enterprise proposal. The 'larger' projects are the more likely to involve non-Aborigines as staff employees. They are also likely to be more complex and to call for higher levels of managerial skill and probably for technical expertise of one kind or another. This cannot always be appropriately obtained from outsiders on a contract basis.

Social complications are the first to consider. Non-Aboriginal staff usually have better salaries and better housing than Aborigines and, in addition, the spouses of non-Aboriginal staff usually have skills of some kind which are needed, or useful, in Aboriginal communities. The non-Aboriginal staff not only constitute two-income households in communities where many households have no wage or salary income whatsoever, they also seem, rightly or wrongly, to have jobs which Aborigines could have – at least if they had adequate training. To make matters worse, given current reductions in funding, the Aboriginal employees, being unskilled, are the first to be laid off, not the non-Aboriginal employees. Local social tension is unavoidable, even if the non-Aborigines do not 'play politics'.

The non-Aboriginal employees of Aboriginal organisations often do 'play politics'. Some are highly committed people who 'identify' strongly and assume that it is legitimate for them to take part in the local Aboriginal political scene in order to defend or further the interests of whatever it is that they are professionally expert in – building houses, running a workshop, advising about community development, managing an art and craft enterprise. Others whose commitment is somewhat less, who see themselves simply as professional employees, may well take much the same view, arguing also that because they are professionals they know 'better' than those who employ them how things should be run. The archetypal examples in the Northern
Territory are town clerks of Aboriginal councils and store managers, but there are other examples as well. These people use the power given by Aboriginal dependence on their skills, not so much to intervene openly in the local political arena, as to manage the supply of information and the definition of options which are available to Aborigines who are, ostensibly, the real decision makers. These people like the more committed ones, are seldom good judges of what is 'best' for an Aboriginal community. Their concepts of 'best' are often founded in a very poor understanding of Aboriginal society and, in some instances, they have been moulded in the context of mission or government policy towards Aboriginal communities with deep assimilationist roots. Finally, Aborigines in their turn often withhold information about their own society from their white employees and, in order to promote their own, often conflicting, interests try to use the influence of white employees for their own ends. The non-Aborigines are not the only ones to 'play politics' in Aboriginal communities. This leads to the question of the social and political context of enterprise development in communities. This has several aspects.

The Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, excepting those on cattle stations and the contemporary outstations, are creations of activity by missions and by government. They are almost without exception tribally and linguistically heterogeneous and they bring together people whose traditional lands lie elsewhere than where they are living. Intermarriage and other relationships between tribes, families and clans complicate the social structure of communities but almost all of them have a fairly high level of tension between individuals, families and leaders. These tensions are focussed on a variety of things including the decisions taken about proposals which may have a large impact on a community, such as a large economic project, and about things which may be regarded as public goods - the allocation of housing, of jobs in the council and the store, the use of vehicles and so on.

A community's social and political structure will be further complicated by other enterprises. The questions raised by these other enterprises are not just economic. The people in charge of existing enterprises usually have local social and political power as well as economic power and as a result they will be anxious in case a new enterprise disturbs existing arrangements to their detriment in one way or another.

This anxiety is particularly acute if it is proposed that a community government council be set up, with a power to conduct market oriented economic enterprises. In the small community, the council is bound to be concerned with
all facets of local activity, far more so than the council of a small non-Aboriginal town. The community government legislation gives councils which opt to take community government status, the chance to increase their power in relation not only to the distribution of 'public' goods and services but also in relation to the conduct of enterprises in their communities. In both of the study areas, this form of local government has had a divisive effect. In general, while community government may increase the scope for enterprise development, for example, by contracting arrangements of various kinds, the evidence is that it is not essential to enterprise development and, in some instances, it may be divisive and consequently a hindrance to such development.

