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Short-term Indigenous population mobility and service delivery

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ABSTRACT

The characteristic of the Indigenous population which is widely acknowledged to have consequences for the efficient delivery of services is a propensity for frequent mobility over the short-term. At the same time, this is the one demographic variable where hard data and understanding are grossly deficient. This paper explores various dimensions of this dilemma with a view to considering potential implications for policy. It opens by reviewing what we know about short-term movement and extends this knowledge using an innovative technique for establishing the rate and pattern of short-term population displacement from census data. Other indicators of short-term movement are highlighted from household surveys and administrative data sets on the duration of stay in non-private dwellings. On the basis of this, recommendations are made regarding the use of usual residence data in rural areas and resident counts in urban areas for global estimation of service demand. Also stressed is the importance of including visitors in estimates of household size and composition. Finally, the limitations of official data collections on short-term movement are highlighted with a call for greater community-based research.

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Short-term population movement among Indigenous people is widely acknowledged as having service delivery implications in areas such as health, housing, infrastructure, employment, education and training. This is because of the potential impact of population shifts on the level and composition of service demand and usage in different localities. At the same time, very little is known in a comprehensive way either about the scale, direction and pattern of such mobility, or about the characteristics of those involved.

A good example of this gap between perception and knowledge is provided by the 1992 report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs into the needs of urban dwelling Indigenous people (Commonwealth of Australia 1992). This report devoted a whole chapter to the needs of what it called 'itinerant' people but provided very few data on itinerancy, save for a comment on the higher than average proportion of Indigenous people in hostels and refuges as well as a table showing the number of beds provided by Aboriginal Hostels Limited. The fact remains, that if policy makers were to contemplate the effects of mobility on the spatial pattern of demand for services, this would currently need to be done in a statistical vacuum.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the various dimensions of this potential problem with a view to considering potential implications for policy. As a first step, existing knowledge regarding short-term population mobility is briefly reviewed as a means of highlighting shortcomings in current analysis as well as anomalies in standard census-based measures of mobility. Ironically, one of the inadequacies of census-based measures is a failure to fully explore the potential uses of census data. To illustrate this an innovative technique for establishing the rate and pattern of short-term population displacement using census data is outlined. Other indicators of short-term movement are available from household surveys and the possibilities are demonstrated with reference to survey work carried out in the Bagot Community in Darwin, which sought to quantify household visitation rates. Also explored are the possibilities provided by administrative data on the duration of stay in non-private dwellings. For this purpose, information from Aboriginal Hostels Limited in Darwin is analysed. In conclusion, a number of implications for policy are suggested.

Short-term movement - what do we know?

A basic problem in the analysis of short-term Indigenous population movement remains the lack of rigorous statistical information. It should be noted, however, that absence of longitudinal data which would shed light on this matter is a common deficiency in the study of Australian mobility and is certainly not unique to the Indigenous population (Bell 1996; Taylor and Bell 1996a). At the same time, the greater ethnographic focus of much

research on Indigenous mobility has involved more stress on biographic and contextual analyses of movement than is evident in the mainstream migration literature.

One study that explicitly considers the contextual influences on mobility is Young and Doohan's (1989) process analysis of population movement in Central Australia. This employs participant observation techniques to provide cameo examples of the interplay between cultural, social and economic factors and circular patterns of mobility with emphasis on establishing the 'setting' and 'situation' of movers at different points in time. At a more aggregate level, Bryant's (1982) analysis of mobility among Indigenous agricultural workers also involves a chronological perspective linking locational shifts to the seasonal round of rural employment opportunities. In a similar vein, Taylor's (1989) depiction of rural-urban migration in the Katherine region identifies a complex of push and pull factors operating in both urban and rural areas serving to generate a frequent circular flow of population. While all of these efforts establish the presence of short-term population shifts, they provide little or no statistical basis for determining its demographic impact.

