

TANGENTYERE
COUNCIL
SUBMISSION



Senate Inquiry into Food Pricing and Food Security

In Remote Indigenous Communities



WORKING
TOGETHER
WALKING
TOGETHER

30 JUNE 2020

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1.Executive Summary

Tangentyere Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Inquiry into Food Pricing and Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities.

As the leading Aboriginal Organisation that supports the Alice Springs Town Camps, Tangentyere Council is deeply concerned about food pricing and food security in remote towns that severely impact Aboriginal Town Campers, as well as the impact on remote Indigenous communities.

Town Campers have developed strategies to combat the issue of Food Security, in line with the Shelter domain of the unique Town Camper Wellness Framework, as food security has been an ongoing issue for residents of the Town Camps, who are both culturally and geographically isolated, and impacted by the consequences of multidimensional disadvantage. Here we explore the issues affecting Town Campers' regular access to healthy and affordable food in this region.

Key concerns that are discussed in detail focus on food affordability and accessibility. The low income of Town Campers in the region is compounded with issues of high rates of suspension of income support payments and high costs of living, including rent and power. Poor public housing and minimal functional health hardware such as fridges and cooking facilities, add further complexity by minimising the opportunities for Town Campers to safely store and prepare nutritious food. The distance of Town Camps to supermarkets, transport issues and locations of corner stores and take-away outlets impact further, making it easier to access unhealthy food outlets compared with healthy food options.

Additionally, we explore the impacts of food security on Town Camper's health and healing, knowledge and schooling, identity, community and the strong leadership that has incubated innovative Food Security strategies.

This submission addresses the terms of reference with specific focus on the environment in which retailers operate; comparative pricing in other non-Indigenous remote communities and regional centres; barriers facing residents from having reliable access to affordable fresh and healthy food, groceries and other essential supplies; the availability and demand for locally produced food; and other relevant factors.

In improving food security in the Alice Springs Town Camps, Tangentyere Council recommends the development of measures that address multidimensional disadvantage.

Specific recommendations include:

- The Australian government acknowledges the issues of Food Security for Town Campers, based on cultural and physical isolation.
- The Australian Government supports a culturally appropriate community-controlled housing model to address overcrowding and support the healthy living practices, including working equipment and infrastructure for the safe storage and preparation of food.
- The Australian Government commissions a regional cost of living study for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in remote communities and Town Camps.
- The commissioning of a National Market Basket that considers food prices in the NT relative to other similar parts of Australia.

- Adequate resourcing of local, Aboriginal organisations to develop realistic options for locally-governed and managed mini-stores in Community Centres where possible.
- The Australian Government fosters relationships and adequately resource projects that develop local and community gardens, including bush foods/tucker and bush medicines.
- The Australian Government increases income support and modifies the need for a 'mutual obligation' to minimise the number of people without an income.
- Support a review of the current pricing of rental property for public housing and costs of power, relative to average income.
- Support the Northern Territory Government to fund additional transport services to improve access to healthy food stores.
- Support mechanisms that allow community members to have a stake in store management groups, especially at a local advisory level.
- Support supermarkets that are locally owned and run (especially by Aboriginal Corporations) to be more financially competitive via subsidies and improved access to relevant supply chains.
- Improved systems for local stores ordering through suppliers to allow for fast responses to consumer needs.
- Simplification of access of Income Management for Food Security Programs.

2. Background

Tangentyere Council is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation that delivers human services and operates social enterprises for the benefit of Aboriginal people from Alice Springs, its Town Camps and Central Australia.

2.1 Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC)

TCAC is a community controlled Public Benevolent Institution delivering human services and social enterprise activities for the benefit of Aboriginal people from the Town Camps, Urban Alice Springs and Central Australia. TCAC was first incorporated in 1979. The organization was a finalist in the 2016 Reconciliation Australia, Indigenous Governance Awards and is one of the 8 largest Aboriginal Corporations in Australia. TCAC has 16 Corporate Members, over 600 Individual Members & provides services to in excess of 10,000 people from a region that covers approximately 873,894 km². Service users come from a region that encompasses much of the southern NT including MacDonnell, Central Desert and Barkly Regional Councils; the APY Lands (SA) and the Ngaanyatjarra Council (WA).

The Corporate Members of TCAC are the Town Camp Housing Associations/Aboriginal Corporations and the members of these Associations/Aboriginal Corporations are individual members of TCAC. The TCAC Board of Directors is composed of the elected Presidents of the Alice Springs Town Camp Housing Associations/Aboriginal Corporations.

TCAC was formed to assist the Town Campers to gain legal tenure and in order to obtain water, electricity and housing. From 1979 until December 2009 TCAC operated as an Indigenous Community Housing Organisation (ICHO) and service provider.

In 2009, 11 Town Camp Housing Associations and 3 Aboriginal Corporations executed Tripartite Alice Springs Living Area Subleases with the Executive Director of Township Leasing (EDTL) on behalf of the Commonwealth and the CEO of Housing on behalf of the Territory. The EDTL then entered a Housing Management Agreement (underlease) with the Northern Territory Government making the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development (DLGHCD) the Housing Authority for the Alice Springs Town Camps. TCAC demonstrated its adaptability to this changed circumstance by re-positioning itself as a Human Services Organisation and by developing and founding the Central Australian Affordable Housing Company (CAAHC). CAAHC was the first nationally accredited community housing provider in the NT. TCAC together with its subsidiary Tangentyere Constructions and CAAHC have proposed to the EDTL a collective strategy for the development and implementation a Community Housing Model. Both the EDTL and the DLGHCD through the Town Camp Futures Unit are receptive to this proposal.

Currently TCAC provides a broad range of Human Services including: (1) Community Centres; (2) Youth Development; (3) Tenancy Support; (4) Aged; (5) Municipal and Essential Services; (6) Repairs and Maintenance; (7) Construction; (8) Child Protection and Wellbeing; (9) Alcohol and Other Drug Harm Minimisation; (10) Community Safety and Wellbeing; (11) Violence Prevention; and (12) Employment.

TCAC is committed to the employment and capacity development of Aboriginal people. 55% of the TCAC workforce of 273 people is Aboriginal. Inherent within TCAC employment of local Aboriginal people is the

concept of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). An emphasis on CPD means that the organisation is well placed to recruit and develop jobseekers.

For the perspective of this submission TCAC will emphasise its understanding of the issues with respect to the Alice Springs Town Camps.

2.2 Alice Springs Town Camps

The following table provides an overview of the TCAC Town Camp Corporate Members:

Figure 1: Alice Springs Town Camps, Incorporation and Tenure					
Name	Alias	Incorporated	Tenure	Lot	Executed
Akngwertnarre	Morris Soak	14/11/1974	SPL-438	5150	22/12/1977
Anthelk-Ewlpaye	Charles Creek	16/07/1974	SPL-426	3702, 3704, 1733	12/08/1977
Anthepe Housing	Drive In	8/03/1974	SPL-412	5146	8/11/1976
Aper-Alwerrkng	Palmer's Camp	17/04/1977	SPL-459	5180	25/07/1979
Ewyenper-Atwatye	Hidden Valley	11/08/1977	SPL-473	5189	30/01/1980
Ilparpa	Ilparpa	25/10/1979	SPL-493	5713	2/07/1980
Ilperle Tyathe	Warlpiri	17/11/1978	SPL-450	5149	30/01/1979
Ilyperenye	Old Timers	22/08/1977	SPL-550	5708	14/09/1981
Inarlenge	Little Sisters	28/02/1978	Crown-1112	3701	11/06/1973
Irrkerlantye	White Gate	28/10/1992	n/a	n/a	n/a
Itwiyethwenge	Basso's Farm	n/a	SPL-554	5123	16/07/1976
Karnte	Karnte	11/07/1983	Crown- 1111	7850	1/02/1988
Lhenpe Artnwe	Hoppy's Camp	6/08/1986	n/a	0	n/a
Mount Nancy	Mount Nancy	16/07/1974	SPL-409	5135	16/07/1976
Mpwetyerre	Abbotts Camp	25/10/1979	SPL-543	2664	4/07/1980
Nyewente	Trucking Yards	6/02/1975	SPL-449	5152	28/12/1978
Yarrenyty Arltere	Larapinta Valley	17/11/1978	SPL-536	5195	23/06/1981

2.3 The Town Camp Wellness Framework

TCAC has recently developed a Town Camp Wellness Framework which defines the overall balance within the Town Camp and impacts on the wellness of each individual living there. It aligns with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) Nest (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2014), the National Wellness Institute of Australia framework (National Wellness Institute of Australia Inc, accessed 13 December 2019), and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) and sets out the most effective ways to achieve outcomes which matter most for Town Campers in our region. This has been developed by senior women and men residing in Town Camps, representing 10 Town Camps and 8 language groups, and includes the following domains:

1. Shelter

Access to basic things needed to live a 'normal' life, including healthy food, financial and occupational wellness, stable and healthy housing, clean water, clothing, etc.