The social and political context of enterprise development includes Aboriginal leadership. In general, as noted in the second chapter, leaders in Aboriginal communities are in a far weaker position than their counterparts in other non-Aboriginal small towns. They need a high level of community consensus, especially in relation to large projects, and yet the mechanisms for generating the consensus are weak or nonexistent in Aboriginal communities. Given the heterogeneous social character of the communities, traditional authority, while important, is by no means sufficient to guarantee steady support to a leader, especially one with innovatory schemes for developing market oriented enterprise. The mechanisms for the dissemination of information, for public discussion of issues and for generating support in Aboriginal communities are also weak. Leaders cannot therefore be sure of their authority either over the long haul, in order to see through a program of development, or in the short run, in order to get acceptance of particular projects.

Finally, we turn to the economic context for enterprise proposals. Throughout the study we have emphasised that the evidence, both from our own case study communities and from overseas research, shows that the components of the microeconomies of Aboriginal communities are closely linked and highly interdependent. Local markets are small, both in terms of population and in terms of disposable income; communities lack skilled labour and capital assets; their communications with the outside world are costly and poor; the costs of production and distribution are high; natural resources such as water and land are either limited in supply, poor in quality or, sometimes, degraded by too intensive exploitation.

In these circumstances, it is essential that any new enterprise proposal be assessed in terms of its effect on existing activities and existing resources and markets. To introduce it may result in a benefit to the community, but
this cannot be taken for granted as it so often is by the proponents of new developments. A new enterprise may well compete for a small market or for scarce resources or for a small pool of skilled labour, to the detriment of hitherto viable enterprises.

A further complication in this process of assessment is that several of the economic activities which are normally conducted in Aboriginal communities are activities in different sectors of the economy, subsistence, service and market. In any assessment, the existence of all three sectors must be recognised and the question must be asked whether a new market oriented enterprise will adversely affect existing enterprise in any one or more of these sectors. This question is seldom asked, because the promoters of new enterprise do not recognise the existence of sectors other than the market sector or because they do not recognise that activities in one sector can have effects in other sectors, especially if an activity occurs in two or more sectors.

The study has also shown, both in the third chapter and in the case studies, that the difficulty of obtaining funds, especially capital funds, is a major problem for enterprise development under Aboriginal control. Capital is usually insufficient and enterprises are burdened with debt, high interest rates, threats of closure or replacement of management, restructuring and so on. They are sometimes 'locked in' to their creditor - suppliers as a result. The implication is that in setting up a new enterprise, adequate capital should be available on suitable terms.

It is especially important that most of the funds, both capital and recurrent, come from government. This in itself perpetuates a dependency which limits the extent to which Aborigines can establish selfmanagement in their enterprises and their communities. With few exceptions, the funds are made available only through white intermediaries, on terms specified by the lending or granting agencies including conditions for reporting, accounting and repayment. These terms seldom allow the kind of latitude and risk taking necessary for the conduct of market oriented economic enterprises.

Finally, there is the question of the size of the enterprise. From the point of view of the external agency promoting an enterprise, it may seem wise to go for the 'large' project, in the belief that a small one would not be viable for one reason or another. But the opposite may well be the wiser course.

Large enterprises are likely to present special difficulties for several reasons. The capital tied up in a
large enterprise is likely to be high and to call for substantial debt servicing. This may mean not only that other small options have to be foregone and that a large amount is put at risk in one project, but also that the lending agency is likely to insist on a higher level of non-Aboriginal involvement than it would in projects employing small amounts of capital. Other reasons why non-Aboriginal involvement is likely to be higher in the large project have been discussed above.

A land based project will have to be negotiated with traditional owners and the larger it is the more likely that several owners will be involved in negotiations. These negotiations may well be prolonged and the outcome may well be a compromise unsatisfactory to all concerned. It is also very difficult for a local community to maintain oversight and control of a large project, such as a cattle or buffalo operation, to prevent contractors from breaking the terms of agreements made.

The negotiation of large projects, whether they involve the use of large areas of land or not, will ordinarily attract the interest and participation of a number of non-Aborigines, speaking for Aboriginal organisations, government departments and funding agencies. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for the leaders of an Aboriginal community, the prospective 'owners' or beneficiaries of a local enterprise, to maintain their own position and interests or to control the course of negotiations in such a complex situation.