Attempts to use biographic methods to statistically summarise Indigenous population flows over time are rare, unsystematic and confined to small and disparate population groups. Typically, they provide weekly or monthly household population counts noting substantial fluctuation in numbers but with no indication of individual rates of movement or the sequence they follow (Palmer and Brady 1991: 43-56; Pholeros, Rainow and Torzillo 1993: 23-30). The most complete of these analyses is Altman's examination of temporal shifts in mobility for a single outstation population in Arnhem Land (Altman 1987: 22-27, 100-107). This revealed high rates of movement associated with the chronological round of social and economic activity involving the dispersal and re-grouping of individuals and households according to observable temporal patterns. It also showed that the sequence of movement was subject to a number of influences. Seasonal factors impacted on the availability of subsistence resources, the need for shelter and the ease with which people could travel. Also evident were the dictates of a fortnightly cycle associated with social security payments and the acquisition of essential supplies. Less predictable were movements to participate in ceremonies and social events, to access specialised services, and to engage in resource harvesting.

Notwithstanding an insufficiency of data, one feature which does emerge from the available literature on short-term mobility is the indication of considerable spatial range of movement extending from frequent inter-household shifts within the same community (Pholeros, Rainow and Torzillo 1993: 23-30; Young and Doohan 1989: 120-24), to intra-regional movement between communities (Altman 1987: 22-27, 100-107; Young

and Doohan 1989: 124-28; Smith and Smith 1995; Martin and Taylor 1996) and, finally, longer-range inter-regional movement often to an urban centre (Young 1981: 25-7; Taylor 1989; Young and Doohan 1989: 129-30). In each case, the mobility region (to borrow Young's (1990) term), is defined spatially by a mix of social and economic factors such as conflict avoidance, deaths in a community, the location of kinfolk, traditional associations to land, recreation, employment opportunities, the need to access services and visit relatives in prisons and hospitals.

Also apparent is a substantial gap between the depiction of mobility in the ethnographic record and that recorded by standard census measures. Striking examples of this are found across much of remote Australia where very low rates of mobility are recorded by the census in areas, such as Arnhem Land, yet numerous case studies attest to the importance of frequent mobility in the daily, periodic and seasonal round of activities associated with indigenous social and economic life (Taylor and Bell 1996b). The basic problem here is well known and derives primarily from the inability of fixed-period migration questions to capture the short-term and often circular movement of many Indigenous people. Indeed, this very movement of people between localities and households casts some doubt on the applicability of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) usual place of residence criteria (Martin and Taylor 1996).

Whilst we are fully appreciative of the existence of frequent short-term mobility, and whilst it is clearly evident that standard mobility measures overlook this, a basic research and policy question remains whether, and how, such movement can be quantified to yield aggregate indicators of demographic impact. In the rest of the paper, three methods for attempting this are examined.

Census-based analysis of short-term movement

From the Australian census form, two types of population count can be established - a *de facto count* which refers to the places where individuals were actually enumerated on census night; and a *de jure count* which refers to the places where they are usually resident (usual residence is defined as that place where a person has lived or intends to live for more than six months during the census year).

Leaving aside for now all the issues to do with applying this usual residence definition to the Indigenous population (Smith 1992; Martin and Taylor 1996), one way of presenting a snapshot of the numbers involved in short-term migration and the pattern of flows that this creates, is by cross-tabulating place of enumeration by place of usual residence. At the time of the 1991 Census, a total of 18,186 Indigenous Australians were enumerated away from their usual place of residence. This represented

almost 7 per cent of the population. For what it is worth, this was higher than the proportion recorded for the whole population (4.9 per cent), but whether such comparison is valid may be questioned given the likelihood of quite different reasons for Indigenous people being away from home.

One means of characterising this displacement of population is to examine the shifts that occur across a matrix of regions. For this purpose a 54-region matrix was used roughly corresponding to the 60 original pre-1993 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) regional council areas. As with earlier migration analysis, fairly detailed patterns of population flow into and out of each region can be derived from such a matrix (Taylor and Bell 1996b). All that is presented here, however, are select summary statistics.

Table 1. Short-term mobility status: Indigenous Australians, 1991.

Type of move	Numbers	Per cent of total	Per cent of those who moved
Did not move	247,292	93.1	
Moved[a]			
within same region	10,329	3.9	56.8
between metropolitan/non-metropolitan regions	4,474	1.7	24.6
between metropolitan regions	374	0.1	2.0
between non-metropolitan regions	3,008	1.1	16.5
Total moved	18,185	6.9	100.0
Total	265,478	100.0	

a. Counted away from the usual place of residence.