2. *Knowledge*

Formal and informal experiences in the classroom, at home and in community, throughout the course of one's life, to maximise life opportunities. Includes cognitive and creative pursuits to also enrich one's capacity to make decisions, problem solve and maintain mental agility.

3. *Keeping Our Country*

Encompasses the interactions between individuals and their 'habitats' at a local, community and global level, and includes safety in nature, home, work and the community.

4. *Identity*

A positive sense of self and culture underpins all of the other dimensions and is fundamental to overall Town Camp wellbeing. Cultural wellness refers to an ability to both enact one's own cultural values as well as interact effectively with people from different cultures and working towards eliminating racism and systematic discrimination, whilst spiritual wellness is seeking meaning in existence.

5. *Community*

Embraces positive relationships and connections with families and others and includes love.

6. *Camp/Community Leadership*

Engagement with peers and community, including governance and decision-making, determining systems and having a voice and say on matters. Includes access to digital systems and technology for social connections.

7. *Healing (Mind, Body and Soul)*

Having one's physical, developmental, psychosocial and mental health needs met to achieve optimal developmental trajectories and opportunities. Includes access to preventative measures and health education as well as access to services to redress emerging health issues.

2.4 Food Security Programs at TCAC

Town Campers have developed strategies to combat the issue of Food Security, in line with the Shelter domain of the Town Camper Wellness Framework, as food security has been an ongoing issue for residents of the Town Camps, who are both culturally and geographically isolated, and impacted by the consequences of multidimensional disadvantage. As a result, we deliver six key Food Relief Programs that specifically support residents of Town Camps:

- Food Boxes – in a user-pays model to allow families access to online ordering and direct delivery of healthy food (at no extra cost);
- Emergency Relief – Brokerage for food and goods for households receiving income support;
- Youth Development Program – delivers 520 dinners/week to young people;
- Community Centres – offers lunch to residents visiting this service at 7 sites;
- Aged and Disability Support Service – includes meals on wheels for Aged clients;
- Community Development Program (for those seeking employment and training) – delivers approximately 500 lunches/week;

Additionally, our social services offer food relief for clients; often the most vulnerable members of Town Camp communities.

The recently developed Food Boxes support the families that are struggling to get to the supermarket frequently and affordably. This program is designed to support the re-empowerment and self-determination of families by offering a free food delivery service, similar to online shopping, and fills a gap identified by the NT Health Alice Springs Food Security Needs Assessment (Alice Springs Food Security Reference Group, 2020).

3. Each Domain impacts on Food Security

Aboriginal people from Alice Springs, its Town Camps and Central Australia are impacted by the consequences of multidimensional and intersecting disadvantage.

TCAC understands that the Town Camp context is distinct from remote Indigenous communities, given their proximity to Alice Springs. As a result, food security in Town Camps is impacted heavily by issues of transport, frequent visitors from remote communities and the close proximity of corner stores and take away outlets.

3.1 Shelter

3.1.1 Food Affordability

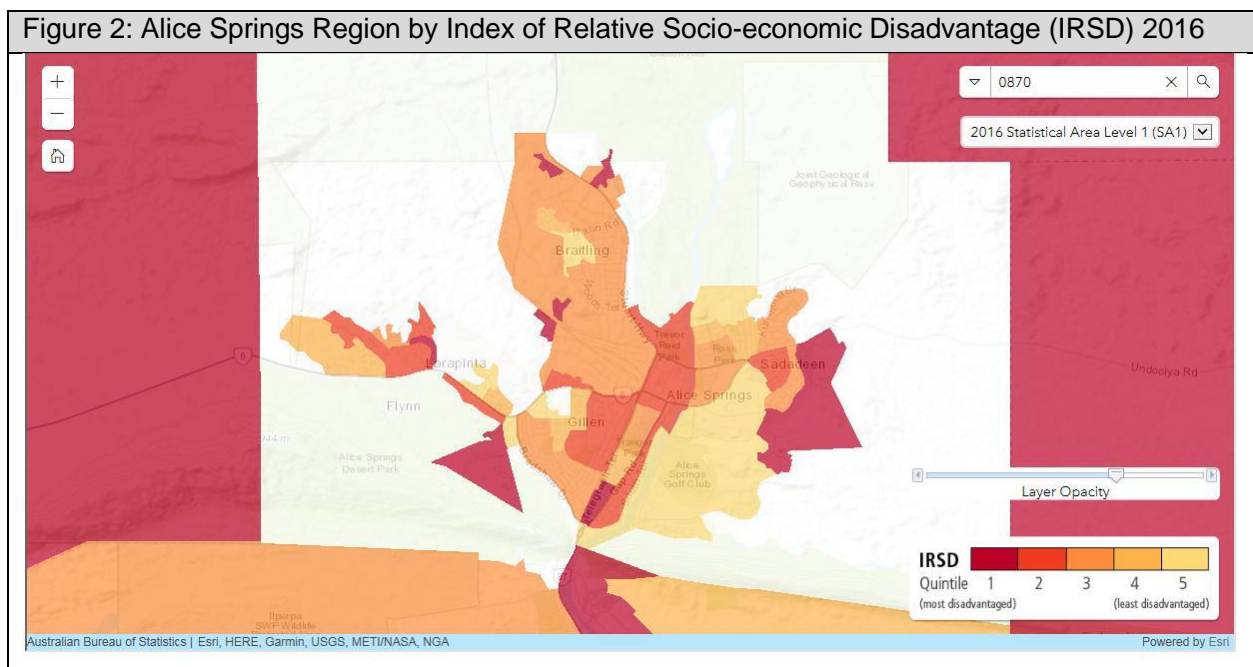
Poverty is a major obstacle to education and employment, and the deepest poverty in Australia is found in the Northern Territory (NT News, 2019), along with the highest prevalence of children at greatest risk of social exclusion (Uniting Care Ageing, 2017). The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) report ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage based on the Census of Population and Housing. The three Local Government Areas (LGAs) covering remote Central Australia (Barkly LGA, Central Desert LGA and MacDonnell LGA) all rank in the bottom 2 percent of all LGAs in Australia according to the 2016 SEIFA report (Regional Development Australia Northern Territory, accessed 13 December 2019).

Roughly 45 per cent of all Indigenous households in the NT are located below the poverty line, and the census suggests that the level of Indigenous poverty in remote NT has been increasing.

As a result, Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are at greater risk of food insecurity. The 2012-13 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey showed that 22% were living in a household that had run out of food and could not afford to buy more (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020). In remote areas, that percentage increased whereby Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote areas were more likely than those in non-remote areas to be living in a household that had run out of food and couldn't afford to buy more (31% compared with 20%). Almost 10% of people in remote areas went without food when they ran out.

Locally, a recent Alice Springs Needs Assessment into Food Security identified that the median weekly personal income for Alice Springs was \$1,002, but the median personal income for Aboriginal people was significantly lower than that of non-Aboriginal people. For those on income support payments, single people received approximately \$325/week or \$500/week for a couple (Alice Springs Food Security Reference Group, 2020).

The Figure overleaf shows the local mapping of Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD), and indicates that the lowest IRSD quintiles were located in Town Camps and the southern part of Alice Springs town (shown in dark red) (Alice Springs Food Security Reference Group, 2020).



Interestingly, the recent Northern Territory Market Basket Survey showed that costs of food baskets for both supermarkets and corner stores (including takeaway outlets) in Alice Springs were on par with costs in Darwin (Northern Territory Department of Health, 2020). However, it showed a significant price increase in both the healthy food and current diet baskets, of almost \$200 per basket, when shopping at a corner store compared with a supermarket.

Given that 89% of Town Camps (14/16) are located more than 500 metres from a supermarket, it is easier for Town Campers to access unhealthy food outlets compared with healthy food (Alice Springs Food Security Reference Group, 2020), at a much higher cost, of up to \$200 per shop. This is further detailed in section 3.1.3, Distance to Food Sources.

As a result of the issue of food affordability, we have multiple Food Security Programs at TCAC (refer 2.4) to ensure that Town Campers have regular access to healthy food. Our Emergency Relief Program supports 50 different households every week, spending more than \$130,000 annually on emergency food alone. Additionally, we offer lunch to all residents 4-days a week in 7 Town Camps, as well as about 500 lunches to CDP workers and 520 dinners to young Town Campers each week.

