



Appendix A: Committee visits to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities

As part of the Committee's inquiry into remote Indigenous community stores the Committee visited seventeen communities, all of which had a distinctive culture, history and identity.

The Committee began its community visits on 30 March 2009 travelling to the Torres Strait and the Cape York Peninsula in Queensland over four days. In late April the Committee visited communities in Central Australia over a three day period. Final consultations were held in Broome, Darwin and various remote regions in the Northern Territory including North West Arnhem Land. These visits took place in July over a five day period.

At each location the Committee held a public meeting followed by an open forum. These meetings demonstrated to the Committee the importance of the store in remote community life. The Committee appreciated the generous hospitality and evidence provided to the Committee by traditional owners and elders, clans and families in all the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities visited during the inquiry.

The Committee would also like to thank everyone who assisted with the administrative organisation of the Committee's community visits including ICC managers, Torres Strait Councils, Government Business Managers and many others within the communities.

A brief synopsis of each community visit is set out below.¹

1 Where population figures are given, these are taken from a range of sources including 2006 Census data and Grants Commission figures.

Torres Strait Islands

The Torres Strait Islands (TSI), traditionally called Zenadth Kes, comprise 274 small islands in an area of 48 000 square kilometres (kms), from the tip of Cape York north to Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. Only eighteen of the islands are populated. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data for 2006 indicated 6 958 Torres Strait Islanders live in the region, 15 per cent of the total population.

Torres Strait Islanders have a distinctive cultural identity as a seafaring people. English is a minority language, the local languages being: Torres Strait Creole (53.6 per cent), Kalaw Kawaw Ya/Kalaw Lagaw Ya (12.7 per cent), Meriam Mir (1.6 per cent), Kriol (0.8 per cent), and Djambarrpuyngu (0.1 per cent).

Serviced by a single freight carrier, deliveries are shipped from Cairns once a week to Horn Island then ferried to Thursday Island and then barged out to the other islands.

Waiben (Thursday) Island

The Committee began its community visits on Thursday Island in the inner island group immediately north of Bamaga at the tip of Cape York Peninsula. Thursday Island has the highest population of all islands in the Strait with 2 547 people.

The Committee's meeting was held in the Torres Strait Regional Authority building. The Committee met with Mayor Fred Gela, Torres Strait Island Regional Council, Mayor Pedro Stephens, Torres Shire Council and with representatives of other key regional organisations and councillors. The Islanders Board of Industries and Service (IBIS) store and private store owners, along with local shoppers, spoke about the high freight and fuel costs which boost food prices in the Torres Straits.

The Committee inspected the IBIS store after hours with the assistance of the store manager and the former IBIS Chief Executive Officer, Richard Bowler.

Badu (Mulgrave) Island

Badu Island is in the west-central Torres Strait, approximately 45 kms north of Thursday Island. The island has a population of about 1 200 people. Badu is an administrative centre for the central strait region and has a successful garden enterprise.

The Committee's meeting was held in the community hall opposite the council chambers and was well attended by Badu Island residents. Dr Peter Warriia, elder and traditional owner, opened the meeting with a blessing and closed it with a dedication. The Committee heard from representatives from the family owned

Donga Town General Store and from Badu Supermarket, managed by the private consultancy Island and Cape. The Committee inspected the Island and Cape store.

Masig (Yorke) Island

Masig is a tiny coral cay, about 2.7 kms long and 800 metres at its widest point in west-central Torres Strait. The people have occupied a central position in the Straits trading networks as skilled navigators. A successful fishing, prawning and cray-fishing business operates on Masig Island.

The Committee's meeting was held in a beautifully decorated covered area outside the IBIS store. The meeting was well attended by Masig families, and by quarantine, health and education staff. It began with a welcome by Councillor John Mosby who spoke in a private capacity on behalf of the Masig people. The meeting concluded with a prayer offered by Father Ned Mosby.

The Committee inspected the Masig Grocery Store and also the IBIS store with thanks to the store manager Mrs Elizabeth Warria.

Mer (Murray) Island

Mer is a small mountainous island, the most eastern in the Torres Strait, and home to the Meriam people. Numbering around 450, the Meriam are well known for Edward Kioki Mabo's ten year struggle to achieve land title for his people in the Mabo/Murray Island native title case in 1992.