It is not always easy to foresee the social impact of projects on a community and even if a community agrees to a project and thinks it can handle the social consequences, they may be mistaken. The social impact of the larger project, for example a large tourist operation, will be greater than that from the smaller project and it is likely to be much harder to modify, defer or reverse the agreements on which it is based than would be the case in a small project.

The conclusion is that there are only limited opportunities for Aboriginal controlled economic enterprises of the profit making market oriented kind in Aboriginal communities. These opportunities are basically of three kinds: to expand existing enterprises, to transfer existing enterprises from non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal control or to set up entirely new enterprises. None of these is easily achieved.

The opportunities for developing new economic enterprises in Aboriginal communities are extremely limited, particularly if enterprises are thought of in conventional
market-oriented terms. With one or two relatively limited exceptions, Aboriginal communities are at a substantial competitive disadvantage in an open economy when trying to develop market-oriented enterprises. These call for resources, markets, capital and a variety of skills which few, if any, Aboriginal communities possess.

The exceptions are therefore of some importance, even if they are never likely to become major businesses. They include enterprises, generally existing enterprises, which supply goods or services for the local markets of Aboriginal communities, markets in which local businesses enjoy some measure of natural protection against outside competition by reason of their remoteness. The local market for services, at the level of the community and its surrounding area, offers some opportunity for enterprise development based on services, rather than on the supply of goods, the services being those at present provided by government agencies. Contract road building and road maintenance and similar services could be provided by either council owned enterprises (under community government) or by Aboriginal-owned private companies. The exceptions also include, for a wider market, arts and crafts and tourist related developments, both of which offer opportunities for new enterprises in some places.

There is some scope for strengthening existing enterprises. These generally have the advantages that they have a local market, the problems associated with initiating a new project (such as problems of land ownership and use) have usually been overcome, and the problems of finding funds and managerial skills have at least been explored. There is, in other words, a measure of community experience, if not expertise, and some agreement, if not total, on the need for and form of an enterprise. These are normally very hard-won advantages and their importance should not be underestimated. To strengthen existing enterprises so that they are assured of a long-term future may well be a better course to follow than to search fruitlessly, and at the cost of failed projects, for some new development.

But existing enterprises often need to be strengthened; few are robust in non-Aboriginal economic terms. Some of them are economically marginal in terms of resources and markets, many of them are kept on a very short and uncertain basis of recurrent funding by the relevant government agencies, most of them lack adequate capital and equipment and they are also commonly dependent at some critical operational point on non-Aboriginal skilled staff.

We have not been able to determine whether there is much potential for transferring existing non-Aboriginal enterprises to Aboriginal ownership and control. Our
impression is that there are few available businesses of this kind and that the transfers are best effected through normal market mechanisms.

Included in the recommendations is the proposal that traditional and subsistence activities in Aboriginal communities should be strengthened. They are of more importance than is generally recognised. They are existing economic activities although, by the conventions of most analyses, especially those of consultants and funding bodies, they are not 'enterprises'. We reject this view and argue that the two components of traditional economic activity should each be strengthened because each offers benefits to communities. One component is traditional subsistence food gathering and it has several benefits including improved nutrition, reduction of spending on store food, maintenance of culture gainful employment of people at present not in employment and the application of existing skills which are otherwise underutilised. The basic economic justification is that money spent on such activity results, by means of work done, in 'value added' and this value is reaped by the community itself as the consumer of the produce and the source of the labour.

The strengthening of subsistence food gathering is probably best done under current funding by the application of CDEP funds, in ways which communities must decide for themselves. The Prior-Wunungmurra Report (1987) makes specific recommendations, in relation to outstations, that CDEP be available to any community desiring it—in the context of supporting traditional and subsistence activities, that CDEP be made more flexible and that bureaucratic monitoring procedures should be minimised. We agree with these recommendations (see Appendix 2).