3.1.2 Impacts on Income – CDP, Rent and Power

The Commonwealth's Community Development Program (CDP) contributes to the issue of income, making income security reliant on mutual obligation conditions that many people cannot meet. We note that mutual obligation seems to only apply in one direction, with consistent failure in relation to the obligation of government to provide economic development and a base level of resources to support education, health, housing and other determinants of workforce participation.

TCAC provided a submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee for the inquiry into the appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of the Community Development Program. In this submission we identified that research undertaken by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University (ANU)

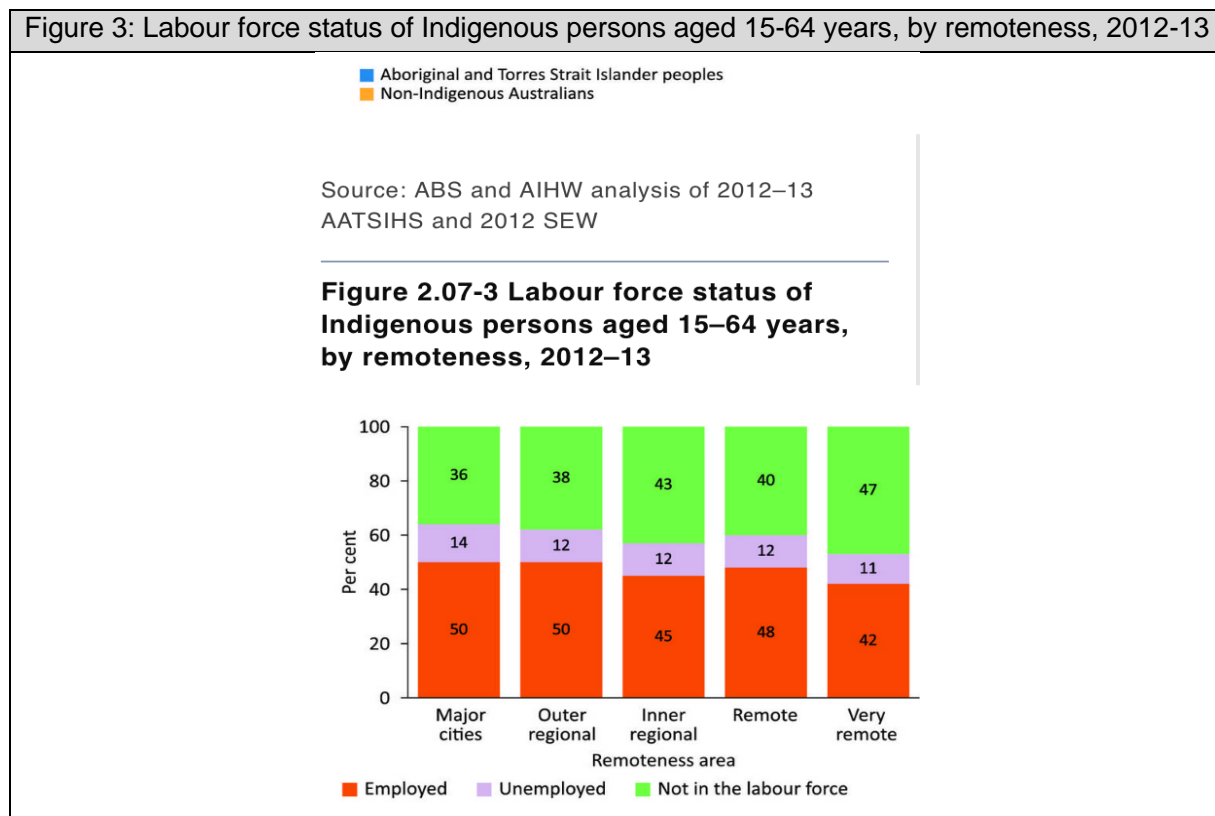
demonstrated that Aboriginal people living in remote and very remote areas are breached from income support payments at ~56 times the rate of income support recipients in urban areas (Australian National University, 2017). During this submission we identified that the primary reason for this level of breaching was related to the significant level of participation required from remote income support recipients in 'Work for the Dole' and other mutual obligation activities. Activity requirements for remote income support recipients are far higher than that of urban job seekers.

The rates of breaching and the number of people not receiving income support contributes to the low rates of income support and means that the income support safety net is failing. The failure of this safety net impacts significantly upon children, families and other areas such as tenancy sustainability. When a recipient's income support payments stop (even temporarily) all Income Management/Centrelink deductions stop. Stopped deductions result in debt including housing debts as rent deductions stop. This system can lead to significant additional financial stress on families who are already struggling financially, compounding other significant stressors they are often facing.

It is our opinion that making significant changes to the Centrelink and CDP systems to ensure food security to Indigenous people in our region would go a long way to improved health and wellbeing outcomes as well as addressing other Closing the Gap targets, as the problems identified – life expectancy, child mortality, poor health, poor educational attainment - are caused by poverty. The NT is not on track for Child mortality, Early childhood education, School attendance, Life expectancy, Reading and numeracy or employment according to the latest Closing the Gap report (DPM&C, 2019).

We think families need real food security and income security - the base of Maslow's hierarchy of needs - before families can address school attendance, which is the basis of any ongoing pathways into education. This is supported by the consultations undertaken as part of the development of the Wellness Framework – see below.

According to the following table only 42% of Aboriginal people aged 15-64 from very remote areas are employed, 11% are unemployed and the remainder are not in the labour force.



Tangentyere is concerned that many people designated as ‘not in labour force’ simply don’t receive any income. Once again, these figures and the following table have been outlined in our submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee for the inquiry into the appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of the Community Development Program. It is felt that there are multiple determinants impacting upon these figures.

The ability to obtain and to maintain housing reflects a major determinant of health and wellbeing. At present income support payments are inadequate to allow people to maintain an acceptable standard of living. The current level of payments undermines the sustainability of housing at the level of the individual, community and system. The inability to maintain housing directly impacts upon health.

TCAC and its Corporate and Individual Members have concerns about rent affordability for residents of Urban, Town Camp and Remote Public Housing based on current levels of income support, which further exacerbates the issue of food security. For the Town Camps (and Remote Communities) rent is currently based on the following table of maximum rents payable to the DLGHCD:

Figure 4: Remote Maximum Dwelling Rent				
Classification	4 Beds	3 Beds	2 Beds	1 Bed
New/Rebuilt	\$250	\$230	\$175	\$150
Refurbished	\$200	\$184	\$140	\$120
Existing	\$150	\$138	\$105	\$90

These maximum rents are significant when considered in the context of the current weekly rates of Department of Human Services income support payments. TCAC acknowledges that rent is currently rebated to 25% of household income. Newstart recipients for example will be left with \$208.50 per week after paying rent. This amount is not enough to meet basic material needs let alone provide the basis for social and financial inclusion.

Rates of overcrowding in the NT are more than double those in any other state or territory, with 52% of Aboriginal Territorians living in overcrowded housing in 2014 (Central Australian Aboriginal Council, 2018). Occupancy rates in Alice Springs Town Camps were estimated between 10.8-16.1 people per house in 2005 (Foster et. al., 2005). Despite this, there has been a 12% decline in NT public housing stock, due to transfer to non-government providers and sale to private investors, but an increase in the number of families on the public housing waitlist (Central Australian Aboriginal Council, 2018). The wait period for social housing is now estimated at 4 to 6 years.

31% of Indigenous Australians reported living in dwellings of an unacceptable nature where 19% didn’t have access to food preparation facilities.

Additionally, the issues of Energy Security; Environmental Health and Debt further impact on the affordability of nutritious food. TCAC raised concerns about Energy Security with the NT Minister for Renewables, Energy and Essential Services (and Jacana) that have been heightened since the introduction of new smart pre-paid meters in Town Camps; Remote Communities and Urban Public Housing. These new pre-paid smart meters have had a significant impact upon households with respect to: (1) how power is purchased; (2) limitations about who can purchase power; (3) changes to emergency and friendly credit; and (4) anecdotal feedback about the affordability of pre-paid power. Point 4 aligns with the suspicion that tariff rates in the old standalone pre-paid meters may not have been adjusted for

many years prior to the installation of new smart meters. A feature of smart meters is that they can be adjusted remotely whereas the old meters needed to be adjusted on site. Point 3 relates to features designed as a safety net, e.g. friendly credit which is an involuntary function is particularly unpopular for reasons associated with debt, disconnection and challenges to re-connection.

