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**Spatial mobility of working age
Aborigines in settled and remote
Australia: a preliminary analysis**

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- to assist in the development of government strategies aimed at raising the level of Aboriginal participation in the labour force and at the stimulation of Aboriginal economic development.

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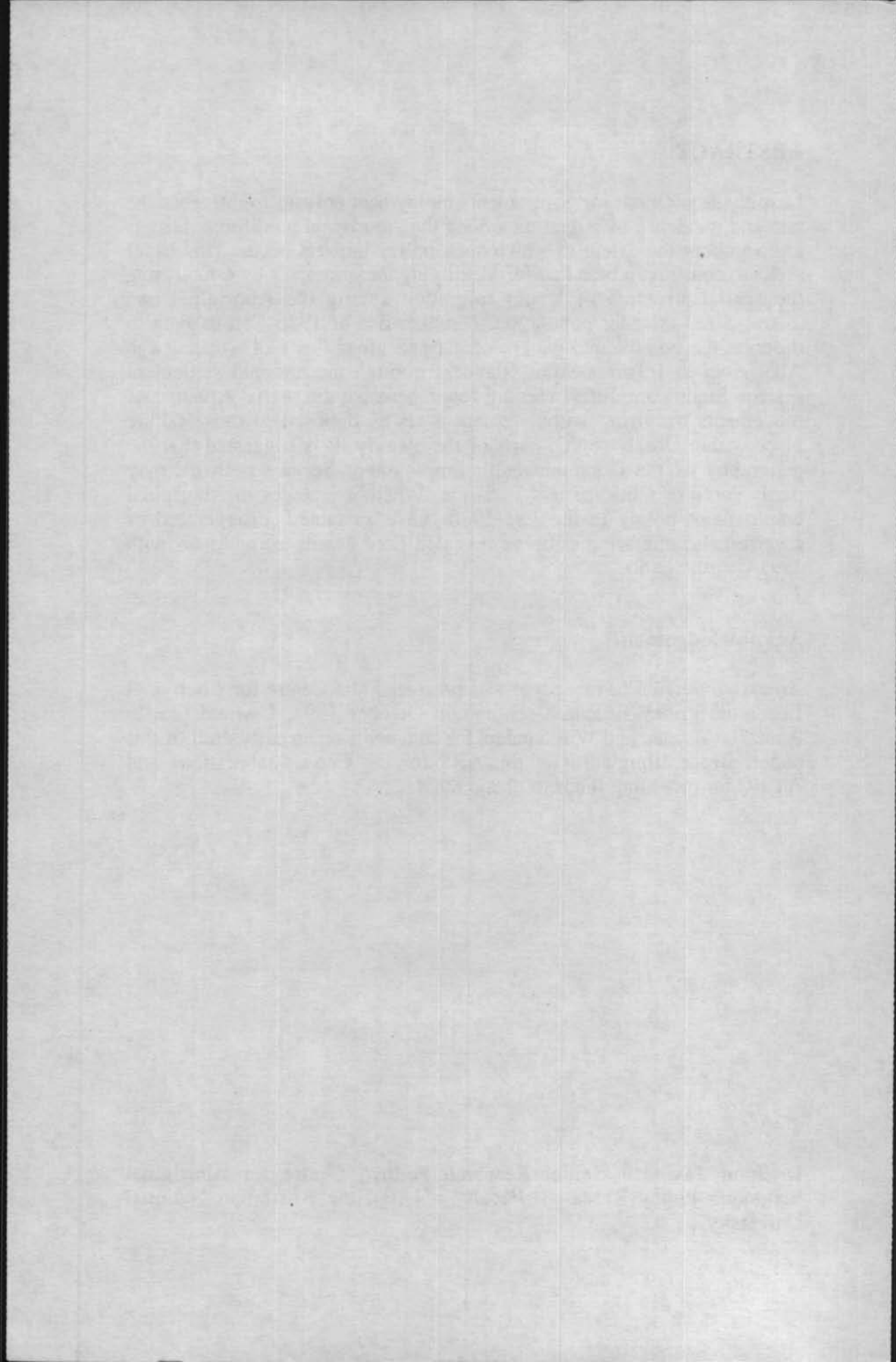
ABSTRACT

Despite the potential for government employment policies to influence the rate and incidence of migration among the Aboriginal workforce, little is known about the extent to which such policy impacts occur. This paper seeks to construct a base line for identifying these impacts by establishing the spatial structure of labour migration among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. It makes use of 1986 Census data to describe the volume and pattern of net and gross flows of working age Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders through the national settlement system. Significant differences are found between the spatial structure of movements occurring within remote areas as opposed to those taking place within closely settled parts of the country. It is suggested that the geography of the Commonwealth Employment Service network may partly serve to reinforce this variation. Whether changes in Aboriginal employment policy in the late 1980s have sustained, exaggerated or reversed the migration patterns revealed here awaits comparison with 1991 Census results.

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One issue central to the debate on Aboriginal and Islander¹ employment policy, and which is likely to loom larger during the 1990s, is the question of whether work should be directed to the workers or workers to the work (Taylor 1991). While the answer to this question seems presently cast in the structure of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) and other employment initiatives, determination of the extent to which migration is precluded or encouraged by policies such as the Training for Aboriginals Program (TAP) and the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme, for example, remains unknown. This is not surprising given the paucity of knowledge regarding the tendency of Aboriginal people to engage in migration for employment or, indeed, of the movements of working age Aborigines whatever their motive. The task of identifying links which may exist between policy and migration and assessing the impact that migration may have on the efficacy of employment programs is thus hampered from the outset by an ignorance of the major patterns of population movement and the extent to which this leads to redistribution of the Aboriginal labour force. As noted in the only other comprehensive study of the subject to date, identifying the issues about Aboriginal migration at a national level is no easy task when so little work has been done on the subject (Gray 1989).