The other component of traditional economic activity is more widely recognised, namely art and craft work. This is recognised principally for its market possibilities, and not because of its economic use value or its cultural value to the communities in which it is carried on. We include traditional cultural activities here, such as ceremonies or dancing because they may be an important element in a tourist development.

Recommendations for specific projects or communities

Yuendumu

1. There are no obvious prospects for initiating entirely new enterprises, and it must be noted that there is already substantial local enterprise development with a long history at Yuendumu.
2. Several existing enterprises may be strengthened or saved from extinction by specific measures, as follows

(i) **Art**

A market for a special form of traditional art work has been developed. The art work itself and the market is at risk because the funding for a coordinator's position is uncertain.

The market is external and success in it depends on having someone with marketing skills as a coordinator and on retaining that person over time to maintain market contacts.

**Recommendation:** secure continuing funding for the position of coordinator should be identified.

(ii) **Craft**

Batik work is already established as non traditional craft work. It, and perhaps screen printing, could be developed to meet both a community market and a market outside.

**Recommendation:** funding for a position of coordinator/instructor is needed and is recommended.

(iii) **Housing Association**

The Housing Association could undertake contracts for the repair and maintenance of government houses if it had improved plant and equipment. These contracts would generate a small income.

**Recommendation:** investigation of the precise needs in plant and equipment with a view to providing the necessary funds.

**Recommendation:** tendering policies of external agencies such as Department of Education to be reviewed with a view to making it easier for local community organisations to tender competitively.

(iv) **Council**

The operation of the Council could be improved with a view to its tendering for contracts with more chance of success if it had improved plant and equipment and if it had an employee capable of preparing tenders in an appropriate form and with reasonable estimates.
Recommendation: monitor the ongoing needs for plant and equipment with a view to providing the necessary funds for new or replacement equipment.

Recommendation: seek cooperation of Batchelor College or the Open College in providing training of local Aboriginals in basic tendering practice. Specialist tasks, e.g. for engineering advice and calculations, will still have to be carried out by consultancy.

(v) **Mining Company**

Diversification can be a source of economic strength for an enterprise. In the past, the Yuendumu Mining Company has had to fight its funding body for recognition of its success through diversification. Funding bodies should not impose constraints in conditions of grants, or in contracts, which prevent enterprise exploring opportunities for diversification.

(vi) **Subsistence**

For people in Yuendumu this provides about 5 to 10 per cent of the food and, with the use of vehicles, it appears to be increasing. It is a higher proportion of food for people on outstations. Art and craft materials are also collected on food trips. Vehicles used for these purposes are also used to maintain contact between outstations and the central community, to maintain supplies and to provide transport for health checkups and in emergencies. The vehicles are often driven heavily laden for long distances, the terrain is often rough and they travel far more kilometres per month than is usual in an urban context.

Recommendation: Since subsistence activities are economically productive and are difficult if not impossible to conduct without vehicle support, recognition should be given by funding bodies to subsistence activities as a ground for claiming a vehicle grant.

(vii) **Store**

Information about its trading operations and its accounts should be regularly made public. The same comment applies to all enterprises. Likewise we recommend that, if a Council conducts an
enterprise, then the accounts of such enterprises should be kept separately and made public.

**Recommendation:** more sustained effort should be put into the training of Aborigines as store managers.

(ix) **CDEP**

**Recommendation:** the possibility of introducing CDEP at Yuendumu should be explored.

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**Barunga/Wugularr/Eva Valley/Bulman**

1. There is scope for a new project or projects in the area.

(ii) **Tourism**

We do not wish to make a detailed recommendation about a project based on the tourist potential of the Barunga/Wugularr/Eva Valley/Bulman area since discussions for a joint venture with a well known tour operator are proceeding.

In general tourist projects, if they are large as most of them are nowadays, are likely to disrupt peoples' lives to some extent with consequent antagonism to the project. For this reason and because the smaller the scheme, the less the complexity and the managerial burden, we recommend that any tourism project start 'small' and establish itself, to secure community acceptance and to build up a group of experienced people.