TCAC has commenced seeking consent from Town Camp households to access Jacana energy data. To date we have received consent from ~170 households. We have now began receiving data from households in Town Camps that have consented to this process and the first wave of evidence is clear - In one Town Camp (with 23 tenanted houses) the average house will use a projected 8,437 kWh per annum (\$2,342 per annum). This average house will have 51 periods without power (involuntary self-disconnection) for a period of 238 hours. This means the average house loses power for about 5 hours every week in the last year. Self-disconnections occur when energy consumers are unable to purchase power for their prepayment meter. The resultant lack of power places people at further risk.

Depending on the climate (refer to 3.4 Keeping Our Country) and duration of involuntary self-disconnections, food spoilage is a reality in many households. It should be noted that the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) produced houses that were not necessarily well constructed with respect to the cost-effective provision of optimal internal living environments.

The current rates of Newstart further undermine household food and energy security and this impacts upon the storage of food and the maintenance of safe internal ambient temperatures.

As at the 30th June 2019, 570 Alice Springs households had prepayment meters. Of these 570 houses 420 had at least one self-disconnection event for a mean duration of 455 minutes (7.5 hours). Most of these households are Public Housing. 285 of these households are located on Town Camps.

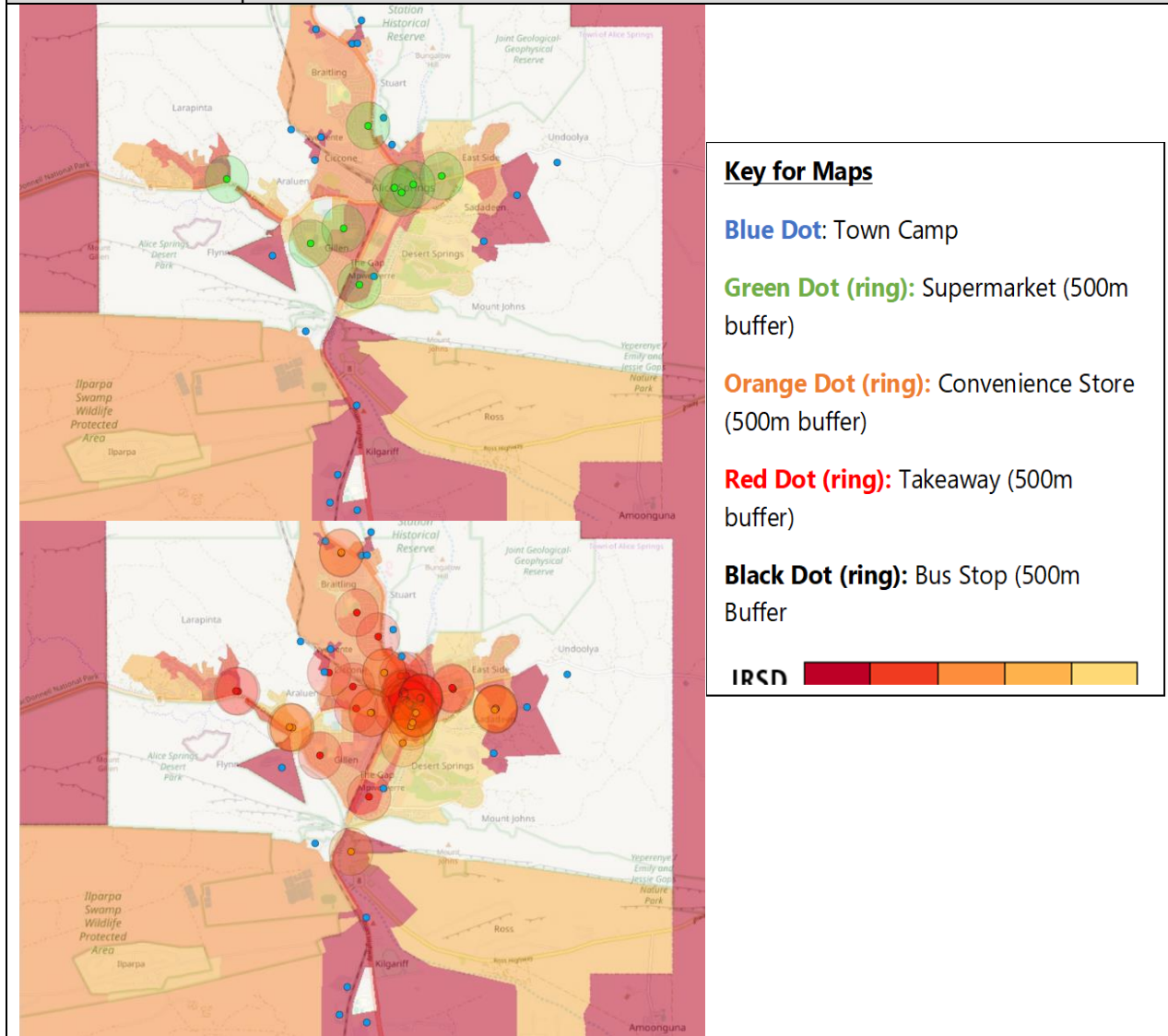
The recent increase in income and other benefits due to COVID-19 has produced clear improvements in the lives of children in the Town Camps. Youth workers report that children have been calmer, better fed and better dressed (McFarlane, B. 2020).

3.1.3 Distance to Food Sources

Proximity and access to healthy food outlets including supermarkets has a significant impact on the dietary intake and therefore health of individuals and communities. This is particularly true in low socio-economic areas (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015). However, a recent audit in Alice Springs revealed there are more unhealthy food outlets (including takeaway) than healthy food options, and that healthy food outlets cannot be accessed in the absence of unhealthy ones (Alice Springs Food Security Reference Group, 2020).

Moreover, 89% of Town Camps (14/16) are located more than 500 metres from a supermarket, making it easier for Town Campers to access unhealthy food outlets compared with healthy food, as shown in the spatial mapping overleaf (Alice Springs Food Security Reference Group, 2020). As discussed in section 3.1.1 Food Affordability, the 2019 NT Market Basket Survey indicated these unhealthy food outlets cost an additional \$200 per food basket compared with supermarkets (Northern Territory Department of Health, 2020).

Figure 5: Comparison of proximity (500m) to healthy (supermarket) outlets (top map) to proximity (500m) to unhealthy (convenience stores, takeaway) food outlets (bottom map) within Alice Springs considering IRSD index and Town Camps.

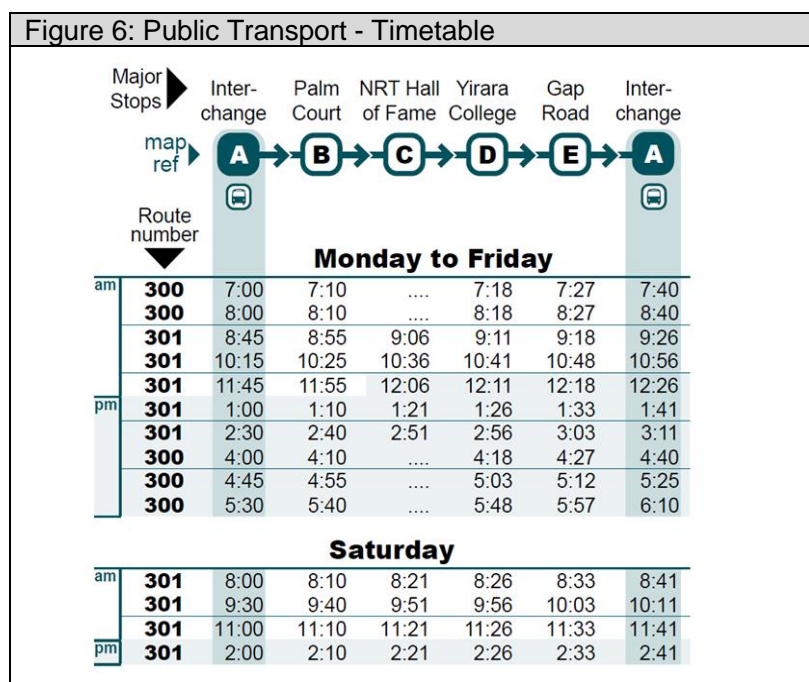


Whilst Alice Springs does have affordable public transport infrastructure, it may not meet the needs of the most vulnerable community members, including Town Campers. Realistically, transport remains a significant issue for people living in remote or regional areas including the Alice Springs Town Camps.

Current rates of income support mean that people living on the Town Camps are less likely to have drivers' licences (~25% of adults have drivers' licences) or to own and maintain registered motor vehicles. It is estimated that ~25% of households had access to a motor vehicle in an emergency (this did not specify that these motor vehicles were registered). TCAC speculates that the reasons for low levels of drivers licensing are linked to resourcing and income support. Some barriers to licencing are as follows:

(1) proof of identity; (2) outstanding fines; (3) drink driving offences; (4) literacy and numeracy; (5) spoken and written English; (6) poverty; and (7) access to a motor vehicle.

