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Hi,

i would like to make a submission to your inquiry into remote stores in aboriginal and torres strait islander remote communities.

i am a remote area nurse and have been working in remote health in the top end of the NT for the last 5 years.

i have recently moved to a community where the shop is run by the ALPA group of stores. in wanting to support the local shop i went shopping there for our fresh produce and other items upon arrival. the cucumber i bought was mostly rotten, the 1 kg bag of tomatoes 3 were rotten, the sour cream went out of date 6 weeks ago, the avocado was black through all the flesh and non was able to be salvaged and a package of a red onion, a tomato and some lettuce leaves cost \$11.

i try to encourage all of my clients to buy and eat fresh fruit and vegetables to help improve their health but with this kind of quality produce - in the only place in town to buy produce- i feel a difference in aboriginal health "close the gap" etc will not come about.

it seems that the range of items is good but the quality control is poor - reflecting a level of management that is sub optimal.

chicken or the egg? yes with more demand for good quality vegetables and fruits then turn-over will be greater and items will be more fresh but with expensive prices coupled with wages (in the majority) coming from centrelink people will not be inspired to pay a high price for food that is rotting.

if we are to make a difference in health and therefore quality of life - the main food source needs to be of an impeccable and affordable standard.

on another occasion some years ago in another community i had a discussion with environmental health from NT Gov - they told me that if that particular store was in urban australia it would be shut down as there were several standards that the take-away did not meet but as it was the only one in town - there was no possibility that they could shut it down.

this standardisation is a joke and a mockery of the standards system itself

i hope your enquiry results in being able to rectify some of these problems.

cheers