

To further my appearance before your committee in Alice Springs 28/04/09.

Your committee requested we put down what makes our store business model successful.

As stated before the committee Station Stores have been around for a very long time. Most started as a request to assist government with the delivery of its services to remote aboriginal people living on pastoral leases, as it was recognised the strong bonds between aboriginal people and pastoralists was a key to delivering services.

At Epenarra and Murray Downs we strive to give the customer what they want and need, this gives us satisfied and returning customers.

We have worked hard since 1979 in running stores primarily for an aboriginal customer base and our businesses are profitable.

Our models work because we are seen as a part of the social fabric in these communities. Respect and understanding of our customers social and cultural identity is an important part of operations.

We do not have to adhere to a list of suppliers and can source our products from the best deals and quality. That said we also have long and strong ties with our main suppliers that does not come from exclusion of others, but rather loyalty.

Our staff is well trained and has long term employees (our shortest term employee has been with us for 4 years). People feel comfortable dealing with us, and relationships are formed. We are here for the long term, not on contract, it is our home and our business, and we cannot afford to get it wrong.

Our transport is flexible, with either a weekly or fortnightly run depending on sales. We adhere to all guidelines set in place by environmental health standards. Both in the cold supply chain of transportation and in our premises.

We deliver high quality customer service and products at competitive prices. We go beyond the 'normal' services of a store to assist our customers. Supporting our local communities in sporting, cultural and community events is something we are proud of and happy in doing.

Health and Social wellbeing of our customers is important. Care is taken to provide and supply a range of options to our customers. Promotion of healthy choices are displayed and encouraged.

On reading the Outback Stores submission to your enquiry, which is meant to be a positive document? Too many times it relates back to 'negative scenarios', and tells us how much better they can do things. Management of Outback Stores may have good intentions, but appear to be doing too much sitting in their offices writing 'feel good' submissions and not seeing what is really happening on the ground.

We are pleased with our achievements in business and hope that we can continue to operate and improve our services for many years to come on a fair and level playing field. Not become a casualty of government policies that affect our right to trade on an equitable basis with our competition.

Finally, in closing each community is different. Encourage models that are working. Judge on merit. You do not need to be a huge machine like Outback Stores to have a social conscience. We are proud of our small business that we operate with integrity and due respect to our customers.

Thank you for your time

Lynne Leigh

Epenarra & Murray Downs Stores