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Geographic location and Aboriginal economic status: a census-based analysis of outstations in Australia's Northern Territory.

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ABSTRACT

This paper utilises 1986 Census data to examine the demographic and economic characteristics of Aboriginal people in Australia's remotest locations. In so doing three objectives are fulfilled. First, to assert that it is important to examine Aboriginal society in a spatial context. Second, to demonstrate how Census statistics may be manipulated to isolate meaningful spatial sub-categories of the Aboriginal population. Third, to consider the extent to which extreme remote location for a particular segment of the Aboriginal population is associated with distinct social and economic characteristics. In considering the special circumstances of remote areas, the notion of 'locational disadvantage', as posited in the *Commonwealth Social Strategy Statement* of 1990, is discussed. This is regarded as an essentially technocratic view of remote area settlement. Viewed from an Aboriginal perspective, movement to outstations represents the spatial optimum in a locational trade-off which is aimed at balancing a range of cultural, economic, social and political considerations. A range of data for the outstation population of the Northern Territory are presented from a specially derived Census sub-file. These are compared with equivalent data for Aborigines in the rest of the Northern Territory and with Aborigines in Australia as a whole. This comprises the most comprehensive set of data for outstations available to date and confirms some of the major findings of individual case studies. The paper concludes that, on the whole, remote location is reflected in lower economic status but not in demographic structure.

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Pointedly described as 'the segment of the continent left over after the other colonies had established their boundaries' (Courtenay 1982: 25), Australia's Northern Territory is the epitome of a peripheral region. Isolated by vast distances from the nation's main centres of population, non-Aboriginal settlement in the region has always been relatively small and tenuously based, deriving mainly from the Territory's strategic location bordering South East Asia as well as from natural resource exploitation and the task of administering an area fully one sixth that of the whole continent (Taylor 1991). Notwithstanding the fragility of this population base, the impact of European settlement has been substantial, not least in redistributing indigenous peoples across a range of cultural, social and economic contexts. Unlike the settler population, the Aboriginal presence in the Northern Territory has been long-term and continuous with Aboriginal people now accounting for 22 per cent of the total population following an initial post-contact decline. Though still predominantly rural-based (69 per cent), Aborigines constitute a sizeable resident minority in all of the Territory's urban centres with the exception of the mining towns of Alyangula, Jabiru and Nhulunbuy. This provides for extremely varied cultural and economic settings ranging from groups of modern hunter-gatherers in places like Arnhem Land to suburban dwellers in towns like Alice Springs and Darwin.

In recent years there has been a greater willingness among Aboriginal affairs policy makers to recognise the diversity which exists in the social and economic circumstances of Aboriginal people. As Altman and Sanders (forthcoming) point out, such diversity is not inherent in the people themselves but derives from the differential impact of European settlement in the various regions of Australia. To some extent, variable lifestyles have also been facilitated by government intervention as, for example, in the case of financial grants to Aborigines wishing to settle in remote localities (Altman and Taylor 1989: 23). During the 1980s, the Commonwealth Aboriginal affairs portfolio identified several categories of Aboriginal communities which reflected this pattern of settlement. These categories included:

A1: Discrete Aboriginal townships in remote areas often located on Aboriginal land and likely to be responsible for their own municipal-type services.

A2: Outstations and other small groups in remote areas linked to a resource organisation in a nearby Aboriginal township or other regional centre.

B1: Aboriginal communities in State or Territory capital cities and major urban areas.

B2: Aboriginal communities whose members are residents of country towns mixed in with a predominantly non-Aboriginal population.

B3: Groups of Aborigines living in an identified location or camp site near or within an urban area and having different arrangements from the town for municipal services, or no such facilities at all.

In line with recent recommendations that research be undertaken into the particular economic circumstances of Aboriginal people in discrete geographic areas (Commonwealth of Australia 1991: 447), the focus in this paper is on the population in category (A2), outstations. These are defined as small (average size 30 people) relatively permanent decentralised communities consisting of closely related individuals that have been established by Aboriginal people with a strong traditional orientation (Blanchard 1987). It is estimated that approximately 588 such communities existed around Australia in 1986 with an estimated total population of 9,538 (ibid: 302). They are located entirely in remote regions of Australia and approximately 70 per cent of all outstation residents are to be found in remote parts of the Northern Territory, the specific focus here. Although comprising only one-fifth of the Territory's Aboriginal population, the proportion resident at outstations has risen dramatically in recent years as part of a decentralisation trend in Aboriginal rural population distribution (Coombs et al. 1982). This movement of population is indicative of significant political, social and economic change occurring within certain segments of Aboriginal society and has been described as a 'return to country' (Blanchard 1987). What seemed in the 1960s to be an inevitable demise of the indigenous Aboriginal economy after prolonged contact with the welfare state was reversed (Altman 1987: xiii). As such, the movement to outstations provides a convenient focus with which to highlight emerging variations in the social and economic circumstances of Aboriginal people.

This paper thus has several aims:

1. To assert that it is important to examine Aboriginal society in a spatial context.

2. To demonstrate how Australian Census statistics may be manipulated to isolate meaningful spatial sub-categories of the Aboriginal population.

3. To consider the extent to which extreme remote location for a particular segment of the Aboriginal population (the population at outstations) is associated with distinct social and economic characteristics.

Geographic location and economic status

The fact that social and economic indicators for Aboriginal people reveal a spatial dimension, even within seemingly homogeneous regions, has long been recognised in Aboriginal economic studies and is increasingly of significance to the formulation of relevant policy. For example, the need to acknowledge heterogeneity within Aboriginal society and the variable economic circumstances of people living in different locations was one of the major conclusions of the Committee of Review into Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs (Miller 1985) and is reflected in the subsequent thrust of the Hawke Government's Aboriginal Employment Development Policy. Prior to this, the two major academic surveys of Aboriginal economic status (Altman and Nieuwenhuysen 1979; Fisk 1985) structured their analyses on the basis of geographic location with an understanding that the economic life of Aboriginal people in different categories of place assumes distinct characteristics. More recent studies reveal evidence of an urban/rural split for a range of economic indicators as well as notable regional variations such that Aborigines in large urban areas and in the Australian Capital Territory and Southern and Eastern Australia are generally better off compared to those in rural areas and in the Northern Territory and other remote regions (Tesfaghiorghis 1991). Evidence is also available showing that urban/rural residence is a significant factor explaining variable rates of Aboriginal labour force participation (Daly 1991). It is important to note that these observations do not simply replicate the pattern of socio-economic variability observed for the rest of the population. This is demonstrated by the considerable gap in socio-economic status that exists between Aboriginal people and others even within remote regions of the country such as the Northern Territory (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1990).

The observation that where you live and how (well) you live are interdependent phenomena is well established within human geography (Harvey 1973; Smith 1977; Kirby 1982) and is increasingly acknowledged by social policy makers. For example, the Commonwealth Social Justice Strategy statement of 1990, *Towards a Fairer Australia* identifies 'locational disadvantage' as an important factor which may inhibit access to employment, education and training opportunities as well as to social infrastructure (Hawke and Howe 1990). This, it is assumed,

works to the socio-economic detriment of those resident in places which score low on some locational index, although the means with which to calibrate such relative disadvantage is left unspecified. The National Population Council (1991: 87-97) develops this theme further and identifies a number of key questions which stem from the relationship between population change and social justice. Those of interest here are: How does population change affect the welfare of individuals? Are some groups more or less disadvantaged? What are the social justice implications of policies concerned with population size, composition and distribution? What are the implications of changing settlement patterns for social justice? Finally, although this is implied in all other questions, what are the implications of population change and policies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities? To the extent that an increase in the number of outstations represents the most tangible form of settlement change in Aboriginal society in recent time, all the above issues are particularly pertinent in the context of the present discussion.