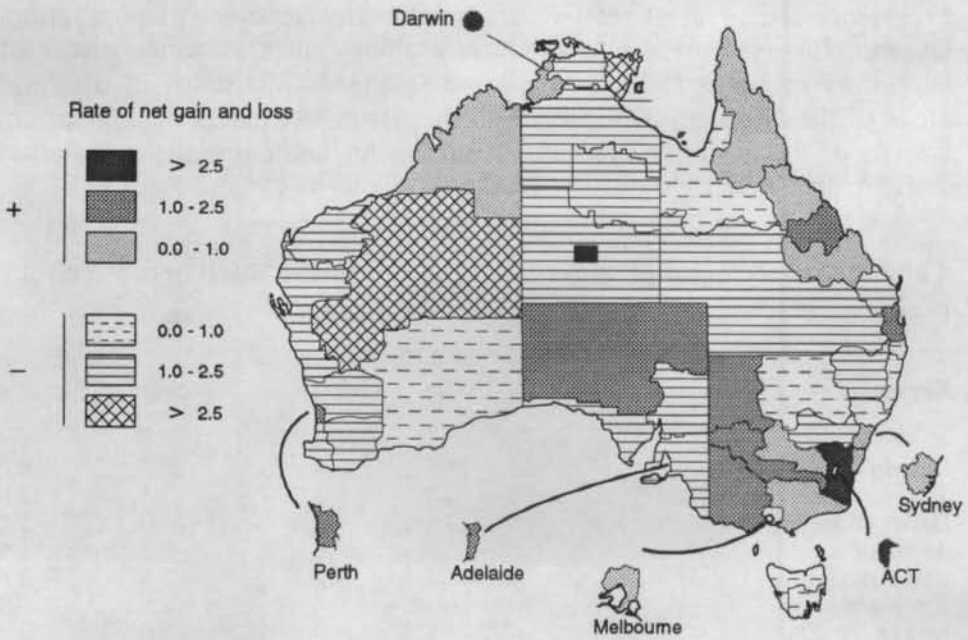
Source: 1991 Census, unpublished data.

The short-term mobility status of the Indigenous population in 1991 is shown in Table 1. Of the 18,000 individuals who were counted away from their usual place of residence, the majority (57 per cent) were involved in relatively local moves within the same region, although this means that almost half (43 per cent) were temporarily absent in another region. Thus, almost 8,000 individuals moved relatively long distances between regions and most of these did so between non-metropolitan and metropolitan regions followed by movers between non-metropolitan regions.[1] Very little short-term population transfer occurred between metropolitan regions.

Of greater interest is the net effect of these movements in terms of temporarily adding to, or subtracting from, regional populations. Using

data on the number of movers into and out of each region, the net migration flow for each region was calculated and expressed as a ratio of the 1991 usual resident population. The resultant rates and pattern of net migration are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Regional pattern of short-term net migration: Indigenous Australians, 1991.



Source: 1991 Census, unpublished data.

For the most part, net rates of inter-regional movement were low with losses rarely exceeding 2 per cent of any region's usual resident population and net gains invariably of the same order of magnitude. This would suggest that in most regions of Australia, temporary transfers of population have only a minor demographic impact at any one time, although over a one year span a considerable number of individuals would have moved temporarily. At the same time, a fairly consistent pattern of regional net gains and losses is apparent. It is noticeable, for example, that all major urban areas or regional centres experienced net gains while the majority of non-metropolitan regions (80 per cent) recorded net losses. This suggests that a proportion of the Indigenous population of major cities and regional centres around the country is comprised of individuals from non-metropolitan areas who are resident on a temporary basis only. The degree

to which this is so varies considerably: Sydney 2.2; Melbourne 2.3; Adelaide and Brisbane 3.4; Perth 4.5; Townsville 5.6; Cairns 8.6; Alice Springs 7.5; Darwin 11.2. While regional centres in Northern Australia tend to have higher rates of net gain, in each case this temporary receipt of population no doubt reflects the distribution of higher order social services, such as regional hospitals, prisons and government offices, as well as the focus of employment opportunities and State and Territory public housing, education and training institutions.