Also, the NTCOSS 27th Cost of Living report showed that fuel prices in Alice Springs had recently increased, revealing Alice Springs as one of the least affordable regions for transport expenditure as a proportion of income, compared with similar regions across the country (Northern Territory Council of Social Services, 2020). It is therefore unsurprising that the current rates of income support do not support sustainable vehicle ownership and yet options for public transport do not support positive outcomes for food security and therefore public health. The challenges to public transport for Town Campers are indicated in the bus timetable below (Department of Transport (a), accessed 2020).



Public transport is limited in scope from the perspective of start and finish times, number of buses on some routes, reduced services on Saturdays, no services on Sundays and distances to bus stops from Town Camps. Public transport doesn't encourage or support participation and social inclusion. Public transport to Town Camps is outlined below (Department of Transport (b), accessed 2020).

Figure 7: Public Transport

Name	CBD (km)	Bus Stop (km)	Buses	First	Final	Travel (Min)
Akngwertnarre	3.2	0.7	4	9.30 am	3.15 pm	10
Anthelk-Ewlpaye	1.7	0.4	4	8.45 am	2.45 pm	10
Anthepe Housing	8.2	1.0	10	7.10 am	5.40 pm	37
Aper-Alwerrkng	4.1	0.3	9	7.00 am	5.30 pm	16
Ewyenper-Atwatye	2.5	1.4	9	7.00 am	5.30 pm	20
Ilparpa	8.5	0.4	10	7.10 am	5.40 pm	19
Ilperle Tyathe	5.2	0.6	9	7.00 am	5.30 pm	20
Ilyperenye	6.0	0.6	10	7.10 am	5.40 pm	17
Inarleng	5.0	0.8	10	7.10 am	5.40 pm	18
Irrkerlantye	3.9	1.6	9	7.00 am	5.30 pm	27
Itwiwethwenge	4.6	0.8	9	7.00 am	5.30 pm	22
Karnte	9.0	2.0	10	7.10 am	5.40 pm	48

Lhenpe Artnwe	2.2	1.1	4	8.45 am	2.45 pm	19
Mount Nancy	4.1	0.3	9	7.00 am	5.30 pm	16
Mpwetyerre	2.6	0.6	10	7.10 am	5.40 pm	13
Nyewente	2.8	0.7	4	9.30 am	3.15 pm	12
Yarrenyty Arltere	4.1	1.5	9	7.00 am	5.30 pm	30

To highlight this issue, please consider the example of an individual from Karnte who lives 9 km from the CBD. This individual needs to walk 2 km to catch a bus to Alice Springs. This individual can catch one of the 10 buses that run between 7.10 am and 5.40 pm (return) on weekdays. Saturday services are reduced to 4 buses and no buses operate on Sundays. Other locations have less options, for example Akngwertnarre residents can only catch one of 4 buses per day. Further, the distance between bus stops and some Town Camps makes walking to/from the bus stop with groceries untenable.

Generally, the options for transport are private cars and commercial passenger vehicles but both are prohibitively expensive for those in receipt of income support. The schedule of prepaid tax fares outlined below demonstrates that the prepaid fare for 5 km is \$17 and 10 km is \$28. For an individual trip this is not prohibitively expensive but where other transport is unreliable then the cost becomes expensive where multiple trips are required throughout the week (Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, 2020).

Figure 8: Pre-Paid Taxi Fare Estimates		
Distance	Up to 4	5 or More
5 km	\$17	\$22
10 km	\$28	\$40
15 km	\$40	\$57
20 km	\$51	\$74
25 km	\$63	\$91
30 km	\$74	\$109
35 km	\$86	\$126
40 km	\$97	\$143

Transport is crucial and people require the resources to purchase transport related goods and services. Transport is becoming a bigger issue with the extreme heat that is being experienced in regional and remote Australia.

3.2 Healing

Aboriginal people living in remote areas, including Town Camps, have a shared experience of multidimensional disadvantage. TCAC recognizes the social determinants of health and the relationship between the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and inequities in health and well-being. These determinants relate to social, economic, environmental and cultural conditions.

TCAC recognizes a range of social determinants and behaviors that impact upon the health including: (1) Early Childhood; (2) Education; (3) Employment, (4) Economic Participation and Income; (5) Addictions; (6) Stress and Trauma; (7) Homelessness; (8) Food and Nutrition; (9) Crime and Convictions; (10) Social Inclusion/Exclusion; (11) Transport; and (12) Language and Culture. Some of these determinants are both determinant and symptomatic of a range of issues including behavioural issues and structural issues. Primary issues impacting upon job seekers and their families include issues such

as overcrowding; high rates of mobility (between localities); health; addictions; anti-social behaviour; educational attainment; proof of identity and transport issues (including drivers licensing).

The burden of disease in remote and very remote areas is also another significant factor that requires consideration with respect to education attainment, participation and employment. The Alice Springs Town Camps provide a case study with respect to the prevalence of chronic disease that is comparable with other remote and very remote areas in Central Australia. According to the Heart of the Heart study 28.4%, 39.7% and 24.2% of residents suffer from diabetes, chronic kidney disease and cardiovascular disease respectively (Brown et al, 2014).

The following standardised mortality ratios presented by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report 'Chronic Diseases and Associated Risk Factors in Australia, 2006' outline the severity and prevalence of preventable chronic illnesses amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people nationally (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016).

Figure 9: Standardised Mortality Ratios	
Chronic Illness	Standardised Mortality Ratio ¹
Coronary Heart Disease (or CVD)	5.0 (5 ATSI Deaths: 1 Non-ATSI Death etc)
Cerebrovascular Disease (Stroke)	4.3
Lung Cancer	3.6
Colorectal Cancer	1.7
Diabetes	13.9
COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)	5.8
Chronic Kidney Disease	7.7

These diseases are associated with 'modifiable' risks factors which include those that are 'behavioural' and those that whilst termed 'biomedical' can at least be partly managed through behaviour. As implied by the term 'modifiable' these risks can be changed through the promotion of healthy lifestyle choices etc.

In a personal communication with Professor Alex Brown of Baker IDI, the following information was shared (Brown, A., 2011):

Central Australian Aboriginal people residing in the Alice Springs Town Camps have poor nutritional intake, low levels of physical activity, are more likely to smoke² and suffer from hypertension³. In addition, there is a significant proportion of this population that is overweight or obese. Aboriginal people are 13 times more likely to suffer from diabetes, 5 times more likely to suffer from heart disease and 7 times more likely to suffer from chronic kidney disease. Mortality rates for Aboriginal people are high and life

¹ Comparison of Indigenous death rates due to individual chronic illness verses non-Indigenous death rates due to individual chronic illness

² E.g. 73% of Aboriginal males aged 18-24 smoke

³ 100% of Aboriginal males over 65 years in age suffer from hypertension

expectancy is comparatively low. The reality for Central Australian Aboriginal people is that the risk factors and the prevalence of chronic illness contrast with the non-Indigenous population.

Figure 10: Outlines the prevalence of selected modifiable risk factors and chronic illnesses amongst Aboriginal Men (by age) in Central Australia