While the Social Justice Strategy statement singles out the fringes of major cities for special attention by virtue of their high concentrations of locationally disadvantaged population, most previous attempts to define locational disadvantage have been based on more rigorous measurement of spatial relativities and thereby have highlighted the relative plight of Australians living in remote non-metropolitan regions (Faulkner and French 1983; Holmes 1977, 1981). From this perspective, the population resident at Aboriginal outstations is manifestly the most locationally disadvantaged in Australia. Not only do they fall firmly within the definition of remote Australia as determined by the Commonwealth Grants Commission, they are physically detached even within this area. On any objective measure of accessibility these localities would excel in their detachment from employment and training opportunities and from social infrastructure. They are poorly connected to transport networks and often distant from even the smallest rural population centres. They are widely dispersed and small in size (usually less than 100 residents) providing, individually at least, a limited market demand for goods and services. In classical central place theory they occupy the very base of the settlement hierarchy and, from the experience of market economies elsewhere, would be regarded in conventional regional development terms as 'downward transition regions' typified by outmigration (particularly of the young and most able), chronic undercapitalisation and economic stagnation (Friedmann 1966).

Notwithstanding their manifest isolation (some might argue because of it), the evidence of the past twenty years or so paints a more positive scenario than that outlined above and this is reflected in a continued growth in the

number of outstations and their associated populations. Far from representing the stagnant economic areas of conventional economic theory, it would appear that the remotest areas of Australia are characterised by an internal dynamism revitalised by the common processes of increased public funding and the growing influence of Aboriginal self-determination (something that has been noted for other remote areas such as Alaska - see Taylor 1991). In this context, Aboriginal people have not been merely passive receptors of external forces but have exercised a degree of choice in their actions and the overwhelming manifestation of this has been an increasing dispersion of the population primarily through the formation of outstations.

From the perspective of those seeking to provide services and achieve social and economic equity goals, such dispersion may be construed as a retrograde step on the grounds that it serves to reinforce the locational disadvantage of an already severely disadvantaged group. However, such a view stems from an essentially Eurocentric notion of remoteness as defined and measured by spatial analytical techniques. From a more behavioural perspective, remoteness is very much in the eye of the beholder and may be equally associated with situations where individuals are unable to 'get or to be reached by the activities (or services and facilities) which are *relevant* to them' (Faulkner and French 1983: 4). In this context, the distribution and location of outstations and the partial displacement of township-based populations to reside in them may be seen as an extension of Aboriginal perceptions of locational advantage. As such, they represent the spatial optimum in a locational trade-off which is aimed at balancing a range of cultural, economic, social and political considerations (Peterson 1985: 93; Stanley 1989: 160-2). Such a trade-off involves reduced access to an already limited labour market, educational and training opportunities as well as to township-based housing and other social facilities. To the extent that these are perceived as losses, they are set against the not insignificant gains due to living in smaller more politically acceptable social units away from overcrowded, polyglot townships with the prospect of productive activity and income enhanced through traditional pursuits (Altman 1985; Fisk 1985: 61-2), an improvement in health conditions (Morice 1976; Eastwell 1979) and fulfilment of cultural obligations through access to ancestral lands (Coombs, Dexter and Hiatt 1982). There is also the prospect of increased direct access to Commonwealth resources such as vehicles and grants to outstation communities. Although these are relatively small in scale they are available in a context where competition for control of financial resources is reduced.

Whatever perspective on outstations is adopted, their unique geographic isolation and the purposeful manner in which they have been established, points to the likelihood that their demographic and economic characteristics would both reflect and derive from this distinctiveness with associated implications for economic and social policy. Whether this is in fact the case is less than clear and confusing signals arise from the available data. For example, in contemplating the prospects for sustained growth of outstations, the population displacement involved has been described as an 'old persons movement' with consequent limits to expansion (Cane and Stanley 1985) whereas other findings suggest that it may be more appropriately described as a 'young persons movement' with an in-built capacity for sustained growth (Young 1982). While noting the existence of a number of ad hoc case studies that have provided a varied range of social and economic data (Altman 1987; Cane and Stanley 1985; Meehan 1982), the most comprehensive picture of the outstation population to date (Young 1982) has been drawn from community profile data compiled by the now superseded Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA), although these data are far from complete and, as described later, severe limitations detract from their use, not the least being the fact that collection of such data was discontinued in 1987.

Given the absence of an adequate analytical data base for this important component of the Aboriginal population, the purpose of this paper is to report on a new source of information in the form of a Census sub-file generated by the Aboriginal Statistics Unit in Darwin for outstations in the Northern Territory. The basic aim is to demonstrate how Census data may be manipulated to create an Aboriginal outstation sub-file and to examine the extent to which data generated by this sub-file reflect the distinctive character of outstations already described. Put another way, is extreme remoteness and purposeful displacement of population associated with distinct socio-economic characteristics? To answer this, selected characteristics of the outstation population of the Northern Territory are compared with equivalent characteristics for the rest of the Aboriginal population in the Northern Territory and the Australian Aboriginal population as a whole. The extent of variation between these geographic groupings is of policy relevance.

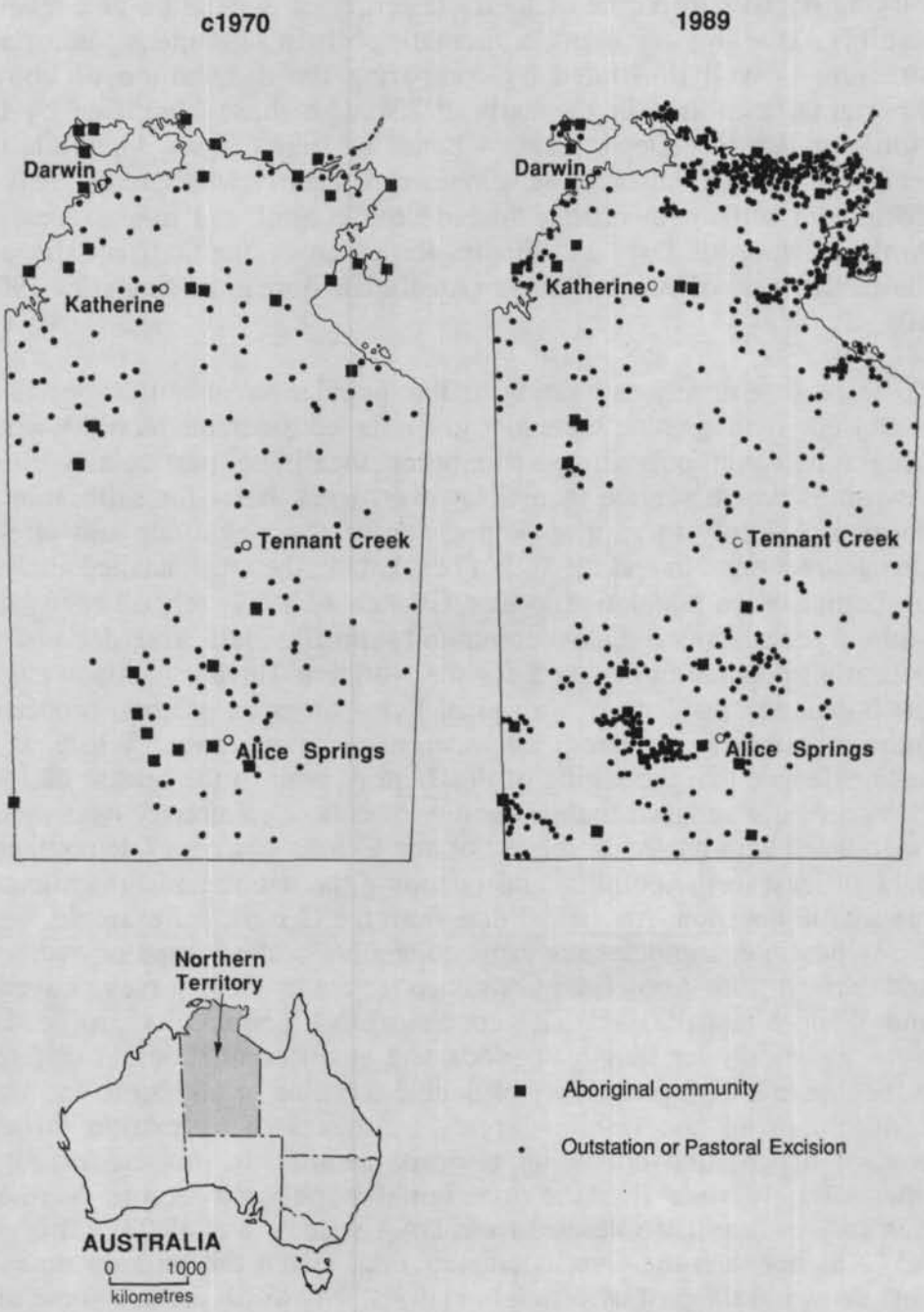
The outstations population - how many?