This paper is thus the first of a series seeking to establish the spatial structure and characteristics of Aboriginal migration throughout Australia. It makes use of 1986 Census data to describe the volume and pattern of net and gross flows of working age Aborigines through the national settlement system. A second paper will describe the labour force characteristics of those associated with each flow as well as those of non-movers. What emerges from this is a description of Aboriginal migration prior to the implementation of AEDP and the acceleration of the CDEP scheme. Subsequent papers using 1991 Census data will provide comparative analysis and enable an assessment of AEDP and related policy impacts to be made, although precisely how effective 1991 Census data will be in providing for this type of analysis is a moot point given the potentially overriding influence on labour market conditions of the economic recession at the time of enumeration.

Aboriginal migration: What are the issues?

The broad task of defining Aboriginal labour migration, identifying the public policy issues associated with it, and examining the extent of existing knowledge of migration has already been accomplished (Taylor 1991). As far as the last is concerned, the few studies available suggest that while a search for employment was one of the factors leading to a growth in the number of metropolitan-based Aboriginal and Islander people during the 1960s and early 1970s (Smith 1980), such net migration loss from country areas to the large cities as did exist is now at

least compensated for by an equivalent return flow from city to country (Gray 1989). At the same time, higher labour force participation rates are observed among those moving to metropolitan areas from all other places (*ibid.*: 138) and although this is also associated with higher unemployment rates, it does provide some insight into the possible motivations of those moving to such areas. At the other end of the settlement hierarchy, the relative lack of any employment motivation for migration has been identified as a notable characteristic of those resident in Aboriginal townships, outstations and other rural localities, at least in remote parts of Australia (Taylor 1988; Young 1981; Young and Doohan 1989).

Apart from these few observations, little else can be said at a macro-level regarding the movement of Aboriginal labour and several gaps in understanding therefore persist. For example, do Aboriginal workers engage in exchange migration with metropolitan areas in the manner observed for the rest of the workforce or do they follow a different pattern of movement? Does the movement of Aboriginal people substantiate migration theory which suggests a step-wise process in which people move from rural areas through local small towns and regional centres to metropolitan areas (Poulsen et al. 1975)? Is the pattern of movement age-specific and related to career or life cycle factors as in the rest of the population? What rates of net migration, gross migration and population retention are exhibited at different levels in the settlement hierarchy? Do these vary in different parts of the country? Are migration flows dominated by those in the workforce, particularly those in young adult age groups? Are migrants more likely to be employed? Do unemployed Aborigines display relatively high rates of mobility as observed for the population as a whole? Is it possible to detect a relationship between employment policies and migration?

In providing a framework with which to address such issues, the first part of this paper identifies relevant factors which govern the structural context of Aboriginal labour migration and explores how these may be employed in the construction of an internal migration data base. To this end, appropriate levels in the settlement hierarchy are identified as the basis for calibrating movement and consideration is also given to the variable character of the labour market in different parts of Australia and the manner in which Aboriginal people articulate with it.

Creating a migration data base: settlement hierarchies and regional labour markets

In this discussion, two factors are considered to be of significance in the measurement of population movement among working age Aborigines and Islanders. First, the extent to which individuals stay within locales which, from a theoretical labour market perspective, offer an equivalent

scale and range of opportunities. The converse represents the extent of movement between different places and into situations that offer greater or fewer opportunities. The relevant marker against which such movement can be measured is settlement size given the generally positive correlation which exists between this and the scale and range of available employment and training opportunities. The second factor is less well defined but no less significant. This concerns the variation in social and economic conditions which exists between remote and sparsely settled parts of Australia and the more closely settled zone. The rationale for selecting each of these criteria and the manner in which they form the basis of constructing a data base are discussed in turn.

In the only other comprehensive study of Aboriginal migration to date (Gray 1989) the framework chosen for analysis identified only movements which occurred between major urban centres (over 100,000 persons) and all other places. It was argued that this distinction reflected significant economic and social differences between Aboriginal 'city' and 'country' dwellers (*ibid.*: 123). However, given the volume and complexity of Aboriginal mobility known to exist between localities at all levels in the settlement hierarchy (Fisk et al. 1974; Bryant 1982; Young 1981; Taylor 1988) plus the structural difference in labour market opportunities that is likely to exist between towns like Ballarat, Darwin, Toowoomba and Turkey Creek, Brewarrina and Borroloola (all of which are below 100,000), a finer-grained analysis appears essential. Accordingly, Table 1 presents a six-level hierarchy which distinguishes metropolitan from other major urban places and divides the 'other urban' component of the Australian Bureau of Statistics 'section-of-State' data into three size categories in recognition of the variable employment and training opportunities offered by large, medium and small country towns. All non-urban places are simply designated rural. Also shown are Aboriginal employment/population ratios for each size category. While the variation in these is not as great as one might have anticipated, there is nonetheless evidence of a positive relationship between settlement size and employment outcomes.

At the same time it is suggested that not all places of similar size have the same labour market characteristics or opportunities. Much also depends on their relative location within the national space-economy. For example, a recurring theme in the literature on the Aboriginal economy is the relationship between geographic location and the social and economic circumstances of Aboriginal people (Altman and Nieuwenhuysen 1979; Fisk 1985; Miller 1985; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 1990; Commonwealth of Australia 1991; Taylor 1991; Tesfaghiorghis 1991). Although variously defined, a broad distinction is generally drawn between the Aboriginal population in the south and east of the country which has an overall higher socioeconomic status, and the population resident elsewhere.