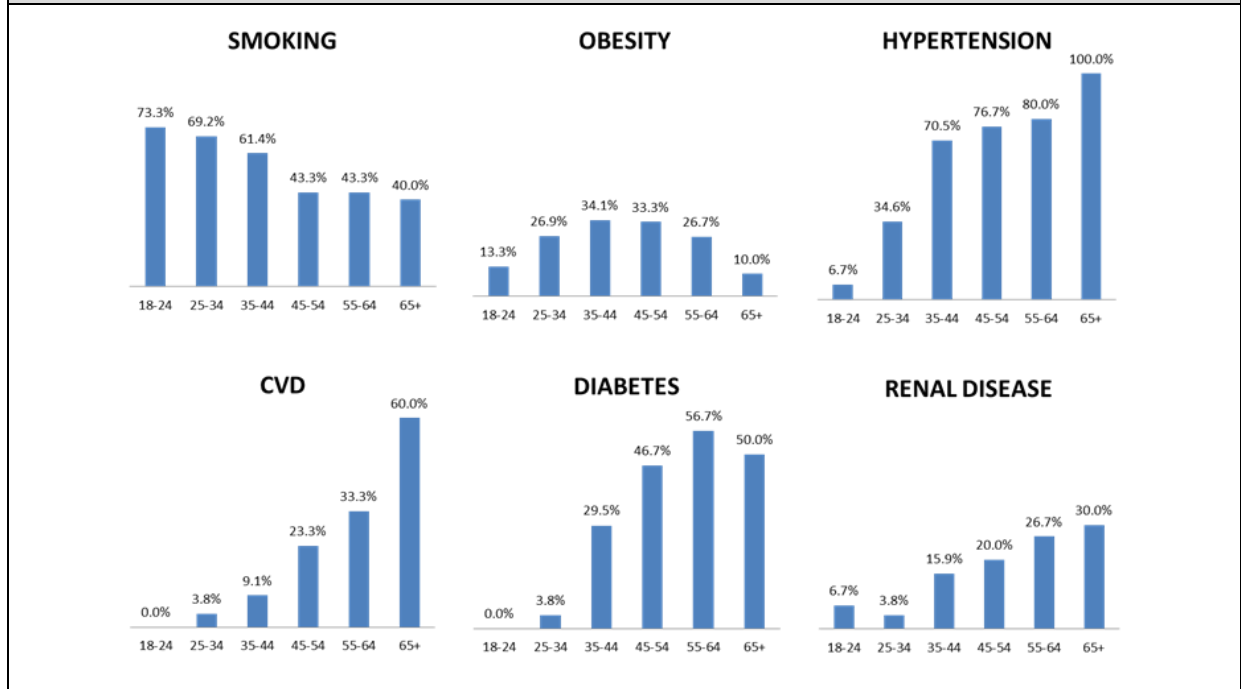
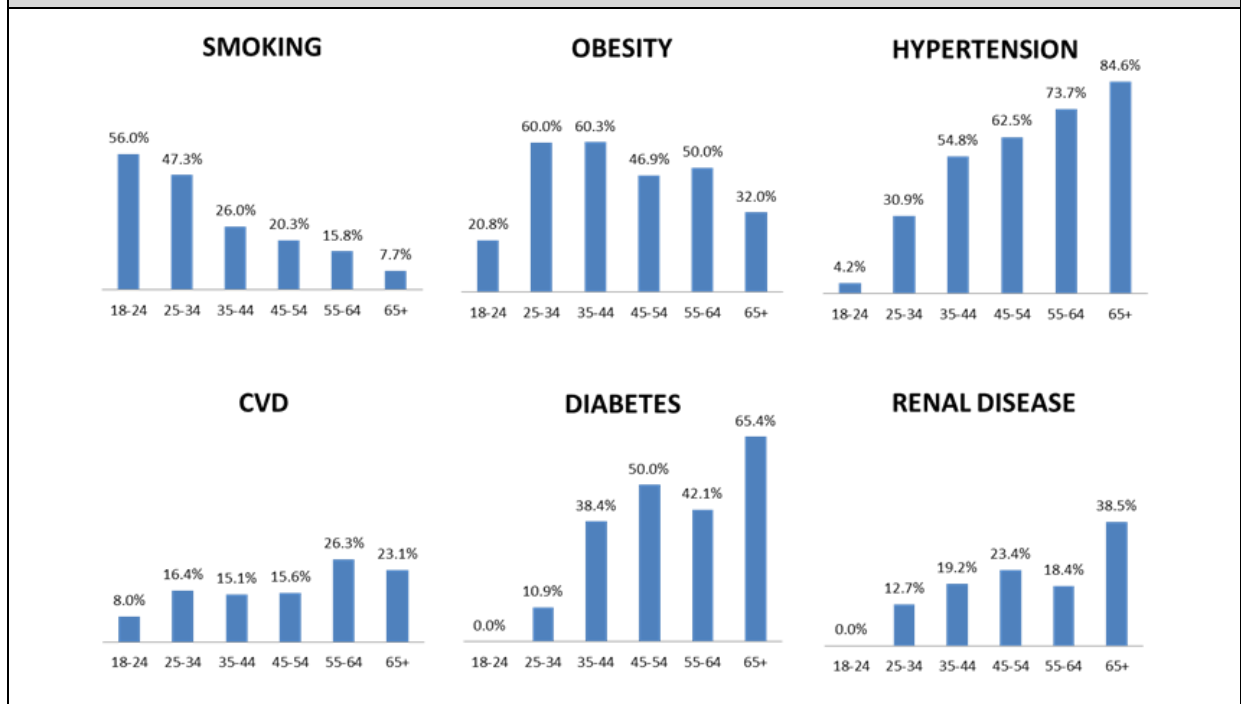
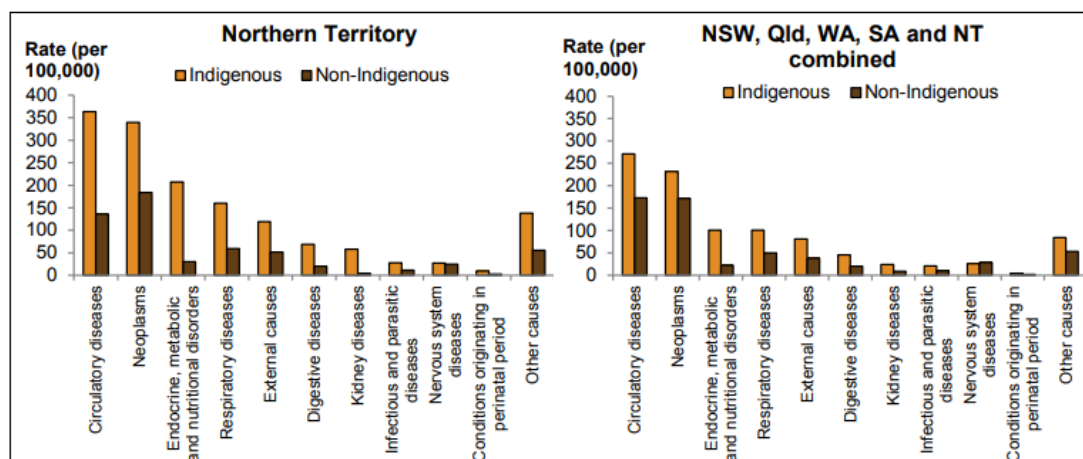


Figure 11: Outlines the prevalence of selected modifiable risk factors and chronic illnesses amongst Aboriginal Women (by age) in Central Australia



It is therefore unsurprising that the NT has a lower life expectancy compared to the rest of Australia, largely attributed to those areas outside of Darwin, including Alice Springs, and a higher prevalence of illness amongst Aboriginal Territorians compared to non-Aboriginal (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017). The table overleaf shows the age-standardised mortality rate, by cause and Indigenous status in the NT, compared with other parts of Australia.

Figure 12: Age-standardised mortality rate, by cause and Indigenous status, NT and NT, NSW, QLD, WA and SA combined, 2011-15 (from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2017))



Source: Table 1.23.2.

Figure 1.23.1: Age-standardised mortality rate, by cause and Indigenous status, Northern Territory and NSW, Qld, WA, SA and NT combined, 2011–2015

3.3 Knowledge

Many Town Camp residents face multidimensional disadvantage (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, 2015, p. 1-19). This is characterised by welfare dependence, poor educational attainment, problem drinking, violence, antisocial behaviour, crime and homelessness (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, 2015, p. 1-19). This is further exacerbated by language barriers, whereby many Indigenous students speak English as a third language, which impacts their school performance in a way that non-Indigenous remote students don't seem to be affected. (Biddle, 2010, p.67 and NAPLAN, 2012). In this manner educational attainment and employment outcomes become both determinants and symptoms of disadvantage.

Understandably there is a significant preoccupation with educational attainment (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, 2015, p. 3) and employment (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, 2015, p. 6) as social determinants of disadvantage. The Forrest Review for example focuses on punitive strategies to improve school attendance (Forrest & DPM&C, 2014, p. 96), the use of 'direct instruction' to improve literacy and numeracy (Forrest & DPM&C, 2014, p. 94) and implementing mainstream strategies for the overall improvement of educational outcomes for Aboriginal children (Forrest & DPM&C, 2014).

Work by TCAC to informally investigate the issue of enrolments and attendance confirmed that attendance of students from the Town Camps at school daily requires significant work.

In the 2017 study “Keeping Strong: Digital technology, participatory research, and young people’s wellbeing amongst Alice Springs Town Camp communities”, a survey of mainly primary students showed 68 of 73 participants (93.15%) stated that school attendance is important. 42.47% also responded that school was either boring, hard or scary and that isolation has an impact (e.g. no friends, no family, far away). When asked how hard or easy learning at school was for them, 34.25% of the 73 students responded hard or very hard. The top five things that participants liked about school include, in descending order, Sport, Friends, Learning, Play and Art.