The Committee's meeting was held in the community hall on the island shore, and opened with a welcome by Elder and Torres Island Regional Councillor for Mer, Ron Day. Thank you to Councillor Day for taking time in a busy month to support the inquiry, and also to the local people who came and shared their views about the store on the day.

The Committee inspected the IBIS store and is grateful for the guidance provided by store assistant Andrew Passi.

Cape York communities

The Cape York Peninsula region is a vast area of cattle grazing land and natural wilderness covering approximately 137 000 square kilometres north of the Jardine River in Queensland (16° south). It is sparsely populated (estimated 18 000, less than one per cent of Australia's total) with 60 per cent being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The Peninsula's largest settlement is the mining town of Weipa on the Gulf of Carpentaria. There are also small service centres at Lakeland, Laura and Coen. Bamaga, a Torres Strait Islander settlement, is the main services centre at the tip of Cape York. Cape Indigenous communities are at Hopevale, Pormpuraaw, Kowanyama, Aurukun, Lockhart River, Napranum, Mapoon, Injinoo, New Mapoon, Umagico and Seisia.

Communities in the region can be cut off entirely during the wet season, from approximately November to April. Stores must stockpile non-perishable items with long shelf-life in preparation for this time and rely on air and barge deliveries for fresh food.

Northern Peninsular Area (NPA) communities

Bamaga, New Mapoon, Umagico, Seisia and Injinoo are five settlements known collectively as the Northern Area Peninsular communities. They are located along a single sealed road from three to four kilometres apart at the tip of Cape York in Queensland.

The five communities are separately populated by the Atambaya, Wuthathi, Yadhaikgana and the Gudang tribes. There are a majority Indigenous residents (1 791 out of 1 939 people) living in the NPA communities. Languages spoken include English, Torres Strait Creole, Kriol, Kalaw Kawaw Ya/Kalaw Lagaw Ya and Mauritian Creole.

Food supply during the dry season is by road train and ferry. Air access to the NPA is via a sealed and all weather tarmac airstrip, and includes an established terminal. Many people from Thursday Island go across the Strait to Bamaga to source cheaper fresher foods from Bamaga and NPA stores.

Bamaga and surrounding area

Bamaga is the most northern township in Queensland located 983 km north of Cairns. Bamaga is the commercial and administrative centre for government services and the headquarters of the NPA Regional Council.

The Committee's public meeting held in the Reginald Sebasio Community Hall was well attended by residents of all ages who contributed to the inquiry. The Committee was pleased to hear from NPA Mayor Joseph Elu who played a key role in the establishment of Outback Stores, and oversees the operation and management of the successful NPA Seisia store.

The Committee wishes to thank the acting IBIS manager and staff in Bamaga for showing them around the store after hours.

Umagico Alau, New Mapoon and Seisia stores

After the public hearing in Bamaga, the Committee visited the following nearby stores: Umagico Alau; New Mapoon; and Seisia stores.

The Umagico Alau store is owned by the NPA and is operated by long term manager Peter Craven.

The New Mapoon Store and Takeaway is a small store which provides popular takeaways, household goods and other services and is managed by Nathan Demey.

In addition to groceries the Seisia Supermarket provides a delicatessen and freshly made salads. The Seisia store sources its fresh meat from its community owned abattoir. The store is managed by Tracey Sands.

The Committee wishes to thank all the store managers for showing the Committee around their respective stores.

Aurukun

The shire of Aurukun covers an area of 7500 square kilometres about two-thirds of up the western side of Cape York Peninsular, between the communities of Pormpuraaw and Weipa. Aurukun is approximately 900 kilometres north-west of Cairns via the Peninsula Development road, which is unsealed for most of the distance travelled.

The majority members of the Aurukun community are the Wik and Wik Way peoples, traditional owners of the area, comprising 17 tribal nations and five spiritual clan groups.