Table 1. Aboriginal employment/population ratios by settlement size categories.

Settlement category	Population range	Employment population ratio
Metropolitan	500,000 and over	38.5
Major urban	100,000-499,999	44.3
Regional centre	50,000-99,999	33.4
Sub-regional centre	10,000-49,999	30.2
Local centre	1,000-9,999	27.5
Rural	less than 1,000	27.1

Similar regional variation is noted for the wider Australian community and the causes are grounded in economic geography. Holmes (1988), for example, draws a distinction between closely settled areas and sparsely settled areas (ecumene and non-ecumene) with economic development and service provision severely impeded in the latter by force of relative locational disadvantage and low accessibility. In a similar vein Hugo (1986) identified five settlement zones for his analysis of the contribution of migration to regional population change with a broad distinction drawn between sparsely settled areas and the rest of the continent.

Indeed, such is the strength of geographic forces shaping social and economic processes at the broad regional level that a similar distinction is often made by federal agencies for fiscal purposes between remote Australia and the more settled parts of the country. Variable federal tax rates provide one example of this and the fiscal equalisation mechanisms of the Commonwealth Grants Commission provide another. In both these cases, the geographic delineation of remote and non-remote is based on a detailed and comprehensive calculation involving consideration of such things as degree of population dispersion, variable Consumer Price Index levels, level of social infrastructure and so on.

A whole body of empirical evidence is now available to support a division of the space-economy in this way. Much of this is summarised by Logan et al. (1975), Faulkner and French (1983) and Holmes (1988). Briefly, the main features of remote Australia include high scores on a socioeconomic deprivation index (Logan et al. 1975: 64), a prevalence of negative scores on a standardised index of accessibility to/from Australia's urban centres with concomitant greater distances between settlements (Faulkner and French 1983: 36), and a specialisation of urban functions with a predominance of service towns, mining towns and Aboriginal towns offering a limited range and few employment opportunities (Holmes 1988). The effect of this in remote Australia is to

produce several non-contiguous labour markets that are spatially very restricted. Away from the few main settlements, pastoralism and mining predominate as the main rural sector activity and neither of these offer significant employment opportunities to Aboriginal people, although pastoralism, of course, used to. As far as migration flows are concerned, these are mostly employment-led (Hugo 1986: 134-5) and predominantly between remote areas and population centres in the more settled parts of Australia (Taylor 1989a, 1989b). While it is true to say that individual places exist along a continuum of relative remoteness and while the choice of boundary between remote and other places is necessarily arbitrary (Holmes 1988: 68), the most notable feature of the regional economic analyses referred to is their degree of spatial coincidence in respect of boundaries separating remote Australia from the rest of the country.

Spatial variation in Aboriginal Australia

It is perhaps no accident that the social and economic dimensions of Aboriginal Australia have also been described with reference to a boundary between what Rowley (1971), for example, has referred to as 'colonial' and 'settled' Australia in recognition of the much higher proportions of Aboriginal people in remote areas and the different manner of their incorporation into wider social and economic structures. Although theoretical objections have been raised over the spatial division of Aboriginal social and economic relations in this way (Hartwig 1978; Drakakis-Smith 1983), Sanders (1987) has argued that it is still important to retain some geographic/demographic distinction between situations where Aborigines are only a tiny percentage of the population against those in which they comprise a much more substantial demographic presence. Clearly, there are sound economic grounds to support this view. Indeed, such a position seems to pervade the Commonwealth's approach to Aboriginal affairs policy, not least in the area of employment policy. The basis for this is expressed clearly in the Miller report:

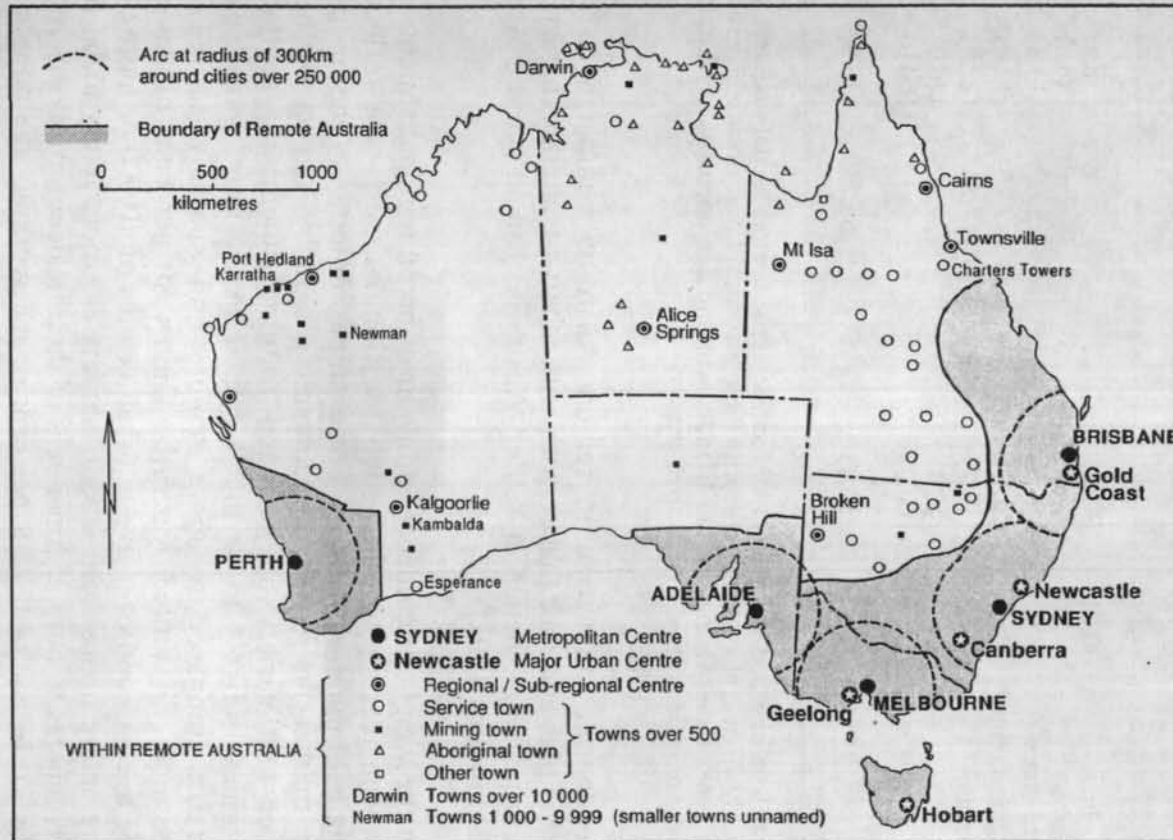
The option (of salaried employment) is not ... open to them (many Aboriginal people) and ... many of them reject it. In the more remote areas which were not colonised to the extent of others and where Aboriginal custom and law remain strong, people have removed themselves from the enforced change of life-style encompassed by a western-style economy ... and have chosen to maintain a life-style compatible with their traditional culture using a mix of components from their own traditional hunter-gatherer subsistence economy together with components of the wider market-based economy ... Not all Aboriginal people have the same concept of the mix of traditional Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal components in their life-style. Many of them who have chosen, or have felt compelled to live in an urban context, accept the employment for wage or salary basis for their livelihood to a greater extent than those who have remained in an isolated rural environment (Miller 1985: 5-6).

The sense of this observation is fully articulated in the AEDP which identifies 47 per cent of the Aboriginal population as resident in remote areas, small multi-racial townships and town camps and earmarked for community-based employment strategies. The remaining 53 per cent are identified as resident in population centres of over 1,000 persons where a conventional labour market exists and where mainstream labour market programs will be applied (Australian Government 1987). Elsewhere, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (1990) has drawn a distinction between Aborigines resident in 'metropolitan urban' areas (those resident in metropolitan cities), 'rural urban' areas (those living within or adjoining normal residential areas of non-Aboriginal country towns) and 'traditional urban' areas (those associated with towns located in remote areas where traditional attachments are still predominant) and 'remote traditional' areas (remote homeland centres). As in the Miller Report, this seeks to distinguish between those living in urban areas who have long been removed from maintaining a traditional lifestyle and those living in localities where traditional culture is still a major influence. On the whole, the former are found in what may be referred to as 'settled Australia' while the latter predominate in 'remote Australia', to use Altman and Nieuwenhuysen's (1979) terminology.

The actual boundary employed here to distinguish these two areas is shown in Figure 1. This has been delineated by selectively allocating Statistical Divisions and Statistical Local Areas to either side of a line which reflects a consensus of boundary locations established by Logan et al. (1975), Faulkner and French (1983) and Holmes (1988). The main exception to the general rule is that Darwin, Townsville and Cairns have been included in remote Australia. This reflects the role of Darwin as a focus for migration in the Northern Territory (Taylor 1989a), while Townsville and Cairns are included in recognition of their strong links with the population of the Torres Strait plus evidence that these localities serve as regional foci for much of the northern interior (Anderson 1986; Courtenay 1982; Taylor 1989b). This particular configuration more or less divides the Aboriginal and Islander working age population in half in proportions remarkably similar to those identified in the AEDP (Table 2).

Such a division into remote and settled zones echoes migration research in the United Kingdom which identifies a north-south divide based on differential quality of life and economic opportunities (Champion et al. 1987; Green 1988; Robinson 1991). In the United Kingdom, as in Australia, it is contended that the construction of such a device does not necessarily imply that one zone (remote Australia) is uniformly poor or lacking in labour market opportunities and that the other zone (settled Australia) is not. Rather, following Green (1988), it is claimed that the concept of a divide is valid despite the existence of local variations because of the concentration and more entrenched nature of deprivation

Figure 1. Remote and settled Australia.



Source: Taylor (1991).

Table 2. Settlement size distribution of the Aboriginal population aged 15+ in settled and remote Australia.

Settlement category	Settled			Remote		
	Pop 15+	Per cent	No. of localities	Pop 15+	Per cent	No. of localities
Metropolitan	30,015	(41.2)	5	n/a	(n/a)	0
Major urban	4,103	(5.6)	5	n/a	(n/a)	0
Regional centre	3,154	(4.3)	6	8,695	(13.5)	3
Sub-regional centre ^a	14,661	(20.1)	76	7,701	(12.0)	6
Local centre ^a	13,623	(18.7)	224	17,844	(27.8)	40
Rural ^a	7,338	(10.1)	337	29,999	(46.7)	53
		(100.0)			(100.0)	
Total	72,894	(53.1)		64,239	(46.9)	

a. Rural localities and some local and sub-regional centres as defined here are not necessarily discrete places. They comprise those Statistical Local Areas where more than 50 per cent of the Aboriginal and Islander working age population is located in a settlement or settlements of a given size category.

and economic stagnation in remote Australia compared to settled Australia plus evidence that persons with otherwise similar characteristics (Aborigines) fare better in settled Australia than in remote Australia (Tesfaghiorghis 1991).