At present, the Northern Territory Government estimates that there are some 650 localities within its jurisdiction which have a population of less than 100 persons and may be described as outstations. The average size of

such localities has been variously estimated to be 16 persons (Blanchard 1987) and 30 persons (Bliss 1987; Peterson 1985: 93), although counting the actual number at any one time is extremely difficult due to high population mobility. Approximately 450 of these places are serviced to varying degrees by virtue of their clustering of population and relative stability. That this represents a dramatic shift in settlement pattern and structure is well illustrated by comparing the distribution of known Aboriginal localities in the early 1970s with those identified by the Northern Territory Department of Lands in 1989 (Figure 1). While the tendency towards outstation development is clearly widespread, areas of distinctive settlement change include the coastal and inland areas of Arnhem Land, the Daly and Finniss Rivers areas, the Gulf country and the desert west of Alice Springs (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1990: 10).

To some extent, any estimation of the 'population' at outstations is an exercise in demographic semantics given the considerable mobility which occurs between outstations and other localities, particularly those townships which service them. However, some basis for calibration is necessary if only to gain an impression of the magnitude and rate of change over time. In seeking such a benchmark, the most detailed analysis of the outstation population to date (Blanchard 1987) relied heavily and without question on DAA community profile data and derived an outstation population of 6,665 for the Northern Territory (this excludes the population resident in Aboriginal living areas on pastoral properties more commonly referred to as pastoral excisions). While it is acknowledged that the timing of this Inquiry prior to the release of 1986 Census results reduced the availability of data, a cautionary note should be sounded with respect to the use of non-Census sources of demographic data, at least to the point of understanding the nature and limitations of the data in question. Aboriginal data from the Census, for example, is, as far as possible, simultaneous in its collection, without gaps or overlaps, and derived from Aboriginal Census collectors by field survey (Loveday and Wade-Marshall 1985). By contrast, DAA community profile data were gathered over lengthy periods and at different times in different places, have a high probability of double counting or omission, and were collected in ad hoc fashion largely by means of estimation through council offices and outstation resource centres. In this context, it is interesting to note that the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory in June 1986 derived from DAA sources was 39,237. This was 4,511 higher than the Census enumeration. Given the reliance on such data shown in the past by official inquiries, it is worth making some play of the fact that for most purposes requiring comprehensive analysis of population subgroups the Census is still the best source available and its

Figure 1. Distribution of Aboriginal localities in the Northern Territory, 1970 and 1989.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (1990: 12).

greater use, albeit in appropriately disaggregated ways, should be encouraged.

The ABS outstation sub-file

Given the nature of ABS Census geography, it is not possible to employ standard output formats to circumscribe an outstation population. Even population totals for each outstation are impossible to establish as the Census geography does not identify localities that are not themselves a collection district (CD - the smallest statistical unit of the Census) or made up of a series of CDs. This, therefore, precludes any analysis of individual outstations as they are too small to constitute a CD. At best, such populations are subsumed as part of the 'Other Rural' section-of-state data which may also include well serviced population clusters of up to 200 persons as well as pastoral settlements which, for analytical and policy reasons, may more appropriately be considered as a separate entity.

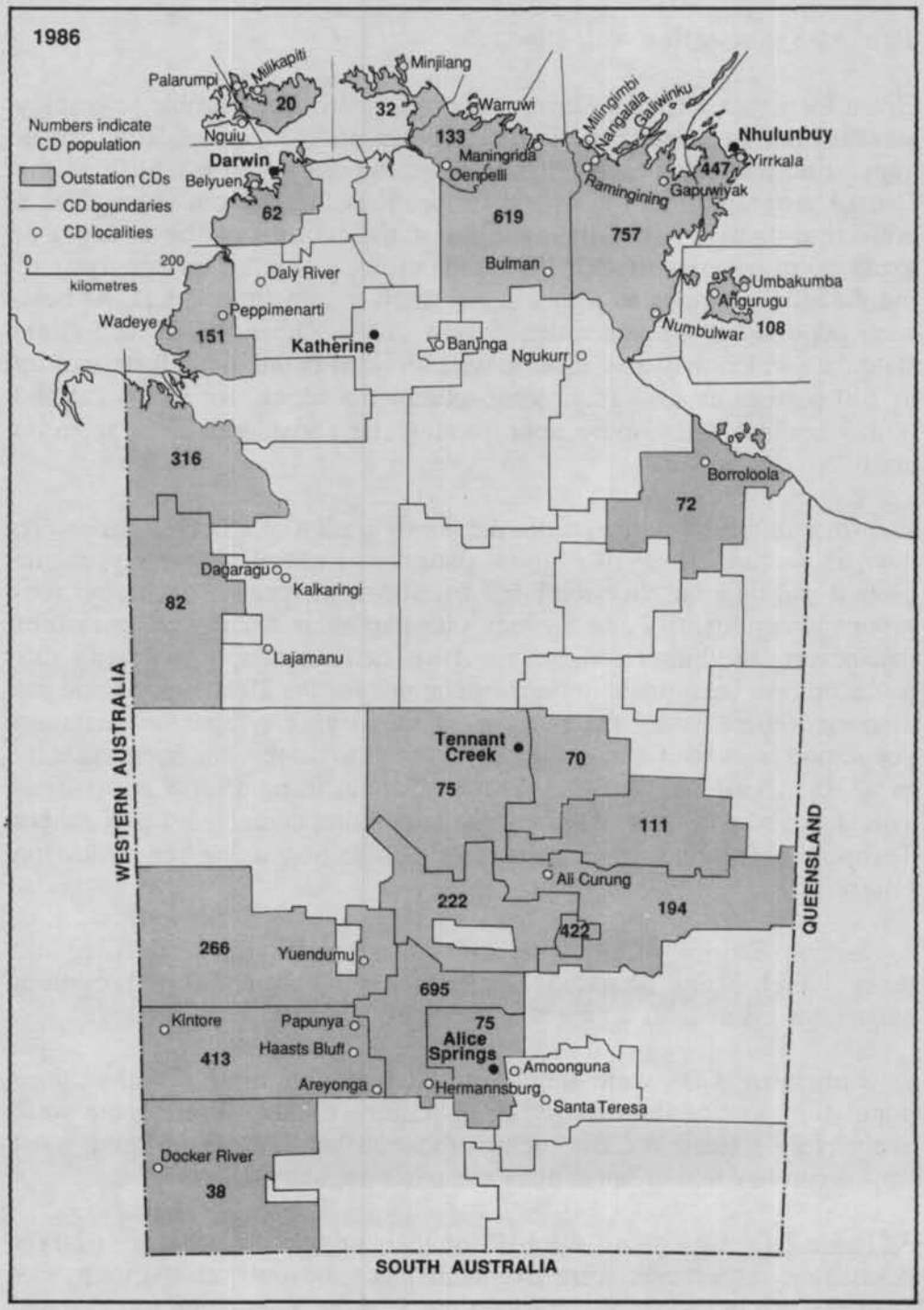
A further difficulty derives from the configuration of CD boundaries. To date, these have tended to ignore patterns of social geography on the ground and thus far have inhibited any focus on specific outstation sub-groups which identify and interact with particular Aboriginal townships and occupy the hinterlands serviced by them. Attempts to rectify this problem have been made in the preparations for the 1991 Census and are discussed later. As for the problem of identifying a separate outstation population from the Census, the only attempt to do this has been made by the ABS Aboriginal Statistics Unit in Darwin using 1986 Census data. This involved a best estimation of the population enumerated at Northern Territory outstations by a process of elimination using the following criteria:

1. Northern Territory Census division collectors districts were listed and those which were bounded localities or which could not contain outstations (as in areas adjacent to the city of Darwin) were deleted.

2. Remaining CDs were then examined to determine whether their population was predominantly at outstations or not. While some were exclusively outstation CDs, such as those in 'rural' Arnhem Land, most were a combination of outstations and other population centres.

3. Those CDs which had the bulk of their population located at larger permanent settlements were excluded from the outstation group. For example, this included the CD where most of the population was located

Figure 2. Location and population size of CDs included in the outstation sub-file.



in Finke township. In most cases, the definition of a larger township was one containing more than 100 people and consisting of a shop and/or school. Some settlements were included in the sample despite having such facilities because the settlements themselves were small. As a broad guide, therefore, outstations were regarded as those localities which were physically detached from larger fully serviced settlements. While a combination of outstations might have more facilities when considered as a group, they were regarded as outstation settlements because they had no real centrally serviced point.

Those CDs included in the outstation sub-file are indicated as the shaded areas in Figure 2 together with the CD population. Those excluded are left blank. This selection results in a total outstation population of 5,474 which may be regarded as a conservative estimate given the nature of the methodology used and is properly defined as a best approximation of the base population. An indication of the geographic distribution of the sub-file population is provided by the population totals shown for each CD. The main concentration occurs in coastal areas of the Northern Territory, particularly in Arnhem Land, which accounts for 43 per cent of the sub-file population. The other main concentration occurs in the desert country to the west of Alice Springs and accounts for 27 per cent of the total. While most recognised areas of outstation development are thus included some exceptions occur as, for example, in the exclusion of some outstations north of the Roper River that are associated with Ngukurr township. Elsewhere, CDs are included from areas which are more representative of pastoral excision communities such as in the Victoria River and Barkly regions, and this begs the question as to whether such communities should be included in an 'outstation' profile. While it is true that excision communities share many of the features of outstations in terms of locational disadvantage, population size and so on, there are significant differences in terms of their historical development and current land tenure which suggest that some separation may be analytically useful. For example, it may be interesting to explore whether these structural differences show up in socio-economic indicators and this could be done by creating separate outstation and pastoral excision sub-files using a modification of the criteria described above. Notwithstanding this point, it is clear that the outstation sub-file as presented here does include some pastoral communities and this should be taken into account when interpreting the sub-file data.

1991 Census small area geography

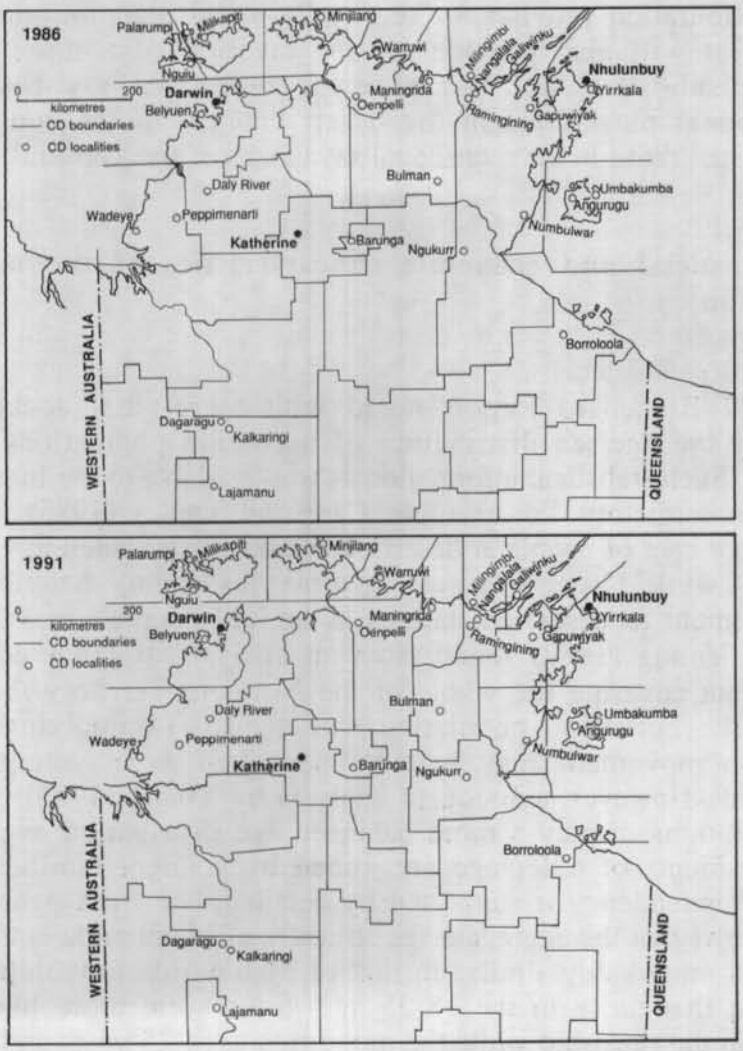
Before discussing in detail the population characteristics revealed by the 1986 Census sub-file, brief attention is drawn to the 1991 revision of Census geography for remote communities in the Northern Territory and the manner in which this will enable a more accurate identification of outstation populations as a basis for regional planning.

It has been appreciated for some time that one of the problems of reliance on the Census for information relating to small areas is the fact that many places, notably outstations and pastoral excisions, are themselves smaller than the minimum geographic level at which data are available (CD level). Furthermore, the configuration of CD boundaries to date has tended to cut across the social geography of functioning regions (an Aboriginal community and its associated outstations) within which most outstation populations and most of their service delivery systems operate.