Aurukun has had negative press in recent times but the Committee found it an attractive community in recovery. The Committee held its meeting in the community hall, formerly the local pub and shared sandwiches with local inquiry participants. Particular thanks are due to Councillor Neville Poochemunka, Aurukun Shire Council Mayor, Aurukun Councillors and the Wik and Way families who went ahead with the public hearing and community forum despite a recent death in the community. The Committee wishes to thank staff and shoppers who shared their experiences in the store.

Thanks also to the Aurukun Supermarket Manager, Craig Oxlade, and John Smith owner of Island and Cape which runs the well stocked store.

Kowanyama

Kowanyama, meaning 'place of many waters', is a remote Aboriginal community situated on the Mitchell River in western Cape York Peninsula, 620km north west of Cairns. Kowanyama can be accessed by road, however it is cut off during the wet season. The area is governed by the community-elected Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council (KASC).

Kowanyama has an estimated resident population of 1 013 people (at 30 June 2007) varying during the year. Resident tribes include the Kokoberra, Yir Yorant (or Kokomnjen) and Kunjen clans. The three main language groups are the Yir Yorant, Yik Thangalkl, Uw Oygangand and Olgol and Kokobera.

The major food supplier in Kowanyama is operated by Queensland Government. There is also an Anglican Church Coffee Shop, the Guest House, and the Takeaway shop.

Thank you to KASC Mayor Thomas Hudson who welcomed the Committee on behalf of the community and to store manager Ian McDowell, Manager, of the Kowanyama Store for facilitating the inspection of the store. The Committee was also pleased to hear from local women who perform important roles in their community.

Central Desert communities

The Committee arrived in Alice Springs, the CBD of the Central Desert Region, on 27 April 2009 and travelled directly to Papunya in the Central Desert of the Northern Territory.

Papunya

Papunya is a remote community of 342 people located 245 kms west-northwest of Alice Springs. Papunya was established as a hub for Anangu desert communities in 1959 and is populated mainly by the Pintupi but also Luritja, Warlpiri, Arrente and Anmatyerre tribes.

Papunya is well known for the Papunya Tula Art Movement (dot art) and its art and music centres. The Committee was honoured to meet with elder Michael Nelson Jakamarra who designed the Possum and Wallaby Dreaming mosaic that features in Parliament House's forecourt in Canberra. The Committee was met Sammy Butcher, Vice President of the Papunya store committee, member of Papunya's Warumpi Band and uncle to the new generation Tjupi Band.

The Committee held a public meeting outside the Council Office and heard from locals about the pride they have in their community owned store. The Committee also thanks private store managers Greg and Michelle Giumelli showing the Committee around the well stocked store.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands

The Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands cover more than 103 000 square kms in the far northwest of South Australia, over 1 200 kms from Adelaide. The Anangu received title for this land under South Australian government legislation in 1981. The Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara is the representative body for the region. All traditional owners of any part of the APY Lands are members of this body.

The APY Lands have a population of 3 000 people living in 50 municipalities and up to 50 occupied homelands. Anangu culture is strong and Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara is the first language.

Stores in APY lands are community owned and run by the Community Store Committees, often by arrangement with non indigenous store managers. Seven out of the nine stores in the APY Lands are Mai Wiru stores. Mai Wiru is a regional food policy developed by the Naganampa Health Council and the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council, under direction of the APY land holding body.

The Committee visited Mai Wiru stores at Amata and Kaltjiti.

Amata

Amata community is at the western end of the Musgrave Ranges in South Australia approximately 500kms south-west of Alice Springs, the nearest major capital centre. The community was originally established as a cattle outstation in the 1960s to relieve growth of Ernabella (Pukatja) community.

Amata has a fluctuating population of 350 with Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara the main language spoken. The population includes Anangu who live in surrounding homelands.

The Committee held its public meeting in the open outside the new PYKu Centre using the community amplifiers to broadcast to local attendees sitting in cars, under the trees and on verandas. The Committee would like to thank Amata

Council Members Alan Wilson and Loyld Inkamala for opening the Committee's public meeting.

Angelina Dunnett, Acting Municipal Services Officer, also provided translation in Pitjantjatjara language and was accompanied by her three year old son Delquad at the public meeting.

The Committee inspected the Amata Mai Wiru store which adheres to a low sugar drink policy. A visit was made to the Amata Tjala Arts Centre where large original canvasses were being worked on by local artists, some of whom are internationally acclaimed.