Given the weight of evidence in favour of broad regional structures, it is worth considering whether such locational criteria are reflected in Aboriginal migration patterns. For example, in terms of the mainstream labour market, the realities of economic geography suggest that both the number and variety of jobs and training potentially available to Aborigines is likely to be much greater in the more settled parts of Australia compared to more remote and sparsely settled areas. Furthermore, in settled Australia, almost 80 per cent of Aboriginal people aged 15 and over live in urban centres of 10,000 or more persons (where active mainstream labour markets are more likely to be found). This compares to only 25.5 per cent of those resident in remote Australia (Table 2). In contrast, 27.8 per cent of the working age population in remote Australia are to be found in small country towns and almost half (46.7 per cent) are located in the smallest of all places, which in remote Australia are comprised predominantly of Aboriginal townships and outstations. Thus, fully three quarters (74.5 per cent) of the Aboriginal and Islander working age population of remote Australia is resident in localities which, at best, are characterised by very limited and spatially

restricted labour markets and which, in many cases, have no labour market at all.

Program influences on migration

There is growing awareness in the social sciences that individual access to social and economic resources is increasingly mediated through specific institutional arrangements as determined, for example, by the policies, internal structure and operational mechanisms of large government departments (Manion and Flowerdew 1982). The institutional structures surrounding Aboriginal participation in the labour market have been reviewed by Altman and Sanders (1991). Despite a gradual recognition of the need for community-based labour programs, it was not until the launch of the AEDP in 1987 and a substantial growth in the number of CDEP schemes since this time, that policy priority was given to developing employment opportunities in the local areas where Aboriginal clients live (Australian Government 1987). This shift of emphasis clearly has some potential to slow down the rate of labour migration and contrasts with previous policy approaches to Aboriginal employment which assumed that Aboriginal clients would fully participate in the mainstream labour market and be required to migrate if necessary (Miller 1985: 181-3). At the same time, in successfully uniting clients with jobs the public and private sector strategies of AEDP still require that some migration will occur and the strength of application and nature of such programs on the ground is likely to have some bearing on mobility levels.

Apart from the CDEP scheme, which to date has been directed predominantly towards localities in remote Australia, the relevant labour market programs are delivered through the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) network. This has its own geography which is based on delivering services to the whole community and is thus weighted in favour of the largest places in settled Australia. The extent of this bias, from an Aboriginal perspective, is shown in Table 3 which indicates the present distribution of CES offices by settlement size category in settled and remote Australia. It is instructive to consider these figures in light of the almost even distribution of Aborigines between settled and remote areas shown in Table 2.

It is assumed that the spatial structure of the CES network has not altered greatly since the early 1980s although the importance given to delivering Aboriginal programs certainly has. Following the introduction of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services Action Plan (ASAP) in 1989, new roles and responsibilities were identified for those areas within Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) providing services to Aboriginal clients. These new arrangements created

Table 3. Settlement size distribution of CES offices in settled and remote Australia, 1991.

	Job Centre	Country Service Centres	Agent	Youth Access Centre	Special Service Centre	AEEDUs ^a
Settled Australia						
Metropolitan	134	0	0	57	93	8
Major urban	20	0	0	9	10	2
Regional centre	8	1	0	5	7	2
Sub-regional centre	37	11	1	14	17	5
Local centre	36	24	82	4	8	1
Rural	0	0	2	0	0	0
Total	235	34	90	88	132	18
Remote Australia						
Regional centre	5	0	0	2	4	3
Sub-regional centre	3	2	0	2	2	4
Local centre	9	6	13	2	2	5
Rural	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	17	8	13	6	8	12

a. Aboriginal Employment and Education Development Units.

Source: Department of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra.

differentiated service units focussed particularly on Special Service Centres (SSCs) and Youth Access Centres (YACs) which carry responsibility for delivering Aboriginal public and private sector programs. It is quite clear that the location of such offices is weighted heavily in favour of settled Australia and even there they are concentrated in metropolitan areas. Precisely what effect this has on the equitable delivery of services, however, is not clear in the absence of data on funding and staff resources per client. Also making a major contribution to the delivery of Aboriginal programs are the Aboriginal Employment and Education Development Units (AEEDUs) which may be likened to mobile CES offices. Although these are more equally distributed in all areas, they are still biased in favour of settled Australia, while in remote Australia they appear to be thinly spread with vast catchment areas to service. Once again, however, the efficacy of this arrangement is unknown. As for mainstream programs available through Job Centres, these are also concentrated in settled Australia, and although remote regional centres are well provided for, only 9 out of 40 local centres in remote Australia have such a facility. Rural areas, on the other hand, whatever their location, appear to be even more disadvantaged with no direct access to the network apart from via mobile services. In remote

Australia, this accounts for places in which 46.7 per cent of the Aboriginal population of working age reside.