Also apparent is the fact that regions in the Northern Territory collectively experience the greatest relative short-term displacement of population. Darwin, for example, far exceeds any other centre as a net gainer of temporary migrants followed by Alice Springs, while many of the rural areas of the Northern Territory head the list of net losers of population. Details of the mobility dynamics resulting in this temporary population shift are presented for Northern Territory regions in Table 2.

Table 2. Inter-regional short-term mover rates: Northern Territory regions, 1991.[a]

Region	In rate	Out rate	Turnover	Net rate
Darwin	13.6	4.6	18.2	9.0
Tiwi	0.7	2.7	3.4	-2.0
Darwin rural	7.1	5.9	13.0	1.2
Alligator	3.7	5.6	9.3	-1.9
East Arnhem	0.5	3.1	3.6	-2.6
Katherine	6.3	6.6	12.9	-0.3
Lower Top End	1.7	3.9	5.6	-2.3
Barkly	1.7	3.3	5.0	-1.6
Alice Springs	7.6	4.4	12.0	3.2
Central Northern Territory balance	0.8	2.8	3.6	-1.9

a. Movers as a per cent of usual resident population.

Source: 1991 Census, unpublished data.

Clearly, net absenteeism is confined to rural areas with rates in rural Top End regions somewhat higher than in the Barkly and Central Australia. Overall, net losses to regional populations are small and nowhere exceed 3 per cent of the usual resident population. However, rates of net gain to urban areas are noticeably higher and turnover rates peak in all urban areas. For example, if those visiting Darwin from elsewhere are added to those simultaneously absent from Darwin this represents an exchange of persons amounting to almost 20 per cent of the city's usual resident Indigenous population. A similarly high turnover rate was evident in the Darwin rural area, as well as the towns of Katherine and Alice Springs.

This observation is especially important in the case of Katherine as the net migration balance recorded there would otherwise conceal the fact of relatively high mobility.

Table 3. Sources of origin of short-term migrants to Darwin and Alice Springs, 1991.

From	Movers to Darwin	From	Movers to Alice Springs
Alligator	22.5	Central Northern Territory	54.3
East Arnhem	16.8	South Australia	16.2
Lower Top End	11.2	Western Australia	10.8
Darwin rural	10.8	Barkly	7.2
Queensland	7.6	Darwin	4.7
Bathurst/Melville	6.3	New South Wales	2.2
Western Australia	6.3	Lower Top End	1.8
Katherine	5.4	Queensland	1.4
Central Northern Territory	4.2	Katherine	1.4
Alice Springs	3.3	Victoria	0.0
Barkly	3.1	Bathurst/Melville	0.0
South Australia	1.3	Tasmania	0.0
New South Wales	1.2	East Arnhem	0.0
Victoria	0.0	Darwin rural	0.0
Tasmania	0.0	Alligator	0.0
Australian Capital Territory	0.0	Australian Capital Territory	0.0
Total per cent	100.0		100.0
Total movers	668		278

Source: 1991 Census, unpublished data.

As for the pattern of inter-regional movement, Table 3 shows the sources of origin of short-term migrants to Darwin and Alice Springs and reveals well-defined catchment areas which approximate to the respective urban hinterlands. In the case of Darwin, the bulk of temporary visitors (68 per cent) originate from adjacent regions of the Top End although, as might be expected for an important regional centre, a wider catchment is suggested by some movement from Queensland, Western Australia and southern parts of the Northern Territory. In Alice Springs, the local hinterland also provides the main source of short-term migrants but this catchment area appears to be quite extensive covering much of Central Australia including parts of Western Australia and South Australia. On the basis of these results, it is not unreasonable to expect that similarly regionalised catchments exist around all urban centres experiencing net gain due to short-term movement. Taylor and Arthur (1993), for example, have suggested such a relationship between Cairns and the Indigenous population of the Torres Strait while Birdsall (1988) reports a similar situation between Perth and its surrounds.