Kaltjiti (Fregon)

Kaltjiti is 45km south of the Musgrave Ranges, 350kms east of Uluru and 500kms south-west of Alice Springs in the remote north-west of South Australia. It is 137km to Adelaide and 125km by road to Amata and the western communities and homelands. Kaltjiti, formerly known as Fregon, was founded in 1934 and the town built in 1961 as a base for cattlemen and their families.

Kaltjiti is a majority Indigenous town (78 per cent) with 212 Anangu usually resident in the village and surrounding Inintata Homelands. Languages include Pitjantjatjara, Luritja, Warlpiri and Yankunytjatjara.

The Committee held its meeting in the Kaltjiti Community Hall with key members of the store committee, Elders Robert Stevens and his wife Fairy. Nganampa Health Council, school staff, local residents and a camel hunter from the homelands provided perspectives on health and food supply in the community. The Committee wishes to thank John Tregenza of Nganampa Health Council for his assistance with translations during the meeting.

The Committee is grateful to Kaltjiti store managers Eileen and Peter Johns who provided an inspection of the Kaltjiti Mai Wiru store. The store managers had recently taken over the store, with immediate improvements to the quality and range of foods and goods available.

Arnhem Land

Arnhem Land is a remote area of Australia which covers 96 000 square kilometres on the coastal north and north east of the Northern Territory. It is bounded by Kakadu National Park, the Arafura Sea and the Gulf of Carpentaria. Declared an Aboriginal Reserve in 1931, Arnhem Land is largely in Aboriginal ownership.

The Committee travelled from Katherine to Jilkminggan, located just south of Central Arnhem Land before travelling to Bulman in the southern most area of Central Arnhem Land.

Jilkminggan

Jilkminggan is located 140km south east of Katherine on the Roper Highway and the nearest regional centre, Mataranka, is 35km away. The traditional owners of the land are the Mangarayi people. The population of the community is 266 which includes Mole Hill, 40km East of Jilkminggan on the Roper River and Mulgan Camp at Mataranka.

The Committee thanks community members and elders for the drive from the airstrip at Mataranka to Jilkminggan, which can be closed off for months of year when the Roper River floods during wet season. The Committee's meeting was opened by Store Committee Chairman Robert Smiler. The Committee heard from the women of Jilkminggan who told of their struggles before Outback Stores took on the management of their store. The Committee also thanks the Sunrise Health Services team who attended from Katherine.

The Committee later inspected the Jilkminggan Store. Particular thanks to the store managers Jenny and Nabeel Rashid and store assistant Lorraine Doctor who showed members the changes that have taken place to the store.

Bulman

Bulman is in forested country 300kms east of Katherine off the Central Arnhem Highway. The four hour road trip from Katherine passes through the communities of Barunga and Beswick. The road often gets cut off during the wet season and is rough and unsealed past Barunga.

The population of Bulman is around 160. The traditional owners of the land are the Rembarrnga and Dalabon people.

The Committee is particularly grateful to the people of Bulman for proceeding with the meeting given a significant recent death.

The Committee held its meeting in a covered open area adjoining the store. People in the community were very pleased with changes that had been made by Outback Stores. Unfortunately due to delays in the flight schedule, the public meeting had to be cut short.

Special thanks are due to Store Committee Vice Chairman Michael Stevens, to Councillor and community leader Lazarus Murray and to Elder Mrs Maggie Chikkapa. Also thanks to Store Managers Peter and Gayleen Aitken and others

who assisted with the administration of the visit and showed the Committee through the store.

The Committee was farewelled by a traditional dance with accompanying didgeridoo.

North East Arnhem Land

North East Arnhem Land has the highest concentration of discrete Aboriginal communities in Australia (communities with greater than 50 per cent of Aboriginal residents). Some 11 000 people live in this very remote area, many in homelands radiating out from larger communities and townships.

The Yolngu people are the traditional owners of North East Arnhem land. In 1963 the Government's decision to excise land for a bauxite mine at Yirrkala on Gove Peninsula prompted Yolngu estate owners to petition Parliament. The Yirrkala Petition, painted on bark, attracted international attention. Although the court case (*Milirrpum and Others v Nabalaco P/L and the Commonwealth* 1971) was lost, the actions of the Yolngu led to later successful land rights claims.