The case for a more regionally-oriented system of gathering and presenting Aboriginal socio-economic data has been argued elsewhere. Altman (1987), for example, has suggested that outstations should not be conceptualised as individual communities but as part of an extended social network that usually includes at least one Aboriginal township. A similar relationship has been noted by Young and Doohan (1989) in respect of Aboriginal-owned cattle stations and kinfolk who may live on small excisions on neighbouring non-Aboriginal properties. Young and Doohan (1989) further note that all too often there is a disjunction between the patterns of spatial interaction on the ground and the geography of statistical boundaries that seek to represent these realities as a means of informing policy and providing for efficient administration and service delivery. It is further suggested that one means of overcoming this is to delineate Aboriginal statistical regions based on the activity spaces of remote area populations (ibid).

While this may be easier said than done, the first steps in this direction are apparent in the redrawing of CD boundaries in the Northern Territory for the 1991 Census. Figure 3 shows the changes that have occurred in the Top End of the Northern Territory. Basically, the approach has been to redesign CD boundaries without alteration to existing Statistical Local Area (intermediate level) boundaries while at the same time creating statistical units that circumscribe outstation populations serviced from, and associated with, particular Aboriginal towns. Thus, for the first time in 1991 it will be possible to identify, at CD level, outstation populations associated with communities at Warruwi,

Figure 3. Collection district (CD) boundary changes: Northern Territory Top End 1986-91.



Gunbalunya, Maningrida, Bulman, Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak, Yirrkala, Daly River and Numbulwar (Figure 3). Outstations associated with townships such as Ramingining, Milingimbi and Nangalala are too close to each other to allow separation into individual CDs. In the southern part of the Territory (not shown in Figure 3), outstations associated with the township of Kintore will be more readily identified, while Yuendumu township becomes statistically separate from its outstation with the creation of two new CDs. From a policy perspective, not only does this new configuration provide for regionally-based planning and service delivery, it will also provide for the creation of a more accurate outstation sub-file as well as a basis for comparison, say, between the population at outstations in the desert country in the south of the Territory and those in the monsoonal savannahs of the Top End.

Selected social and economic characteristics of the outstation population

Age and Sex

The 1987 Blanchard Report noted with regret that accurate data regarding the age/sex distribution of outstation populations was not available. Such statistical information as was available to the Inquiry often proved contradictory. For example, Cane and Stanley (1985) found that only 28 per cent of people at desert outstations they visited in 1984 were aged 0-14 while 32 per cent were aged 60 plus leading them to describe the movement to desert outstations as an 'old people's movement'. In contrast, Young (1982) found from an analysis of DAA community profile data covering the whole of the Northern Territory that 40 per cent of the outstation population was aged 0-14 implying that the outstation movement may best be described as a 'young persons movement'. However, subsequent analysis by Young (1985) concluded that outstations display a more balanced age distribution over time as initial residents of older age are joined by younger families (Young 1985). This tendency is supported by detailed data from Arnhem Land which shows that the aggregate age structure of Maningrida outstations in 1980 was remarkably similar to that of Maningrida township with the exception that those in the 18-25 age group were more likely to be resident in the township while the proportion aged 25 years and over was higher at outstations (Altman 1983).

This latter profile is supported by data from the Census sub-file shown in Table 1 which reveals an almost evenly balanced sex ratio in outstations (more so than for the rest of the Northern Territory Aboriginal population) and age distributions which are broadly comparable

regardless of location. While the proportions of total population in the 0-14 age group are almost identical (39.5 per cent/39.7 per cent), the proportion in the young adult age group 15-39 is lower at outstations (39.5 per cent) compared with the rest of the Northern Territory (44.4 per cent) while the reverse is true for older ages over 40 years (21 per cent/15.9 per cent).

Compared to the remainder of the Northern Territory, males at outstations are more concentrated in the youngest and oldest age groups and less in evidence in the young adult-middle age groups. Females at outstations, on the other hand, tend to be over-represented in the older age groups over 40 and correspondingly less evident in younger age groups. The striking feature, however, is the fact that extreme locational disadvantage and the desire of many to live away from community life has not resulted in distinct demographic selectivity, at least for the outstation population as a whole. From a policy perspective, two conclusions seem pertinent. First, that the demographic basis for continued growth of the Aboriginal population is no less in evidence at

Table 1. Percentage age distribution of Aboriginal population: Outstation communities and NT remainder.

Age group	Outstations			NT remainder		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
0-4	13.8	11.9	12.8	14.5	13.7	14.1
5-9	15.1	13.4	14.2	13.5	12.2	12.8
10-14	13.8	11.3	12.5	13.6	12.2	12.8
15-19	12.0	11.1	11.6	12.5	12.7	12.6
20-24	8.8	9.5	9.2	10.7	11.1	10.9
25-29	6.8	8.4	7.7	8.5	9.2	8.9
30-34	5.9	6.5	6.1	6.4	6.9	6.7
35-39	4.3	5.4	4.9	5.1	5.5	5.3
40-44	4.4	4.8	4.6	3.9	4.0	4.0
45-49	4.0	4.2	4.2	3.3	3.3	3.3
50-54	3.2	3.8	3.5	2.4	2.7	2.5
55-59	2.5	2.6	2.5	1.9	1.9	1.9
60-64	2.1	2.8	2.4	1.4	2.0	1.7
65-69	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.0	1.1	1.1
70-74	1.1	1.3	1.2	0.7	0.7	0.7
75+	0.6	1.2	0.9	0.6	0.8	0.7
Total	49.8	50.2	100.0	48.5	51.5	100.0
Sex ratio			99.2			94.1

Source: ABS Aboriginal Statistics Unit, Darwin.

outstations than elsewhere. Second, there is no basis for program differentiation for outstations on age grounds in areas such as education, health and employment, at least at the aggregate level.

Education

One consequence of the lack of reliable and comprehensive data on age structure was the inability of the Blanchard committee to obtain an accurate figure on the number (or proportion) of children living at outstations who were not receiving an education service (Blanchard 1987: 29). Data on attendance at educational institutions is available from the Census sub-file and these show that the proportion of the outstation population aged 5-14 years in attendance at primary school was 61.9 per cent which was similar to the figure of 66 per cent recorded for Aboriginal children elsewhere in the Territory. This is a surprisingly even distribution given the relative lack of educational services at outstations and it may be that attendance figures for outstations are inflated by the inclusion of pupils who were enumerated there during school holidays. Certainly, they do not reflect the relative duration of school attendance which is restricted at outstations to short periods of teacher visitations compared to the full time tuition available elsewhere.

Rather than adding new insight, such results serve to underline the difficulties of reliance on Census data to describe situations that do not readily comply with the standard output formats. However, some indication of the relative lack of educational attainment among the outstation population is apparent from data relating to age left school (Table 2) and this tends to confirm the impression conveyed by the Blanchard report (1987: 29) and from case studies (Young and Doohan 1989: 164) that many outstation residents do not receive educational services. The proportion of outstation residents in the age group 15-24 who did not go to school (15 per cent) was significantly higher than among Aborigines in the rest of the Northern Territory which itself fell significantly behind the national figure.

Also of interest are the much higher proportions of outstation residents in all age groups who had not attended school, more than one-third compared to 15 per cent in the rest of the Northern Territory and only 6.6 per cent nationally. There were far fewer outstation residents staying on beyond the age of 17 (which may arguably be as attributable to the limited distribution of high school facilities as anything else) and a greater proportion leaving at less than 13 years. Once again, these tendencies hold firm for all age groups. The impact of education (or lack of it) on the general employability of outstation residents compared to Aborigines in Australia as a whole is emphatically underlined by the

enormous differences in the proportions of those, particularly over 35 years of age, who had no education. This is consistent with similar observations regarding use and proficiency in English and/or Aboriginal languages made later and begs the question of whether those migrating to outstations may be doing so partly as a consequence of their lack of formal school-based skills or, conversely, whether they lack such skills because of their preference for more traditional lifestyles in remote locations.