Short-term movement and household size

Current ABS practise regarding household composition is to identify visitors to households (non-usual residents) in order to then exclude them from household and family classifications. As the *1991 Census Dictionary* states, this is to meet:

> ... the requirement for more accurate data and simpler and more relevant classifications reflecting the usual family and household structure (ABS 1993).

Much of the ethnographic record would dispute the notion that the exclusion of visitors from Indigenous households presents a more accurate picture of the usual family and household structure. It is well documented that Indigenous people move frequently between households and often draw upon kin to meet their short- or medium-term accommodation needs and terms such as 'concertina households', 'recomposing households' and 'household clusters' have been employed to describe the outcome (Taylor 1990; Finalyson 1991; Smith 1992). The question addressed here is, to what extent does such short-term movement occur? Is it indeed possible to quantify the impact of visitation upon household size?

To answer this, data are used from a 1986 survey of the Bagot community in Darwin (Taylor 1986). At the time of the survey this was a community of some 300 individuals occupying 40 dwellings on crown lease land vested in the Bagot Community Incorporated. At each household, the individual renting the dwelling was asked to distinguish permanent household residents from those temporarily resident at the time of the survey. This revealed that half of all dwellings had visitors totalling one quarter of the enumerated population. They were also asked to indicate the maximum number of people who had stayed at the dwelling at any time over the previous 12 months. This revealed some remarkable figures with one household recording a maximum of 40 individuals. Only 20 per cent of households indicated that they had no visitors in the 12 months prior to the survey while of those with visitors the majority (80 per cent) provided temporary accommodation on a regular basis (for periods totalling at least half the year).

Using these data, three population totals for the Bagot community were derived as follows:

i The base population *(de facto)*: those people (residents and visitors) counted in the survey by the conventional means of asking a householder to record the numbers resident at each house at the time of the survey.

ii The potential population *(de jure)*: the number of people resident in each house varies throughout the year because of high mobility in and out of the community. By ascertaining the largest number ever to have been

accommodated at each house in the course of the year preceding the survey, a figure indicating the maximum potential population of Bagot was derived.

iii The effective population *(de jure)*: it is unlikely that all those who visited Bagot would be present at the same time (as assumed in ii above) because of the casual and irregular nature of much visiting. Although the individuals involved may vary, it is clear that there is an overall visitor presence throughout the year. A third total thus exists and this lies somewhere between i and ii above. This was estimated from questions on visitor numbers and duration of stay and represents the number of people likely to be resident in Bagot at any one time.

These three population levels are shown in Table 4 for the Bagot community together with a calculation of the average number of persons per dwelling according to each estimate. Clearly, substantial variation exists between the enumerated, effective and potential population estimates with the number of people resident in Bagot rising potentially to a level 75 per cent higher than the base figure. In such (an unlikely) event, the average number of persons per dwelling would be around 13, substantially above the already high enumerated *de facto* figure of 7.5.

Table 4. Population estimates for the Bagot community, December 1986.

	Base population	Effective population	Potential population
	303	428	532
Difference from base population	-	+125 (41%)	+229 (75%)
Average persons per dwelling	7.5	10.7	13.1

Source: Taylor (1986).

Corroboration of this effect of short-term mobility on increases in population levels over the enumerated base population is available from similar calculations made for the town of Katherine (Taylor 1990). Here, the estimated increases over the base population were somewhat less than in Bagot (30 per cent for the effective population and 45 per cent for the potential population), although unlike the Bagot estimates these figures were for the town as a whole including suburban dwellings. In Katherine, the average number of persons per dwelling was estimated to increase from a base of 5.9 to a potential of 8.7. As in the Bagot community, however, it is clear that any measure of household size that failed to take into account the impact of short-term visitors would clearly underestimate the level of overcrowding.

Duration of stay: administrative data

A key policy and demographic question related to the short-term movement of population concerns the length of time spent away from the usual place of residence. Indeed, this issue forms the basis upon which usual place of residence is formally defined. In the Australian census, for example, the usual place of residence is that place where a person has lived or intends to live for a total of six months or more in the census year. Duration of movement also lies at the heart of distinctions between circular mobility, on the one hand, and migration on the other with the former considered to be moves of relatively short duration with no intention of a long lasting change of residence. While these are not necessarily juxtaposed in motivational terms, over time their aggregate impacts on population distribution can be quite different. Where circulation forms the dominant pattern of population mobility, shifts in regional population distribution are unlikely. In contrast, where migration prevails, the distribution of population may be altered drastically.