At a national level, the COAG Reform Council’s report *Education in Australia 2012: Five years of performance* (COAG, 2013) provides an indication of the size of the performance gaps in reading achievement between metropolitan and rural students by producing a number of tables for Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN Reading Achievement for the years 2008-2012. As an illustrative example, Figure 13 is a summary of these data for students meeting minimum reading standards in 2012:

Figure 13: Performance gaps between Metropolitan, Remote and Very Remote students: Percentage of students meeting minimum reading standards (2012) by Year Group.				
Reading Standards of: (2012)	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
Metropolitan	96%	93%	97%	92%
Remote	85%	80%	85%	80%
Very Remote	59%	41%	55%	57%
Gap (Metropolitan-Remote)	11%	13%	12%	12%
Gap (Metropolitan -Very Remote)	37%	52%	42%	35%

Figure 13 demonstrates there are significant achievement gaps between the percentage of students meeting minimum NAPLAN reading standards for students in metropolitan, remote and very remote students. The table shows increasing performance gaps with increasing remoteness and gaps for each year level of approximately one and a half years’ schooling between Metropolitan and Very Remote students.

The National Assessment Program— Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2018 as well as indicating decreasing achievement with increasing remoteness for Indigenous students shows a significant performance gap between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students. This is illustrated in Figure 14.

Figure 14: National performance gaps for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN Reading				
	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
Indigenous	82.0%	77.2%	75.6%	73.9%
Non- Indigenous	96.6%	96.0%	95.4%	94.6%
Gap	14.6%	18.8%	19.8%	20.7%

Figure 14 demonstrates significant performance gaps between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous NAPLAN Reading results which also increase with years of schooling.

These gaps also appear in Year 12 completion rates, Year 12 university admission rates, and employment levels after leaving school.

Interestingly, the data for non-Indigenous students in remote locations is on par with non-Indigenous students in metropolitan regions, which strongly indicates hunger-related ability to concentrate and language as a barrier to school performance (Biddle, 2010, p.67 and NAPLAN, 2012).

In 2015, the Foodbank Australia report found that teachers estimate that the average student loses more than 2 hours a day of learning time when they come to school hungry. On the basis of arriving at school hungry once a week, that student would lose in excess of a whole term of learning time over the course of a year and that 4 out of 5 teachers (82%) report an increased workload due to hungry students as the children find it harder to concentrate (73%), are lethargic (66%) or demonstrate behavioural problems (52%). Every kilogram of food given to a child via a school breakfast program in Australia, or by accessing nutritious breakfast daily, provides a long term social return on investment of \$110 (Foodbank Australia, 2015).

3.4 Keeping Our Country

Prior to December 2009 TCAC implemented repairs and maintenance for Town Camp houses in accordance with the National Indigenous Housing Guide (NIHG). The NIHG was developed by Health Habitat. TCAC partnered with Health Habitat on the Fixing Houses for Better Health (FHBH) and the Maintaining Houses for Better Health (MHBH) prior to the Northern Territory National Emergency Response (NTNER) and the Subleases. Following the NTNER the Town Camps executed Tripartite Alice Springs Living Area Subleases with the Commonwealth and Territory Governments. The Tripartite Subleases had the impact of transitioning Town Camps from Community Housing managed by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Housing Organisation (ACCHO) to Public Housing managed by the DLGHCD. This change resulted in the de-emphasis of some Health Living Practices (HLPs) and the NIHG in the construction, refurbishment and maintenance of Town Camp housing. Additionally, repairs and maintenance has tended to be 'responsive' rather than 'cyclical'.

The Health Living Practices are outlined below:

Figure 15: Healthy Living Practices	
Health Living Practices	Details
Washing People	Ensuring there is hot and cold water and that the shower and bath work;
Washing Clothes & Bedding	Ensuring the laundry is functional;
Removing Waste	Ensuring drains aren't blocked and that the toilets are working;
Improving Nutrition	Ensuring adequate infrastructure for food storage and preparation;
Reducing Overcrowding	Ensuring health hardware can cope with the actual number of residents.
Reducing the Impact of Vermin	Reducing the impacts of animals, vermin and insects on the health of people ⁴ ;
Reducing Dust	Reducing dust ⁵ ;
Controlling Temperature	Ensuring adequate passive and mechanical cooling;
Reducing Trauma	Reducing trauma from non-life-threatening injury etc

⁴ Through ensuring adequate insect screens etc.

⁵ Reducing the prevalence of respiratory disease etc.

The Centre for Appropriate Technology reported that the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) emphasised Safety and the first 4 HLPs at the expense of the remaining 5 HLPs in its report 'Housing Experience: Post Occupancy Evaluation of Alice Springs Town Camp Housing 2008-2011. Controlling the temperature of the living environment is HLP number 8.

The de-emphasis of 5 HLPs and changes to repairs and maintenance has resulted in the shifting of costs from the 'landlord' to the households themselves. For example, houses built prior to December 2009 had solar hot water heaters installed. New houses constructed since December 2009 as part of SIHIP have electric hot water heaters. The reason for this change is about the cost of the construction process. The result is that the cost is shifted from the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development to the tenant. The outcome is increased power consumption and reduced energy security (as discussed earlier).

Other visible barriers attributable to inadequate income support that align with environmental health include the inability of households to manage hard rubbish and abandoned motor vehicles. Baker Heart and Diabetes has identified that ~25% of Town Camp households have access to a motor vehicle in an emergency and this lack of access demonstrates the logistical barrier for tackling the issue of hard rubbish.

TCAC seeks to support Town Camp communities to tackle a range of issues including those related to environmental health. This work happens at the level of the household and the community. One example is in the removal of abandoned motor vehicles, during 2017/18 and 2018/19 TCAC has worked with members to remove 370 abandoned motor vehicles.

TCAC has partnered with the University of Newcastle School of Architecture and Built Environment (SABE) to consider design-based approaches to both environmental health and crime prevention (through environmental design). TCAC is also working toward an interagency approach to animal management in partnership with Animal Management in Remote and Rural Indigenous Communities (AMIRRIC) and the Alice Springs Town Council.

TCAC, its Corporate and Individual Members want to progress toward the management of environmental health in the spirit of participatory development so that individuals, households and communities can manage these issues for themselves but feel that the current levels of income support are a major challenge to the most basic solutions. The issues arising from the low levels of income support are complicated by the cost shifting from program to individual (e.g. limited investment in passive cooling, installation of electric water heaters and the lack of cost-effective heating etc.).

Poor outcomes with respect to the Healthy Living Practices directly impact upon the health and wellbeing of Town Campers. The impacts of inadequate access to infrastructure that supports outcomes HLPs 1,2 and 4 are clearly relevant to health outcomes.

In the 2017 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report, 31% of Indigenous Australians in the NT reported living in unacceptable dwellings, with 19% reporting not having access to food preparation facilities including stoves/ovens (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017).

Further, as Alice Springs experiences increasing warmer weather, it is anticipated that houses will become increasingly unhealthy and unsafe during period of extreme heat and that houses will become less cost effective during these times. Ultimately housing and services will need to adapt to the extreme heat that we can continue to expect.

The 2004 report, *Climate Change in the Northern Territory* (Hennessy, 2004) noted that Alice Springs averaged 90 days over 35°C and 17 days over 40°C (at the time of publication). This report predicted that by 2030 these figures would increase to between 96-125 days over 35°C and to between 21-43 days over 40°C. The figures for 2018/19 have surpassed these predictions.

The issue of food security and income support will also need to be reconsidered in the context of climate change as people become more reliant on passive and mechanical cooling and transport (other than walking).

3.5 Identity

Key characteristics of one's identity in a Town Camp include cultural practice and language. In education, there is often limited consideration of linguistic or cultural preservation and transmission. Under the title of "stopping distractions to education" the Forrest Review recommends "scheduling cultural ceremonies outside school hours or during school holidays" (Forrest & DPM&C, 2014, p. 99). In contrast other sources have identified that, "the stress of being denied instruction in one's mother tongue in the school context can set up a powerful sense of failure in young people" (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2009, p. 61). Language and culture are protective factors and to undermine such strengths further marginalises Aboriginal people (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2009, p. 12).

Between 1974 and 2008 the multilingual nature of Aboriginal populations in the NT was supported through bilingual education (Simpson et al, 2009, p. 6). Bilingual education was introduced in recognition of the fact that "young people learn best when taught through their mother tongue" (Simpson et al, 2009, p. 6). Bilingual education was based on the "principle of building on what children already know" and of breaking learning down into manageable tasks (Simpson et al, 2009, p. 11). One of the key objectives of bilingual education was to work toward the acquisition of spoken and written English so that it could become the language of instruction (Simpson et al, 2009, p. 11). In 2008 the NT Government scrapped bilingual education (Simpson et al, 2009, p. 15). The decision to abandon bilingual education was influenced by NAPLAN results and the review of the NTNER (Simpson et al, 2009, p. 28). Ironically whilst the review of the NTNER was critical of the Department of Education it recognised bilingual education as a universal success factor (Simpson et al, 2009, p. 27). Despite this recognition bilingual education was abandoned as a result of the overall criticism outlined in the review (Simpson et al, 2009, p. 28). The reviewers had identified other success factors that were undoubtedly linked to bilingual education including empowered teacher and community relationships; and cultural and development programs (Simpson et al, 2009, p. 27).