Table 2. Age left school persons aged 15 and over: Aboriginal people in NT outstations, NT remainder and Australia.

Age left school	Per cent in each age group					
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Total
Aboriginal people at outstations						
Less than 13	6.8	6.4	5.8	7.1	2.5	5.9
13-16	46.9	47.6	27.4	11.7	6.7	33.7
17 and over	5.6	8.4	4.2	1.7	0.4	4.9
Still at school	10.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6
Did not go to school	15.0	20.7	46.4	58.4	70.6	34.7
Not stated	15.0	16.7	16.6	21.3	19.1	17.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Aboriginal people in NT remainder						
Less than 13	2	2.6	4.7	3.8	3.6	3.0
13-16	45.7	47.0	40.2	31.2	17.7	40.9
17 and over	15.2	19.4	10.8	5.8	2.5	13.4
Still at school	13.2	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	5.2
Did not go to school	5.3	8.8	18.8	29.6	47.9	15.0
Not stated	18.5	21.9	25.0	29.2	28.0	22.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Aboriginal people in Australia						
Less than 13	1.0	1.7	3.6	5.1	6.8	2.6
13-16	59.0	68.4	70.2	63.0	46.6	62.3
17 and over	14.3	16.6	6.6	3.7	2.8	11.5
Still at school	15.0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	5.9
Did not go to school	1.8	3.0	7.3	13.8	25.2	6.6
Not stated	8.6	10.1	12.0	14.4	18.4	11.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS Aboriginal Statistics Unit, Darwin; ABS 1991.

The problem of providing educational services to remote outstations in the Northern Territory is one which remains to be fully resolved. Since 1986/87, the Northern Territory Department of Education has attempted to satisfy this demand as part of a general drive by the NT Government to mainstream service delivery to Aboriginal communities. Apart from the provision of classroom facilities and an assistant teacher, this involves periodic visits from a qualified teacher based at centrally-placed townships with more frequent visits occurring to outstations in the desert regions compared to those in the Top End. The number of outstations serviced in this way and total enrolments (as at mid-year) is shown in Table 3 for the period 1986-1990.

Table 3. Education services and enrolments at NT outstations 1986-1990.

Year	No. of outstations	Enrolment
1986	56	945
1987	58	936
1988	54	917
1989	65	1,069
1990	55	1,008

Source: Northern Territory Department of Education.

While it appears that enrolments and the number of serviced outstations have remained relatively static over recent years, these figures do not show those outstations that have ceased to be serviced under the remote areas program by virtue of their growth and/or incorporation into township-based programs (eg. in the latter case about half of the Hermannsburg outstations). Nor do they show those outstations that are no longer serviced due to reductions in the number of school age children as a result of out-migration. Whatever the case, it is clear that there remains a significant number of outstations in the Northern Territory (given that there are some 600+ registered such places) with no access to educational facilities. Data on age distribution in Table 1 show that 26 per cent of the outstation population is of school age (1,500 persons) while the enrolment figures in Table 3 show that approximately 500 of these do not attend school. In essence, this shortfall results from Northern Territory Government procedures for allocating remote area school resources. These require that communities first of all request a school facility, then demonstrate a degree of residential stability over a period of

time (Blanchard 1987: 217) and have at least 12 children of school age (NT Department of Education, pers. comm.). The Aboriginal response to this situation varies. As Young and Doohan (1989: 164) have pointed out, in some cases people stay in town rather than at outstations so that their children can attend school. In other cases children commute to school from outstations. There are those as well who do not consider education to be a priority and live at outstations despite the lack of facilities. The overall effect is the same, however, substantial educational disadvantage due to location.

Language

Perhaps more than any other characteristic, it is in the widespread use of Aboriginal languages and the relative lack of proficiency in English that differentiate outstations from the rest of the Aboriginal population, even within the Northern Territory. As shown in Table 4, less than 5 per cent of outstation residents speak English exclusively compared to almost one-third of Aboriginal people in the rest of the Northern Territory and more than three-quarters of those in the nation as a whole. The proportion who speak English well is similar to the rest of the Northern Territory although outstation residents are much more likely than their Territory counterparts to lack English proficiency. While this tendency is clearly related to the pattern of educational attendance revealed in Table 3 and appears to be correlated with lower labour force participation rates (Daly 1991), it is also indicative of cultural choice and is an example of how locational disadvantage from one perspective may be viewed as locational advantage from another.

Table 4. Proficiency in English persons aged five years and over: Aboriginal people at NT outstations, NT remainder and Australia.

Proficiency in English	Outstations	NT remainder	Australia
Speaks English only	4.6	30.1	76.8
Uses Aboriginal languages and speaks English:			
Very well or well	47.6	45.4	12.7
Not well	35.7	15.1	4.3
Not at all	6.7	3.7	1.0
Not stated	5.4	5.7	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS Aboriginal Statistics Unit, Darwin; ABS 1991.

Labour force status

Using DAA community profile data, the Blanchard Report (1987: 131) estimated that fewer than 10 per cent of outstation residents aged 15 years and over were engaged in formal employment. This is a lower proportion than the figure of 16 per cent revealed by the Census sub-file data, although the latter is still significantly below the figure of 27 per cent recorded for the rest of the Northern Territory Aboriginal population and clearly indicates the relative lack of formal employment opportunities at outstations.

This is also reflected in Census sub-file data which show a substantially lower percentage of both male and female outstation residents in employment compared to other places (Table 5). At the same time, it appears that formal attachment to the labour force is not significantly impaired by remote location as the proportion of females not in the labour force, for example, is remarkably consistent irrespective of location (around 60 per cent) although it is slightly higher in outstations than elsewhere. Accordingly, female participation rates do not differ greatly between geographic categories but female unemployment is substantially higher at outstations. Participation rates for males at outstations are similar to the rest of the Northern Territory (44.3 per cent and 49.2 per cent respectively) but both of these are much lower than the national figure (63 per cent). Male unemployment at outstations, on the other hand, is significantly higher than elsewhere.

These figures provide some guide to the extent of engagement in the formal labour market and the relative performance of Aborigines in

Table 5. Labour force status: Aboriginal people in NT outstations, NT remainder and Australia.

Labour force status	Outstations		NT remainder		Australia	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Persons aged 15+	1,567	1,742	8,299	9,327	66,419	70,714
Employed	22.8	9.7	32.4	21.4	40.3	22.7
Not in labour force	48.5	67.8	41.2	60.1	32.2	60.0
Not stated	7.2	7.3	9.5	9.7	4.7	5.4
Participation rate	44.3	24.8	49.2	30.1	63.0	34.5
Unemployment rate	48.6	60.6	34.2	28.9	36.0	34.1

Source: Aboriginal Statistics Unit, Darwin; ABS 1991.

different localities. Broadly speaking, Aborigines at outstations and in the rest of the Northern Territory are less attached to the labour force than elsewhere, though not substantially so. At the same time, the chances of obtaining employment for those in the workforce are significantly reduced at outstations when compared with other places and this is the case for both males and females. Similar observations regarding Aboriginal labour force participation in remote areas have been made from analysis of the Census one per cent sample with the conclusion that Aborigines living traditional lifestyles are less interested in entering the formal labour market due, in part, to a discouraged worker effect (Daly 1991).