Food supply to the region is provided by a weekly barge from Darwin. Larger island communities have airstrips and mainland communities have road access which is closed during the wet season.

Goulburn Island (Warruwi)

The Warruwi people are the traditional owners of the Goulburn Islands, two islands located roughly three kilometres off the northern Arnhem Land coast and 300 kms north-east of Darwin. The Warruwi community is located on the southern tip of the south island and has an airstrip.

Warruwi has a population of approximately 415 people. It is a dry community (no alcohol) and fishing is the traditional practice of local people who hunt turtles and dugong prevalent in the area. There are four clan and language groups within Warruwi. The main languages spoken are Maung, Kunwinjku, Walang and Galpu.

The Committee visited that Ajurumu Self-Service Store and Takeaway which is owned by the Ajurumu Store Aboriginal Corporation and managed by Arnhem Land Progress Corporation's (ALPA) consultancy management arm, Australian Retail Consultants (ARC).

The meeting was held in the sheltered area in front of the store and was opened by Store Committee Member and Community elder, Jenny Inmulugulu, with a

welcome in Maung language. Thank you to ALPA store directors who attended the meeting and to the many families who shared their views about pricing and food supply in the store. Store managers Damien Fitzpatrick and Kirsty Slattery showed the Committee a range of produce and healthy takeaways that are available through the store.

Milingimbi

The Milingimbi community is the main settlement on Milingimbi Island (part of the Crocodile Island Group). It is located just off the north coast of Central Arnhem Land in the Arafura Sea, approximately 440 km east of Darwin and 206 km west of Nhulunbuy and has an airstrip.

Milingimbi has a total population of approximately 1 500 people. It is located on Yirritja moiety land, belonging to the Batjimurrungu and Walamangu clans. The northern part of the island is Dhuwa moiety land belonging to the Gorryindin and Gamalangga clans. The main languages spoken at Milingimbi are Gupapuyngu, Djambarrpuyngu and Wangguri, however several other Aboriginal languages are used.

The Milingimbi Community Store is one of Arnhem Land Progress Corporation's five member stores and is managed and covered by an ALPA Corporate Licence. The Store completed a major renovation in August 2008 resulting in a significant increase in floor space and storage capacity.

The Committee's meeting was held outside under trees with the sea in view in the Jessie Smith Park. The meeting was well attended by Milingimbi Elders and community members who positioned themselves in groups under the trees. Thank you in particular to Store Director Keith Lapulung, Store Committee members Ross Mandi and Dorothy Buyulminy, store manager Geoff Mclean and interpreter John Ryan.

The Committee inspected the new well stocked store which also runs a bakery and take-away offering a range of healthy options.

Maningrida

Maningrida is largest discrete Indigenous centre in North East Arnhem Land, with 2 700 people usually resident and 92.2 per cent being Indigenous. The township is approximately 550km east of Darwin and 250km west of Nhulunbuy and is located at the mouth of the Liverpool River.

The main languages spoken in Maningrida are Burarra, Djambarrpuyngu, Djinang, Gunninggu, Gurrmoni, Kriol, Nakkara, Ndjebbana, Rembarrnga, Yanyangu.

Maningrida can be reached by road from Darwin (500km) between three and six hours, and one hour by air depending on the type of aircraft. Maningrida has regular daily flights.

The Committee held its meeting late in the day in Maningrida Town Hall, which was funded and built by the community itself. The meeting was attended by Managers and Directors of the town's two key Aboriginal corporations the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) and the Maningrida Progress Association (MPA), both of which run stores and a range of other businesses in the town.

Particular thanks are due to traditional owner Helen Williams, Chairperson of the Maningrida Progress Association, who welcomed the Committee. Thank you also to youth centre staff, health clinic staff, and to Mark Hutchings, Manager of BAC Barlmark Supermarket, and Bill Young, General Manager of the MPA store for the evening inspections of their large well stocked and busy stores. The Committee would especially like to thank Lisa Ackerman from the BAC Good Food Kitchen for opening the takeaway for inspection on the following public holiday.