Given that the present CES network is more favourably attuned to the needs of Aboriginal clients, it is assumed that the spatial bias revealed here was even more apparent prior to the implementation of AEDP. Precisely what links exist between this institutional spatial structure and the geography of participation in different labour market programs is unknown although the Miller Report did identify a significant imbalance between the spatial distribution of TAP placements and the distribution of the Aboriginal population for the period 1983-84 with the bias in favour of more settled areas (Miller 1985: 143-7). Nothing in the present structure suggests that this will be any different today and it is likely, on a per client basis, that private sector employment and training programs will be applied more in settled Australia and in the larger centres of population. The extent to which this influences population movement will depend on the nature of these programs and whether or not they have achieved the AEDP aim of developing employment in the places that clients live. With respect to population movement between 1981 and 1986, all the indications are that the scope for Aboriginal labour migration was more in evidence in settled Australia given the greater absolute level and spatial diversity of labour market opportunities available. At the same time, the possibility that large distances between discrete labour markets in remote areas may have encouraged migration can not be discounted, nor can the prospect that Aborigines in remote areas may have engaged in long-distance movement to participate in job markets in more settled areas.

Migration status of the Aboriginal working age population, 1981-1986

It should be stressed from the outset that time-specific census migration data is not the ideal tool with which to identify and measure the full range and intensity of complex population movements undertaken by Aboriginal people. It is not proposed to dwell on this point here as the nature of these shortcomings has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1990: 13-17). Furthermore, it is not the purpose of this paper to consider all forms of mobility, rather the task is to focus on those moves which are deemed to be significant from the perspective of the labour market. In assessing the volume of migration in this way for the period 1981-1986, movement is thus defined here as a change of residence which involved a transfer from one settlement size category to another or a movement which occurred from one place to another of the same size category. On this basis, the mobility status of the working age population is shown in Table 4. This indicates the prevalence for survivors of the 1981 population of each size category to have remained in the same place,

Table 4. Retention and migration prevalence^a by settlement size category in settled and remote Australia.

Settlement category	Retention	Out-migration to same category	Out-migration to other category
Settled Australia			
Metropolitan	81.2	2.3	16.4
Major urban	75.0	1.0	23.0
Regional centre	71.5	0.3	28.0
Sub-regional centre	74.4	4.1	21.5
Local centre	58.0	16.4	25.6
Rural	62.7	5.1	32.2
Total	72.4	5.6	22.0
Remote Australia			
Regional centre	76.9	3.3	19.8
Sub-regional centre	56.8	18.6	24.5
Local centre	65.8	16.5	17.7
Rural centre	88.9	3.4	7.6
Total	77.1	9.0	13.9

a. Retention prevalence is calculated using as base population the number of survivors of the 1981 population of the area. Those retained in each category include those in the same settlement size category in 1981 and 1986 and who did not move from their urban centre or Statistical Local Area to another of the same size category. Prevalence for out-migration is also calculated using the 1981 population of each category size as the base.

to have moved to another place of the same size category, or to have transferred to a place in another size category.

Clearly, the vast majority of working age Aborigines in both settled and remote areas either stayed in the same dwelling between 1981 and 1986 (or at least were enumerated in the same dwelling), or moved to another dwelling within the same locale. Thus, in terms of the definition used here, almost three-quarters (73.4 per cent) of all working age Aborigines were non-movers and although the overall level of retention is not substantially different between settled and remote areas, slightly more movement occurred within settled Australia. More importantly, there was a greater tendency for movement within settled areas to take place between places of different size. In labour market terms these are assumed to be the more significant moves involving a transfer from one scale of job and training opportunities to another.

More detailed analysis reveals the prevalence of mobility and/or retention to be highly dependent upon both settlement size and location. In settled Australia, a direct link is revealed between the size category of settlements and their tendency to retain population. Metropolitan areas showed the highest prevalence for retention and local centres and rural

areas the lowest. In remote Australia this pattern was reversed with rural areas displaying the highest prevalence for retention of all. It is also interesting to note that sub-regional centres in remote Australia displayed much lower retention levels than equivalent places in settled Australia while the reverse was true for local centres. This reflects the greater movement that occurred between sub-regional centres in remote Australia and the relatively high proportion of moves that occurred between local centres within settled Australia. Further variation is apparent from an analysis of migration prevalences. For example, in settled Australia, the tendency for movement to occur to a different size category increased with decreasing rank in settlement size while the overall level of such movement was generally high. In remote Australia the opposite trend was apparent with inter-category movement decreasing with rank size and a greater tendency for moves to have occurred between places of like kind, particularly among sub-regional and local centres.

Stasis or spatial redistribution? The pattern of gross and net flows

One important element of Aboriginal labour migration which is not revealed by analysis of the prevalence of flows is the volume and pattern of interaction which occurred between each of the settlement size categories. This indicates whether flows between particular categories assume dominance and, if so, in what direction. According to migration theory, for example, the tendency is for smaller places to lose migrants to the next largest places with a resultant step-wise movement up the settlement hierarchy. Among the Australian workforce, this pattern of movement is found to be age-specific with those in the younger working age groups moving to larger places, particularly metropolitan areas, and a net reverse movement to smaller places occurring in older age groups (Hugo 1986; Jarvie 1989). Whether such movement results in an overall redistribution of the population may not matter so much as a determination of the spatial shifts that occur for different age groups and between particular places since these are the factors more likely to be of policy relevance from a labour market perspective.

Movement within settled Australia

The age breakdown of Aboriginal migration will be discussed in a later paper along with other migrant characteristics. Here, only the numbers involved in individual flows between categories are identified and these are set out in a series of migration matrices which provide for an analysis of gross and net movements. The pattern of movement between each settlement size category in settled Australia is shown in Table 5. Numbers in the diagonal indicate intra-category moves while off-diagonal numbers refer to the more important inter-category moves. Overall, a total of 11,566 Aborigines moved from one size category of residence to another

Table 5. Inter- and intra-category flows of the Aboriginal population aged 15+ in settled Australia, 1981-1986.

