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House 6480  
**Fregon/Kaljiti Community – APY Lands**  
South Australia

Fregon/Kaljiti, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2009

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**Submission**

**Inquiry into community stores in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander communities**

Herewith I submit this document to the above Inquiry as an individual, a customer of the Fregon store, as well as of community stores on the APY Lands, as a community member and as an Australian citizen.

For the record Fregon is the English name of the community while Kaljiti is the Aboriginal name of the community.

There is no confidential information in this submission. All records are well known by the community.

This submission will focus on the impacts of the Fregon store on the health and well being of the community in Fregon, and especially children.

This submission conveys the voices of women community members in Fregon.

◆ **Food supply, quality, cost and competition issues:**

**Fregon store:**

- Fregon store has a very poor food supply regarding fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, meat, and basic needs such as flour, sugar, bread, tea and milk;
- When these products are available they often present poor quality and very high prices;
- Fregon store has a very large supply regarding unhealthy junk food and high sugar soft drinks;

- These unhealthy products are comparatively cheaper than healthy food such as vegetables and fruits or meat;

### **Comparison with other community stores on the APY Lands:**

While I haven't been in all the community stores on the APY Lands, I know the stores in Amata, Watinuma, Kanpi, Ernabella and Indulkana.

Compared to other community stores on the APY Lands, Fregon

- Has a very poor choice of cheese and milk products, and is more expensive;
- Has a basic choice of white bread while other stores have a large choice of healthy wholemeal bread;
- Has a very poor choice of fresh vegetables and fruits and at high prices;
- Has a poor choice of meat products and presents low quality at high prices.

### **Community voices:**

Women members of the community came to me and said that they want the store to have a **larger choice of healthy food for them and their children.**

**They said they want better and healthier choice of food and at cheaper prices.**

When they asked the current store manager for changes for better food supply they were told that it was none of their business.

2007. From its earnings the store bought a AU\$ 25,000.00 (?) bus said to be for the community, this bus is not working (?). I don't know from whom the bus was bought and who decided about it.

2008. From its earnings the store bought plasma TV and dvd players said to be for the community.

**The women said they are not involved in these decisions and prefer to have furniture and items for their houses, food and clothes for the children instead of plasma TV.**

**The women claim the right to decide what will be bought for them and their family.**

The women from the community prefer to have a store with a large choice of healthy food at cheaper prices instead of a plasma TV at the end of the year.

◆ **The effectiveness of the Outback Stores model, and other private, public and community stores models:**

I am not aware of the Outback Stores model but the fact that the women community members are angry shows that this is not working well in Fregon.

Because of the remoteness and the difficulty people have to access products, the community store directly impacts on the essential aspects of the community health, well being and economy.

Poor quality food promotes short and long terms illnesses such as vomiting, nausea, food poisoning, diarrhoea, diabetes, obesity and so on. I guess that dental problems occur as well because of the consumption of sweets and soft drinks.

People in the community do not have access to essential products such as shoes, clothes, household and furniture.

There are no stores on the APY Lands that sell shoes, clothes, household items and furniture in an accessible and easy way for the families.

Mintabie stores might offer some of these articles but are said to be overpriced and take advantage of community members in various ways. I myself have not been there but several community members told me about their frustration and anger about activities that are common in Mintabie.

Women told me that they are forced to buy the clothes that they sometimes find at the store but do not like them. They want clothes like in 'normal' shops.

They added that the prices are very high and they spend lots of money on things they don't even like.

**Community voices:**

Women community members in Fregon are angry. The Outback store model is not effective in the community and has a negative impact on people health and well being, as well as on their economic power. Women worry about the future for their children.

◆ **The impact of these factors on the health and economic outcomes of communities:**

- Children have lots of health problems because of bad nutrition;
- Adults have lots of health problems because of bad nutrition;

- People have no access to clothes and shoes and rely on charity items that might be sent from non-government organisations, this on rare occasions;
- People have no appropriate access to household items, therefore they do not cook healthy food in their houses but buy ready to eat unhealthy food at the store;
- People have no appropriate access to furniture, therefore they sleep on the floor on dirty mattresses and develop scabies, head lice and other illnesses;
- Furthermore, several family members, adults and children, often have to sleep on one same mattress which is not appropriate re children safety. This also make illnesses to be quickly passed on from family members to family members;
- Adults and children do not have bed frames and therefore sleep on the floor where dirt, insects and vermin are often to be found;
- People do not have table or chairs in their household. This make it very difficult for the people to sit together at the table and have family meals;
- People need to be educated about how to use and take care of fridges and stoves. These kitchen essential items are often broken very quickly because of lack of proper use from community members;
- Many women in the community want to be educated in budgeting; the lack of budgeting skills has a strong impact on adults and children's health;

### ◆ **Recommendations:**

- 1 To develop a model of Outback Stores, or adapt the current model, involving community members having their say in what products are provided at their community store;
- 2 To develop a model for Outback store focused on health and people's well being instead of profit;
- 3 To have a store providing second and first hand clothes, as well as shoes with reasonable prices; items can be ordered and delivered quarterly for example;
- 4 To have a store with furniture and household items at reasonable prices; here again, this can be a system of ordering items in large quantity to be delivered in the community;
- 5 To develop an educative program delivered to the community in collaboration with community members and the store involving budgeting and healthy shopping;

- 6 To make an Inquiry about the Mintabie stores; several community members expressed their frustrations and anger about the activities of the Mintabie stores;
- 7 To train community members to work at the store.

Community stores are essential for the communities on the APY Lands. Stores are also places where people socialise and talk. They go there to meet each other and to get food for themselves and their family. To be able to buy good food for your family gives us a feeling of fulfilment and empowerment. I feel good if I can give my children the good food for them to grow healthy and strong.

Community Stores are an important central setting in and for the community. This could and should be used in many ways for the good of the people. There is not simple solution, but things can be done together with the community. Stores should not be an organisation taking advantage of people who already do not get the services they are entitled to as Australian Citizen.

Regards

Emmanuelle Barone