**Recommendation:** tourism projects start small and should include a ranger training component, including funding for training in the project design.

(ii) **Cattle operation**

We do believe, on the basis of past experience and studies, that a large cattle operation would be uneconomical. However, we support the proposal
that one or more killer herds might be economically maintained, provided ways can be found to utilise the meat without having to send the beasts to the abattoir in Katherine for processing. Two ways present themselves as recommended.

Recommendation: allow consumers to buy beasts directly from the Council/Cattle Company and kill them for themselves

Recommendation: arrange for someone to butcher the beasts, on, say, CDEP wages, and then to distribute the meat free, and to impose a surcharge on the rent for provision of a household service.

2. Existing activities which may be strengthened are art and craft work and subsistence food gathering.

(i) Art and craft materials, subsistence food collection

For this funding one or more vehicles would be needed, particularly for groups at Barunga, Wugularr and Eva Valley.

Recommendation: funds should be provided for the Barunga/Wugularr Council for this purpose.

Recommendation: the planting of locally indigenous trees and shrubs which have contributed to traditional subsistence living such as Terminalia ferdinandiana.

(ii) CDEP

Although there are difficulties with the CDEP scheme, it is a most important instrument by means of which the Council builds up its community enterprise capacity, its workforce and its own authority.

CDEP is also a most important means by which school leavers can be helped into meaningful employment and into community workforce experience.

Difficulties should be negotiated, rather than rules rigidly applied to the administration of the scheme.
Recommendation: if the communities decide they want CDEP, it should be continued at Barunga and, if possible, introduced to Wugularr, Bulman and elsewhere.

(iii) Buffalo operation

Recommendation: continued support for buffalo operations in the Bulman area, with increased Aboriginal control of the operation.

General observations and recommendations

1. Sectoral scope

In investigating the potential for enterprises in a community, all three sectors—market, service and subsistence—should be considered.

2. Operating requirements

In setting up a project, operating requirements should not be imposed on it which are inappropriate for it: e.g. a subsistence activity should not be expected to provide a marketable product or result in a profit; a subsistence cattle operation ('killer' herd) should not be expected to comply with all the conditions, such as abattoir butchering, applied to a commercial operation.

3. Context

In considering any proposal, the context in which it is (or is to be) carried out must be taken into account. The micro-economies of communities are so small and fragile, that a new project may well have adverse effects on existing projects, for example by overtaxing the few skilled people in a community, by adverse effects on the market of another enterprise and so on. These are the kind of economic aspects of the context which should be considered. Land is another aspect, almost always involved in any project, even if only for the physical location of the project. The implication for the traditional owners of the land and for other users of the land must be taken into account. In general, we believe that the smaller the land area involved in any project or the fewer the number of traditional owners, the more likely the success of negotiations for a new project.

This lead to a third aspect: the local political context. A proposal may seem economically sound but
politically divisive as, for example, the suggestion that all vehicular repair and maintenance equipment at Barunga and Wugularr should be brought together in one location.

4. Management

The form of management is of considerable importance but it is impossible to say that any one form is to be preferred over others, but several comments are appropriate.

(i) If an enterprise is to be under Aboriginal control, it is desirable that it should be under Aboriginal management as well. It should be designed therefore with the skills available in the community and the experience of the community in running enterprises in mind. The management structure and functions should therefore be as simple as possible and may entail some changes to orthodox rules about ideal management arrangements. In addition, whether managers are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, the management should be open and responsive to the Aboriginal directors of the enterprise. Management should not be able to frustrate control by quoting 'white fella' rules, by secrecy about current operations and budget or by claiming an authority to act, without consultation, 'on behalf' of directors.

(ii) The more complex the form of management and the more conditions are imposed by outside organisations for management according to non-Aboriginal criteria the more likely it is that key positions will be created in the management structure which can be filled only by non-Aborigines. These are the positions of power and non-Aborigines will use them to weaken or influence the Aborigines formally in control of the project.

