

Submission to the Inquiry into community stores in remote indigenous communities

- The current model of remote community stores is missing an enormous opportunity to create community social capital, capacity and health benefits. The community store could be developed to become a social meeting (yarning) place to build community togetherness.
- The current model of community stores being required to be 'profitable' is unnecessary. If a non-government organisation or community group management was used, the aim would only be for a cost neutral model.
- The government should not be supporting a system that supplies predominantly unhealthy foods to a population group already acknowledged as being at high risk of chronic diseases (eg diabetes) resulting from a poor diet. Healthy foods should predominate using the traffic light system and the government prepared to support this with financial supports such as subsidies, tax relief, etc, contractual requirements as well as in-store healthy food promotions. Consideration should be given to making some high fat and/or high sugar foods and drinks unavailable (eg soft drinks).
- As much as is possible, local food production and sale at the community store should be encouraged and developed. This should focus on foods (fruits, vegetables, meat) that are native to that environment. Seasonality of foods should not be seen as an impediment.
- Economies of scale could be improved by tendering for one supplier for certain regions at agreed price and food availability conditions and/or developing regional warehousing to supply multiple community stores.
- Governance and employment needs to be at least partly community participation. Communities vary in their capability to achieve this but it should be incorporated where possible and encouraged and developed as part of an overall strategy.
- Community stores should become an ideal location to publicise and run health promotion and clinical health strategies, including but not only healthy eating programs.
- An emergency food supply plan needs to be developed for occurrences of a sudden loss of functioning of the community store, as in most communities there is no other option. In Western Australia, Foodbank WA could be contracted to supply emergency supplies in times of need.
- It should be recognised that not one model fits all and local solutions may be required that sees quite different models being used at different locations.
- A budget needs to be set aside for ongoing evaluation of progress and assessment of various models of community store delivery.

I don't think any of the above is unachievable as I think each dot point is being done somewhere to some degree already.

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