	Usual residence, 1986					
	Metropolitan	Major urban	Regional centre	Sub-regional centre	Local centre	Rural
Usual residence, 1981						
Metropolitan	653	325	278	1,155	890	561
Major urban	227	38	26	228	210	89
Regional centre	202	40	8	84	100	87
Sub-regional centre	1,046	206	95	558	726	321
Local centre	1,135	235	156	1,115	2,324	443
Rural	787	118	179	551	518	431

within settled Australia between 1981 and 1986 while 4,012 moved from one locality to another of the same size. Not surprisingly, the greatest volume of interchange occurred between metropolitan areas and other places with 3,397 moving in to the largest cities from other places in settled Australia and 3,209 moving out. However, gross interchange between sub-regional centres and other places and local centres and other places was almost as great (5,527 and 5,528 respectively) while rural places experienced a higher gross interchange (3,654) than might have been expected given the relatively small proportion of the settled area population living in such places. Movement to and from major urban centres and regional centres was relatively small (1,704 and 1,247 respectively) in accordance with their small share of the area population.

By far the greatest intra-category flow was between local centres with movement to another similar place being the single most favoured destination for Aborigines in small country towns. In contrast, almost no movement occurred between regional centres or between major urban centres while the flow of 653 between metropolitan centres was not as great as might be expected given the large proportion of working age Aborigines resident in such places and the concentration of employment and training opportunities to be found there.

The net movement represented by these figures is shown in Table 6 which reveals a clear pattern of net loss and gain according to size category. Overall, large places experienced net gain and the smallest places incurred a net loss. However, it was not the large cities and main regional centres that gained the most, rather it was the medium-sized country towns, places such as Wagga Wagga, Armidale, Shepparton, Mildura,

Table 6. Net migration flows of the Aboriginal population between settlement size categories in settled Australia, 1981-1986.

	Metropolitan	Major urban	Regional centre	Sub-regional centre	Local	Rural
Metropolitan		+98	+76	+109	-245	-226
Major urban	-98		-14	+22	-25	-29
Regional centre	-76	+14		-11	-56	-92
Sub-regional centre	-109	-22	+11		-389	-230
Local centre	+245	+25	+56	+389		-75
Rural	+226	+29	+92	+230	+75	
Total	+188	+166	+221	+739	-640	-652

Bundaberg, Maryborough, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln, Devonport, Bunbury and Kwinana. Major gains in such settlements were derived from surrounding small country towns and rural areas which suggests that they served either as an alternative destination for migrants from the smallest places or as an intermediary step en route to metropolitan areas. The importance of these settlements as an overall destination for Aboriginal migrants was also demonstrated by their net gain from metropolitan areas. The only other significant net flow within settled Australia was the movement from local centres and rural areas into metropolitan areas. This runs counter to the notion of a step-wise movement and demonstrates that the larger cities continued to attract working age Aborigines directly from the smallest places.

Table 7. Inter- and intra-category flows of the Aboriginal population aged 15+ in remote Australia, 1981-1986.

	Usual residence, 1986			
	Regional centre	Sub-regional centre	Local centre	Rural
Usual residence, 1981				
Regional centre	245	89	258	472
Sub-regional centre	189	1,439	358	441
Local centre	407	577	3,082	577
Rural	755	460	559	1,042

Movement within remote Australia

Inter and intra-category moves within remote Australia are shown in Table 7. In contrast with settled Australia, the level of movement between places of similar size was greater in remote Australia than movement between places in different size categories (5,808 compared to 5,142). Thus, most Aboriginal people who changed their place of residence in remote Australia between 1981 and 1986 did not move to an appreciably different set of labour market opportunities. Again the greatest intra-category flow was between local centres (3,082) while a substantial number also moved between sub-regional centres and within rural areas. There was far less interaction between the three regional centres due largely to a lack of mobility between Townsville and Cairns. Almost all of the 245 persons who moved between regional centres did so between Darwin and the North Queensland coast.

Table 8. Net migration flows of the Aboriginal population between settlement size categories in remote Australia.

	Regional centre	Sub-regional centre	Local centre	Rural
Regional centre		-100	-149	-283
Sub-regional centre	+100		-219	-19
Local centre	+149	+219		+18
Rural	+283	+19	-18	
Total	+532	+138	-386	-284

Among those who transferred to a different size category, the familiar pattern of net loss from rural areas and small country towns was displayed with most net gains going to the three regional centres of Darwin, Cairns and Townsville (Table 8). In the case of the latter two, this partly reflected the importance of these cities as a destination for migrants from the Torres Strait. It is also interesting to note, from data not shown here, that almost no movement took place between Cairns and Townsville with virtually all the intra-regional centre interaction occurring between these two and Darwin. As in settled Australia, sub-regional centres such as Alice Springs, Port Hedland, Kalgoorlie and Mount Isa displayed net gains, notably from smaller country towns, and although their volume of interaction with rural places was not inconsiderable, the flows between the two tended to be in equal proportion thus minimising migration effectiveness.

Table 9. Inter-category flows of the Aboriginal population aged 15+ from settled to remote Australia, 1981-1986.

	Remote Australia, 1986				
	Regional centre	Sub-regional centre	Local centre	Rural	Total
Settled Australia, 1981					
Metropolitan	408	336	533	212	1,489
Major urban	27	28	34	11	100
Regional	54	18	51	19	142
Sub-regional	117	125	221	87	550
Local centre	99	109	251	79	538
Rural	78	122	197	188	585
Total	783	738	1,287	596	3,404

Movement between settled and remote Australia

The number of working age Aborigines involved in moving between settled and remote areas is shown in Tables 9 and 10 with the first of these indicating movement from settled to remote areas and the second showing the opposite flows from remote to settled areas.