(iii) The desirable kind of management will be affected too by work to be done. Simple business activity may well be best carried out by a very small management group in which one person is the principal or executive person. But such a simple structure would not necessarily serve well for a community which wanted some measure of overall management of its economy in all its different aspects.

(iv) The form of management appropriate for a project or enterprise which has significant community service aspects will be difficult to determine.
Most enterprises in Aboriginal communities have community service aspects. There is no guarantee that, by putting enterprises of this kind in the hands of the council, the community as a whole will have understanding of and oversight of them. On the other hand, those run as private enterprises, perhaps in traditional ownership on traditional land, are not intended to be the business of everyone, even if they do have significant community service functions. The decision as to the appropriate form is therefore not simply a technical management matter but above all a political matter to be settled by the community itself.

5. Employment

In general Aboriginal communities have an ample supply of unskilled — and in some areas semi-skilled labour — while there are few people who are trained for entrepreneurial, management, and highly skilled roles. It is also true that those with these skills tend to be better off than those without them. These labour supply and income distribution considerations suggest that emphasis should be placed on projects which create jobs for unskilled and semi-skilled people. Projects which demand skilled labour, apart from leaving the problem of poverty relatively untouched, are also likely to result in more Europeans being employed and a loss of control of the project to outsiders. This statement is not intended to disparage the importance of skilled jobs to the communities, however. It is a statement about emphasis. Skilled jobs provide employment for the few skilled people in communities. However, replacing Europeans would provide enough employment to absorb any unemployed or underemployed skilled workers in most communities.

6. Outside assistance

(i) Training: To be able to control enterprises which call for a variety of skills and to reduce their dependence on skilled non-Aborigines, Aborigines must be able to get the skills needed and to have them officially recognised. The apprenticeship system needs to be adjusted to make it flexible enough to meet the special problems of Aborigines seeking training in skills in communities.

(ii) Capital:

(a) All projects require substantial amounts of capital. Sometimes much of the capital
already exists in the community. For example, communities may have idle plant, or local suitable timber or sand. However, most projects will require substantial funding. Aboriginal communities are poor, at least in material terms, by world standards and cannot be expected to raise much funding themselves, unless they receive substantial royalties. Governments, then will continue to remain the major sources of funds for projects.

(b) Dependence on government funding for communities and projects brings with it a loss of control by the local community. To some extent this is inevitable. Nonetheless, the process of obtaining capital and other funding and the rules relating to its expenditure are too complex and should be simplified, in particular to speed up the process of decision and allocation and to give local communities greater freedom in determining how the money will be spent.

(iii) Managerial and technical expertise

(a) Problems arising because of shortages of managerial and technical expertise, which are common in Aboriginal communities, can be lessened by choosing projects which are small and minimise the managerial and technical problems. Selective training programs can aid Aborigines in performing managerial roles.

(b) Aborigines should not be excluded from management because they do not have a particular managerial skill. For example, it is common in European society for the manager to have accounting skills; however, in an Aboriginal community it may be suitable for the Aboriginal manager to operate without those skills, but for the accounts to be done by some other organisation in the community.

(iv) Marketing

The appropriate approach to marketing the products of Aboriginal communities will vary greatly and will depend on the nature of the product, location of the community, availability of competing products. One generalisation can be made, however. It is that overall, not enough marketing effort has been undertaken for Aboriginal goods. This is
especially true in relation to Aboriginal art and craft work.