TCAC clients on Town Camps are Aboriginal and predominately language speakers as outlined overleaf.

Figure 16: Language Groups in the Alice Springs Town Camps			
Name	Alias	Location Type	Languages
Akngwertnarre	Morris Soak	Town Camp	Warlpiri
Anthelk-Ewlpaye	Charles Creek	Town Camp	Arrernte, Anmatyerr
Anthepe	Drive In	Town Camp	Arrernte, Warlpiri, Luritja, Pitjantjatjara
Aper-Alwerrkng	Palmer's	Town Camp	Arrernte
Ewyenper-Atwatye	Hidden Valley	Town Camp	Arrernte, Warlpiri
Ilparpa	Ilparpa	Town Camp	Arrernte, Pertame, Luritja
Ilperle Tyathe	Warlpiri	Town Camp	Warlpiri
Ilpeye-Ilpeye	Golders	Town Camp	Arrernte
Ilyperenye	Old Timers	Town Camp	Arrernte, Warlpiri, Luritja, Pitjantjatjara
Inarlenge	Little Sisters	Town Camp	Arrernte, Warlpiri, Luritja, Pitjantjatjara
Irrkerlantye	White Gate	Town Camp	Arrernte
Itwiyethwenge	Basso's	Town Camp	Arrernte, Kaytetye, Anmatyerr, Alyawarr
Karnte	Karnte	Town Camp	Luritja, Pitjantjatjara
Lhenpe Artnwe	Hoppy's	Town Camp	Arrernte, Pertame, Luritja, Anmatyerr
Mount Nancy		Town Camp	Arrernte, Kaytetye, Anmatyerr, Alyawarr
Mpwetyerre	Abbott	Town Camp	Arrernte, Warlpiri, Luritja, Pitjantjatjara, Warumungu
Nyewente	Trucking Yards	Town Camp	Arrernte, Luritja
Yarrenyty Arltere	Larapinta Valley	Town Camp	Arrernte, Pertame, Luritja, Pitjantjatjara

3.6 Community

Recently, the Alice Springs Food Security Reference Group reviewed initial data from local research involving service providers, and including the key coping mechanisms of individuals/families and potential ramifications of food insecurity (Alice Springs Food Security Reference Group, 2020). Key coping mechanisms included (a) increased reliance on family and other social supports, (b) provision of services including food, facilities and resources and systems navigation, and (c) adaptation and opportunistic food access. Whilst some types of opportunistic food access genuinely improve food security, such as access to bush foods or bush tucker, others can be problematic to the individual and the community, such as crime.

Given many families already have a low income, with high rates of breaching of 'mutual obligations' and increasing rates of rent and electricity, a coping mechanism such as increased reliance on family places a heavy burden on existing food security. As a result, there are many programs and services in Alice Springs and the region that offer some food relief (as previously discussed). These are developed based on the need. At TCAC also, we deliver six key Food Relief Programs that specifically support residents of Town Camps:

- Food Boxes – in a user-pays model to allow families access to online ordering and direct delivery of healthy food (at no extra cost);
- Emergency Relief – Brokerage for food and goods for households receiving income support;
- Youth Development Program – delivers 520 dinners/week to young people;
- Community Centres – offers lunch to residents visiting this service at 7 sites;
- Aged and Disability Support Service – includes meals on wheels for Aged clients;
- Community Development Program (for those seeking employment and training) – delivers approximately 500 lunches/week;

Additionally, our social services offer food relief for clients; often the most vulnerable members of Town Camp communities. However, almost all food security programs in our region are dealing with emergency distribution of food, or funds to purchase food, and without a drastic change in each of the issues outlined in this submission, these programs will need to be resourced indefinitely.

Town Campers are solutions focussed and have developed initiatives that are exceptions to this.

The recently developed Food Boxes support families that are struggling to get to the supermarket frequently and affordably, so this program is designed to support the re-empowerment and self-determination of families by offering a free food delivery service, similar to online shopping. Each family purchases their own food, and continues to have agency and control over their lives, rather than receiving a cooked meal. This program fills a gap identified by the NT Health Alice Springs Food Security Needs Assessment (Alice Springs Food Security Reference Group, 2020).

Community gardens are also being established in a number of communal sites in some Town Camps. With some initial resourcing, Town Campers have partnered with local horticultural experts to construct and maintain a number of community garden beds, for various uses. Similarly, with adequate resourcing TCAC would be in a position to develop realistic options for locally-governed and managed mini-stores in Community Centres where possible, so that Town Campers could purchase emergency food at a local Community Centre in the Town Camp, alleviating short-term pressure from families.

3.7 Camp/Community Leadership – Food Security Innovation

Town Campers have an growing appetite for self-determination, community leadership, and active participation. A strong and responsive innovation to the issue of food security is the recently developed Food Boxes to support Town Camp families that are struggling to get to the supermarket frequently and affordably. In particular, during the time of COVID-19.

In Alice Springs, online shopping is not an option for Town Campers as supermarkets will not deliver to an address in a Town Camp. This program has therefore been designed to support the re-empowerment and self-determination of families by offering a free food delivery service, similar to online shopping. Our program sources (through wholesale relationships and bulk ordering), packages and delivers food and hygiene/cleaning packs to households in the Town Camps. Through a paper ordering system, Town Camp residents will be able to select from a variety of packs from three key local suppliers, in a user-pays model.

The benefits of this model include:

- compliance with the NTG safety measures to minimise the spread of COVID-19;
- reduced risk of exposure and community transmission of illness including COVID-19;
- maintaining agency of Town Campers;
- improved health and hygiene;
- value for money; and
- supporting local business.

The costs of purchased supplies are covered/recovered through Centrepay Deductions authorised by Town Campers. However, this has proven difficult as this model of deductions through Services Australia is limited. For more than 10 years, a large proportion of Town Camper's income support has been "quarantined" through a process of Income Management. 50% of the income can only be utilised to purchase food and essential items, however, the Services Australia processes render it very difficult to access this funding for a proactive program such as ours. Without physically taking a client to a Services Australia office, the Income Managed funds cannot be accessed, and with only one office in Alice Springs and long wait-times, this option is often untenable. The simpler process, which only involves signing a form, only allows access to the non-quarantined funds, which Town Campers often require for 'non-essential' items such as new clothes or shoes. Flexibility of processes based on an understanding of the remote context by Services Australia could greatly enhance people's food security in the region.

The recent Food and Nutrition Program Audit in Alice Springs identified 64 organisations as relevant to food security, delivering a total of 113 programs or policies, however, the main focus was on emergency relief and educational programs. Our program addresses access to food, which was identified as a service gap in the region (Alice Springs Food Security Reference Group, 2020), but is limited in it's reach based on the difficulties of the Services Australia processes.

4.Recommendations

In improving food security in the Alice Springs Town Camps, Tangentyere Council recommends the development of measures that address multidimensional disadvantage.

Specific recommendations include:

- The Australian government acknowledges the issues of Food Security for Town Campers, based on cultural and physical isolation.
- The Australian Government supports a culturally appropriate community-controlled housing model to address overcrowding and support the healthy living practices, including working equipment and infrastructure for the safe storage and preparation of food.
- The Australian Government commissions a regional cost of living study for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in remote communities and Town Camps.
- The commissioning of a National Market Basket that considers food prices in the NT relative to other similar parts of Australia.
- Adequate resourcing of local, Aboriginal organisations to develop realistic options for locally-governed and managed mini-stores in Community Centres where possible.
- The Australian Government fosters relationships and adequately resource projects that develop local and community gardens, including bush foods/tucker and bush medicines.
- The Australian Government increases income support and modifies the need for a 'mutual obligation' to minimise the number of people without an income.
- Support a review of the current pricing of rental property for public housing and costs of power, relative to average income.
- Support the Northern Territory Government to fund additional transport services to improve access to healthy food stores.
- Support mechanisms that allow community members to have a stake in store management groups, especially at a local advisory level.
- Support supermarkets that are locally owned and run (especially by Aboriginal Corporations) to be more financially competitive via subsidies and improved access to relevant supply chains.
- Improved systems for local stores ordering through suppliers to allow for fast responses to consumer needs.
- Simplification of access of Income Management for Food Security Programs.

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