Despite a relative lack of employment and training opportunities, there was no appreciable transfer of working age Aborigines away from remote areas and into settled Australia. That is not to say that movement between the two areas did not occur. Indeed, given the inevitable distances involved in moving between these broad zones, and the structural constraints hindering such spatial interaction, particularly for Aboriginal people, one of the striking features is that the number of individuals who undertook such a transfer (7,241) is perhaps greater than might be expected, although this is still lower than the volume of gross movement which occurred within each zone.

While it is not possible to determine the number of individuals who moved between essentially contiguous places on either side of the boundary, it is significant to note that almost half of the movements between settled and remote areas (43.8 per cent) were either to or from metropolitan centres and thus involved long distances. It is also noticeable that a large number of these (1,209) took place between metropolitan areas and remote local centres. Indeed, almost half of all the moves out of remote Australia originated in such small country towns and the net loss of such places to settled Australia amounted to 459 persons. This particular movement from remote local centres accounted for much of

Table 10. Inter-category flows of the Aboriginal population aged 15+ from remote to settled Australia, 1981-1986.

	Settled Australia, 1986						
	Metropolitan	Major urban	Regional centre	Sub-regional centre	Local centre	Rural	Total
Remote Australia, 1981							
Regional centre	351	39	33	82	91	45	641
Sub-regional centre	420	60	32	197	145	56	910
Local centre	676	77	122	436	283	152	1,746
Rural	236	14	30	89	105	66	540
Total	1,683	190	217	804	624	319	3,837

the overall net loss to settled areas of 433 persons. The importance of sub-regional centres in settled Australia as a destination for migrants also reappeared with such places experiencing the highest net inflow from remote areas (254 persons). In contrast with the pattern observed within each zone, remote rural areas experienced a net gain from settled Australia, although this was entirely due to movement from other rural areas and probably resulted from local migration to adjacent places along the boundary.

Conclusion and policy implications

A significant proportion of working age Aborigines (26.6 per cent) moved away from the locale in which they lived in 1981 and had relocated in another place by 1986. In the closely settled areas of Australia, most of this movement involved migration either up or down the settlement hierarchy and therefore occurred between places with a different scale of employment and training opportunities. The overall net direction of this transfer was up the settlement hierarchy and thus towards locations which, from a labour market perspective, offered greater opportunity. In remote areas, such a transfer of population was less apparent with a greater proportion of individuals moving to places which were similar in size to the one they had left. Furthermore, very little movement took place in and out of remote rural areas where a large proportion of working age Aborigines were resident. The relative absence of population shifts into places with significantly different labour markets in remote areas tends to lend support to the general thrust of the CDEP scheme and the AEDP in stressing the importance of job creation

in the places where clients live if Aboriginal employment levels are to be raised. Whether such jobs provide a basis for economic advancement equivalent to jobs elsewhere and whether they are sustainable over time is, of course, a moot point although to be fair the same could be said of many jobs in Australia today.

While net transfers did not result in a significant overall redistribution of working age Aborigines, certain types of locality clearly attracted migrants while others lost them. Foremost among the attractors were medium-sized country towns across Australia and the main source areas were smaller surrounding country towns and rural areas. It is interesting to note that these settlements often perform an important regional service role and whether this migration has anything to do with education and training courses offered in such places could be established by reference to DEET's Aboriginal Study Assistance Scheme (ABSTUDY) data. Although the volume of movement from all over Australia was greater to metropolitan areas, these moves were reciprocated by an equivalent return flow as Gray (1989) generally found. Thus the inflow to sub-regional centres was of a different quality and may have been linked to Aboriginal housing or educational and training provision. Whatever the reason it suggests that the Aboriginal labour force of such places was being significantly augmented by in-migration during this period. Conversely, the working age groups of small country towns and rural areas were depleted, particularly in settled Australia.

Whether these patterns have been sustained, exaggerated or reversed by the policy changes of the late 1980s remains to be seen. Given the new emphasis on creating jobs *in situ* it is likely that the overall level of movement has receded but separating this from the effects of recession will be difficult. One useful pointer would be a detailed breakdown of the geography of Aboriginal job placements through the CES and some indication of where clients originated. Also of interest is whether the flows out of rural areas and small country towns have been reversed by the wider application of the CDEP scheme.

One issue, which has already been raised elsewhere (Taylor 1991), is whether it is feasible to talk of an Aboriginal segment in the labour market. In many places, the main employers of Aboriginal people are Aboriginal organisations as well as the State and Commonwealth departments responsible for the delivery of services to the Aboriginal population. In these, and other cases, affirmative action policies are aimed at Aboriginalisation. To what extent does this create a particular set of spatially-specific opportunities distinct from those available in the wider labour market? Furthermore, do jobs in the 'Aboriginal' sector contain their own dynamic in terms of labour force migration which may differ from that observed for the general labour force? Resolution of such

issues will require much closer scrutiny of employment programs and their outcomes.

Clearly, there has been a greater tendency on the part of Aborigines in settled Australia to undertake major displacement into new social and economic environments. Whether this was through choice or necessity is not clear, but the institutional structures facilitating participation in the labour force may have assisted this process. Whether these also influenced the gross movement between remote and settled areas is also worth considering as it does suggest that a limited national network of Aboriginal migration exists. Answers to all the above questions await comparison with migration patterns revealed by the 1991 Census.

Notes

1. Hereafter the terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Aborigines' are used in a collective sense to refer to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

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