(v) Funding

If Aborigines are to control their own enterprises and enlarge the area within which they are selfmanaging, they will need more 'untied' funding. For the immediate and middle term future at least, there is little or no prospect that communities can meet all their own needs for 'untied' funds by generating profits or incomes from commercial or quasi commercial activities. In general they are so poor that they will require government funding into the indefinite future. The government which has a policy of selfmanagement and of promoting enterprise therefore presents itself with a problem: how to reconcile the Aborigines' need for 'untied' funds with the constraints which lending or granting agencies impose about the purposes for which funds can be used and about how they should be accounted for. It is a problem which the Aborigines cannot be asked to solve.
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APPENDIX 1

Methodology for Gathering Demographic and Economic Data for the Barunga, Wugularr, and Eva Valley Case Study

During the fieldwork which was conducted at Barunga, Wugularr, Eva Valley, and Mountain Valley and Mainoru stations in the period June to August 1987, household censuses were conducted to obtain demographic, linguistic, residential, historic, income, and other relevant data. A single form was used for each identifiable domestic unit in each of the above mentioned communities and dated for the day or period in which information was collected. Each domicile and individual was provided with a numeric identity to assure anonymity during data analysis, although the original forms did include the names of household members. Heads of households were self identified by an adult member of the domestic unit.

For each member of the identified domestic unit, the following data were gathered: birthdate, relationship to head of household, place of origin, language group affiliation, occupation, and source and amount of income. Traditional (Jawoyn) owners were identified by a special symbol as were adopted individuals. Other data regarding the domestic unit included the type of house, tenure of family in the house, ownership of modes of transport by type, other capital expenditures (such as stoves, refrigerators, televisions, etc.), notes on participation in subsistence activities, use of subsistence resources gathered by others, notes on the distribution of cash income within and between households, travel to and visitors from other communities, purchase of commercial foods, the occurrence of household activities outside of a domicile, and causes of morbidity in reference to individual household members.

The data on individual members of the domestic unit were gathered from individuals or in conjunction with the local health aides or sisters. This was particularly useful in getting accurate birth data. The other household data was greatly incomplete, primarily because the research design and funding did not allow the time or local assistants to conduct necessary extensive interviews at each household. Completion of this data gathering at Barunga, Wugularr, and Eva Valley is highly recommended for future research, as well as the development of a comparable data base at the closely related community of Bulman and its outstations as well as one or two comparative case
communities (we have suggested Yirrkala and Mornington Island as possibilities). Data gathered by Dr John Taylor, North Australia Research Unit, in 1987 and 1988 regarding residential histories of the study communities and Katherine would usefully supplement these data, although a discussion of his Katherine data is included in this context.

Data related to household members were coded and entered into the University of Alaska Fairbanks VAX mainframe computer for analysis by SPSS. Other household data were too sparse to be analysed quantitatively but have been included in narrative discussions.

The systematic collection of data related to subsistence was not part of the research design of this study. The data included here were based on opportunistic observation, informant recollection, historic documentation, and analogies to other Aboriginal communities in which subsistence has been a focus of study (see Altman 1987 for Maningrida as an example).
Recommendations:

1. That where access to mainstream economic activity is possible, appropriate help in the area of training programs be set up and co-ordinated by the relevant agencies (TAFE and DEET), preferably with the help of local industry;

2. that changes in the marketing of art and craft to be made so as to ensure a larger return to the artists, thereby increasing income entering the community;

3. that where necessary the government should continue to support outstations by providing funding for certain positions which help the community to maintain a decent environment and to manage their own affairs;

4. that it be acknowledged, without stigma, that isolated outstations will continue to rely on government support, even when some degree of private enterprise is possible;

5. that State, Territory and Federal governments agree on areas of financial responsibility for outstations, and that funding for them be on a more secure, long term basis so that people can safely consider long term plans;

6. that Aboriginal people be given the opportunity, through regional meetings, to discuss income options, possible outcomes and appropriate development strategies;

7. the CDEP be available to any community desiring it;

8. that CDEP be made more flexible to allow for use by part of a community without the rest losing rights to unemployment benefits;

9. that bureaucratic monitoring procedures be minimised as much as possible, consistent with the expenditure of public monies;
10. that research be carried out into the viability of a scheme which acknowledges the importance of productive traditional activities, by guaranteeing long term funding which would be controlled by Aboriginal communities. The Cree Income Security Program to be used as a focus for such research;

11. that isolated communities be assisted to develop towards mixed economies, wherein government funded positions are supplemented by income from small scale enterprises where possible.