Industry sector

Australian Government employment is almost non-existent at outstations (Table 6). This reflects the locational disadvantage experienced by outstation communities in being remote from major centres of service delivery where employment is more in evidence (ABS 1990). It is also indicative of the low level of direct Commonwealth involvement in the provision of remote area services such as education and health. Conversely, the much higher involvement of outstation females (in particular) in State (Territory) government employment reflects the greater role of State level employment in remote areas. At the same time, Altman and Taylor (1989: 19) have argued that there is no formal labour market at outstations and that those employed in State sector activities, such as education and health care, are more correctly interpreted as

Table 6. Industry sector of employed persons aged 15 years and over: Aboriginal people in NT outstations, NT remainder and Australia.

Industry Sector	Outstations		NT remainder		Australia	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Australian Govt.	0.6	2.3	9.2	12.4	8.4	11.0
State Govt.	11.5	35.9	18.4	35.5	20.9	27.3
Local govt.	1.4	0.6	6.2	2.2	9.3	2.9
Private sector	80.9	48.2	58.0	41.0	54.7	51.3
Not stated	5.0	12.9	8.1	8.9	6.5	7.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS Aboriginal Statistics Unit, Darwin; ABS 1991.

employed in the labour markets of neighbouring townships, even though they may be working at outstations.

The striking feature of sectoral employment at outstations is the concentration of employment in private sector activities, particularly among males. While this may reflect some allocation of employment in Aboriginal community organisations to the private sector category (a common problem in the Australian Census), the likelihood of this form of 'category jumping' holds true for Aborigines elsewhere, particularly those in the rest of the Northern Territory, and is not in itself a sufficient explanation of the much higher private sector employment evident at outstations. No doubt this observation partly reflects employment in Community Development Employment Program schemes (work-for-the-dole) and may also be indicative of seasonal involvement in the pastoral industry stemming from the inclusion of essentially 'pastoral' CDs within the sub-file population. The extent to which this also reflects Aboriginal involvement in art and craft manufacture at outstations is a moot point.

Table 7. Industry of employment: Aboriginal people in NT outstations, NT remainder and Australia.

Industry	Outstations		NT remainder		Australia	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Agric., forestry etc	28.6	8.9	10.1	2.5	9.4	3.1
Mining	1.4	0.0	1.1	0.3	2.8	0.4
Manufacturing	0.0	0.0	3.6	1.8	10.6	5.8
Elec., gas & water	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.1	2.3	0.4
Construction	2.5	1.2	8.6	1.3	8.8	1.3
Wholesale, retail	2.5	7.1	6.3	8.0	8.4	11.3
Transp. & storage	0.6	0.0	3.5	1.3	8.9	1.6
Communication	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.8	1.7	1.3
Financial services	3.1	0.6	2.1	4.4	2.7	5.7
Public admin., defence	3.9	4.1	13.0	15.3	12.9	10.7
Community services	45.1	68.6	36.2	50.5	19.5	43.3
Recr., personal services	6.2	2.4	5.4	5.6	3.9	7.9
Not stated	5.6	6.5	7.9	7.8	7.9	7.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS Aboriginal Statistics Unit, Darwin; ABS 1991.

Industry

The decline of Aboriginal employment in rural/agricultural industries reported throughout much of Australia is not apparent to the same extent at Northern Territory outstations, particularly in the case of employed males (Table 7). Whether this again reflects the inclusion of 'pastoral' CDs in the sub-file population or whether there are other more traditional subsistence-based activities included in the Census employment figures is not clear.

Apart from agriculture, the tendency is for a much greater concentration of outstation employment in community services, particularly among females. While the same is true for Aborigines elsewhere, the spread of employment across a range of industries is much greater in the rest of the Northern Territory and Australia as a whole due largely to the greater opportunities available in public administration and in wholesale and retail industries.

On the one hand, this variation between outstations and elsewhere reflects their position at the base of the settlement hierarchy and may be seen as a direct consequence of locational disadvantage. At the same time, it is indicative of the forms of economic activity that outstation residents recognise as relevant to their needs and priorities. One feature of this table which is of interest is the fact that no outstation residents are recorded as employed in manufacturing despite the obvious importance of the craft and artefact industry for this particular segment of the population (Altman and Taylor 1989: 16-19). This provides another example of the failure of certain Census questions to adequately describe economic circumstances for some segments of the Aboriginal population.

Occupation

One of the anomalies of the employment situation at outstations is the fact that Aboriginal females are proportionally more likely to be employed in skilled occupations than their counterparts elsewhere in the Northern Territory or Australia as a whole (Table 8). This reflects the role of outstation female residents as health workers, teachers aides and clerks in providing a basic level of services for their community. Males at outstations, on the other hand, are much more likely than their counterparts elsewhere to be engaged in labouring occupations reflecting the lack of any alternatives as well as the likely influence of 'pastoral' CDs on the sub-file data.

Table 8. Occupation of employment: Aboriginal people in NT outstations, NT remainder and Australia.

Occupation	Outstations		NT remainder		Australia	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Managers & admins	3.4	2.9	4.6	1.7	3.8	2.5
Professionals	4.5	11.8	5.3	10.8	3.9	6.7
Para-professionals	12.9	10.6	7.2	6.6	5.2	7.1
Tradespersons	10.9	8.9	18.0	3.3	18.9	5.2
Clerks	3.1	22.5	6.3	35.3	5.7	31.7
Pers.services & sales	0.6	6.5	3.7	12.1	3.3	15.9
Plant & machine. op.	3.6	0.0	11.9	1.1	15.0	2.4
Labourer & related	49.3	25.4	32.6	18.7	38.0	22.3
Inad. descr. & n.s.	11.5	11.8	10.5	10.1	6.0	5.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS Aboriginal Statistics Unit, Darwin; ABS 1991.

Individual and household incomes

In comparing income distribution in remote areas with elsewhere, it is worth bearing in mind the form of incorporation into national economic structures that remote communities have recently experienced. The integration of such areas into the cash economy occurred suddenly only twenty years ago with the introduction of training allowances (Altman and Nieuwenhuysen 1979: 43-44) and the move by the Department of Social Security to make welfare payments directly to Aboriginal people (Sanders 1985). Ironically, this in part provided the income support necessary to facilitate decentralisation trends emerging within remote Aboriginal society (Altman and Taylor 1989: 28). The tendency for welfare to serve as an income support mechanism for the pursuit of traditional activities is reflected in the universally low income levels at outstations revealed by the Census.

Almost two thirds of males resident at outstations (60.4 per cent) and three-quarters of females (74.6 per cent) receive annual incomes of less than $9,000 (Table 9). This compares with approximately 50 per cent of males and 60 per cent of females elsewhere. Of course, what these figures do not show is the supplementary imputed income from traditional activities which is available to outstation residents to a significantly greater degree than Aboriginal people elsewhere (Altman and Taylor 1989). For example, in trying to estimate this income advantage, Fisk

(1985: 63) calculated that total income (welfare payments plus subsistence and income from art and craft sales) at outstations was 11 per cent higher than at Aboriginal townships in 1981 and much higher still after 1983 when outstation residents received full access to social security entitlements. While it is generally felt that subsistence production from hunting and gathering is more important to the economies of outstations in the Top End compared to those in the Centre (Blanchard 1987: 132), evidence from the Maralinga desert homelands of South Australia (Palmer and Brady 1988: 40) suggests that the opposite may be true, particularly in areas of recent resettlement.

Table 9. Individual annual incomes: Aboriginal people in NT outstations, NT remainder and Australia.

	Individual annual income					
	$0-9,000	$9,001-15,000	$15,001-22,000	$22,001 and over	Not stated	Total
Males:						
Outstations	60.4	22.0	4.5	1.5	11.6	100.0
NT remainder	50.0	21.2	4.6	4.0	15.1	100.0
Australia	48.7	21.7	13.0	4.8	11.8	100.0
Females:						
Outstations	74.6	9.2	2.8	0.5	12.9	100.0
NT remainder	59.5	15.6	6.5	1.6	16.8	100.0
Australia	63.6	15.6	5.7	1.3	13.7	100.0

Source: ABS Aboriginal Statistics Unit, Darwin; ABS 1991.

The proportion of outstation males in higher income brackets compares surprisingly well with males in the rest of the Northern Territory but both of these fall behind the rest of Australia particularly in their proportion in the $15-22,000 income bracket. The greatest variation exists between female incomes with those at outstations more heavily skewed towards the lowest income range compared to their counterparts in the rest of the Northern Territory who more closely correspond in income distribution to the national pattern. However, what is perhaps surprising to note in the data for both males and females is the fact that the proportions in the lowest income bracket are not more differentiated according to location. This is no doubt linked to the relatively high level of formal attachment to the labour force revealed for outstations (Table

5) and demonstrates the general income levelling affects of welfare dependency.

The most interesting feature of household income distribution is not so much that outstation households are more concentrated in the lower income brackets but that they more closely resemble the national pattern of distribution than other Aboriginal households in the Northern Territory (Table 10). The major difference occurs in the proportion of

Table 10. Annual household income: Aboriginal households in NT outstations, NT remainder and Australia.

Per cent of households in each income bracket

	$0-9,000	$9,001-15,000	$15,001-22,000	$22,001-32,000	$32,001 and over	N/S	Total
Outstations	10.5	27.2	13.3	13.9	14.9	19.8	100.0
NT remainder	9.2	15.0	12.7	14.2	24.6	22.9	100.0
Australia	11.9	18.7	17.4	15.8	16.5	17.6	100.0

Source: ABS Aboriginal Statistics Unit, Darwin; ABS 1991.

households in the $32,000+ income bracket, although the high proportion of 'not stated' for households in the remainder of the Northern Territory may be responsible for some of this variation. Indeed, the high level of non-response observed for all categories makes interpretation of these results somewhat difficult. Nonetheless, to the extent that the Census data do allow conclusions to be drawn about spatial variations in individual and household incomes, they highlight the considerable levelling effect of welfare payments and indicate that loss of income is not a factor which is likely to inhibit any decision to move to outstations.

Conclusion

Manipulation of the Census small area data can provide for separate analysis of geographically-defined sub-categories of the Aboriginal population. The outstations Census sub-file presented here comprises the

most comprehensive set of data for outstations available to date and tends to confirm the main socio-economic features of such localities as portrayed by case studies and non-Census based community profiles. On the whole, extreme locational disadvantage is reflected in lower economic status, although care needs to be taken in establishing such connections as perceptions of relative locational utility are culturally bound. Thus, while employment rates at outstations are manifestly low because of a lack of formal labour market opportunities, it is also true to say that most outstation residents would eschew such employment preferring to engage in more traditional pursuits which outstations are ideally located to provide.

Although outstation economies operate largely outside formal labour markets, formal attachment to the labour force is not drastically affected by remote location due to an almost wholesale reliance on welfare payments as an income support mechanism. Such formal employment as does exist derives from the servicing role of associated townships, particularly in the case of female outstation residents' part-time employment. Given the relative importance of informal economic activities at outstations (Altman and Taylor 1989) it is abundantly clear that the Census is not the best vehicle for extracting employment and income data and the limitations of such information as a means of informing policy cannot be sufficiently stressed. While the same might be said of Census data on school attendance, it is clearly apparent that outstation residents display far less tendency to have school-based skills and this begs the question of whether this reflects cultural choice or problems of accessibility or a mixture of both.

This sort of conundrum has led to some expression of concern regarding the assessment of Aboriginal program performance according to the criteria of the wider Australian society (Altman 1991). Such concerns emanate from two broad areas that have been identified as cultural and structural. From the cultural perspective, it is recognised that many Aboriginal people in rural and remote locations are not seeking the same economic status as other urban-based Aboriginal people and other Australians. As Altman (1991) points out, this is a supply-side reason why Aboriginal people do not seek full incorporation into the mainstream economy. From a structural perspective, it is realised that the absence of labour markets and cost of service provision in many areas where Aboriginal people choose to live makes the fulfilment of economic equality goals impossible without far greater and very costly government intervention. In any case, given existing tendencies in budgetary management, this would tend to run counter to the principles of self-

determination and self-management upon which the movement to such remote communities is predicated.
Clearly, the whole issue of what type and level of services are desired at outstations is one that needs to be established in concert with individual outstation populations with considerable flexibility allowed, albeit within overall budget constraints. In some cases, this may involve an actual limitation on services and programs, in others it may necessitate an increase. At the very least, it would require that policy is more attuned to the diverse objectives and perceptions of those choosing to settle in remote areas. In this context, it may also be worth considering non-Aboriginal perceptions of increased population dispersion and how these may be altered to view the movement to outstations as a resource with national benefits. Apart from obvious spin-offs in areas such as defence and coastal surveillance, the most cogent example is provided by the ecological benefits inherent in traditional Aboriginal land management practices. These are increasingly relevant in the context of the debate on sustainable development and need to be considered in an accounting framework which sets the cost of supporting remote area settlement against the environmental well-being of the nation (Coombs et al. 1990; Young et al. 1991). Other more social benefits may also accrue from the establishment of more appropriately-scaled cultural environments away from the alienating influence of large polyglot townships in which some Aboriginal people are invariably marginalised (Commonwealth of Australia 1991).

The impact of remote location on demographic structure is less apparent than it is on economic structure. In this regard, it is clear that outstations are a microcosm of the wider Aboriginal population and do not display any tendency towards age or gender selectivity, at least at the aggregate level. Whether regional variations exist around this general tendency, for example between outstations in the coastal monsoon savannahs of the Top End of the Territory and the desert outstations in the southern part of the Territory, is something that might be usefully explored and could be achieved by judicious disaggregation of the sub-file. The same, of course, would apply to any of the characteristics explored here.

On a further methodological note, it has been demonstrated that the call to generate Aboriginal population profiles for discrete geographic areas is entirely achievable. Problems arise with the present sub-file in the inclusion of predominantly 'pastoral' areas in table populations but this is something that is easily remedied. One question that should be raised, however, is to what extent such a profile represents a truly 'outstation' population and whether indeed such a thing exists in a statistical sense. Altman (1985) and Young and Doohan (1989) have indicated the

interactive nature of social networks that connect remote Aboriginal populations to a central place and given the levels of population mobility that such links generate it is worth contemplating just who is being enumerated at Census time and the extent to which distinctions between Aboriginal townships and their associated outstations are valid in planning terms. Rearrangement of the basic Census building blocks in 1991 should help in assessing this question in the Northern Territory, but it is an issue that regional councils of the newly created Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) will face in fulfilling their charter under the ATSIC Act (No. 150 of 1989) to provide a regional plan for improving the economic, social and cultural status of Aboriginal people in each of their jurisdictions. In this context, the need to organise Census geography in a manner which enables discrete segments of regional populations to be distinguished is something that requires more widespread attention.

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