While the census provides no direct indication of the duration of population movement, the fact that usual residence criteria stipulate a minimum of six months in one place suggests at the very least that the 18,186 individuals counted away from their usual place of residence at the 1991 Census were absent for periods of less than this. Clearly, this census estimate is very imprecise and offers no substitute for more direct measurement of the duration of each move. To provide a more empirically-based indication of movement duration, administrative records from Aboriginal Hostels Limited in Darwin are employed to calculate the number and length of stay of hostel occupants over a 12 month period.

In 1986, three hostels were operated in Darwin by Aboriginal Hostels Limited: Galawu, Silas Roberts and Daisy Yarmirr. Whilst each of these provided for slightly different clientele, with regard to their source of origin and reasons for visiting Darwin, their basic aim to provide short-term accommodation and support to Aboriginal people while they are away from homes for health reasons or for meeting general business, employment, social and cultural commitments, was the same.

Information from tenancy records provided by the first two of these hostels enabled calculation of the length of stay of different family groups over the 12 month period from June 1985 to June 1986. As the composition of some family groups varied over the course of the tenancy, this does not provide an exact measure of length of stay for all individuals. If this were available, the distributions would be slightly more biased towards shorter stays.

In both cases, the average length of stay was around two months but this masks a degree of difference between the distribution of residency in each

hostel (Table 5). In Galawu, almost half of all families stayed for short periods of less than two weeks and almost two-thirds stayed for less than one month. In contrast, the majority of residents at Silas Roberts Hostel (60 per cent) were resident for periods greater than one month. The interesting point to note is that while such hostels are portrayed as providing accommodation primarily for transients, short-term visitors clearly comprise only part of the clientele. Many other individuals are relatively long-stayers in Darwin, in some cases for periods over six months duration. A major reason given for such extended periods of residence was the lengthy waiting list for Housing Commission accommodation for those whose intention was to stay in Darwin.

Table 5. Length of stay of family groups in Darwin hostels, 1985-86.

Length of stay	Galawu		Silas Roberts	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Less than 2 weeks	68	48.9	35	25.5
2 weeks - 1 month	17	12.2	19	13.9
1-2 months	22	15.8	40	29.2
2-6 months	23	16.5	38	27.7
More than 6 months	9	6.5	5	3.6
Total family groups	139	100.0	137	100.0

Source: Aboriginal Hostels Limited, Darwin.

Policy implications

While statistical information regarding short-term population movement remains lacking, some basis for further quantifying the pattern and demographic impact of such mobility has been demonstrated involving innovative use of census data and survey techniques. Potential also exists for establishing certain basic features of this movement using selected administrative data sets. A brief example has been provided in the form of tenancy data from Aboriginal Hostels Limited, but information collected by health and education departments might also prove useful in this regard. Also potentially available for analysis are the age, sex and other census characteristics of individuals counted away from their usual place of residence on census night.

From the evidence available regarding the spatial impact of short-term inter-regional movement, it would appear that estimates of service demand in many rural areas, particularly those in the Northern Territory and parts of Western Australia, may require some upward adjustment to compensate for frequent absences of sections of the population. The obvious solution

here would be to use usual place of residence data when planning for rural populations in line with recent efforts by the Darwin Office of the ABS to develop estimated resident populations for Northern Territory Community Government Councils and Incorporated Associations (ABS 1996).

In urban areas, on the other hand, it would seem advisable to employ resident counts as the basis for estimating service demand as urban populations are likely to be augmented by temporary sojourners at any given time, particularly those in Northern Australia. However, the temporary character of a proportion of the urban population also needs to be considered in terms of their special needs and where these are best met. From the brief data presented on duration of stay in urban hostels, it seems that the majority of short-term migrants to urban areas are resident for only brief periods, but it is also the case that many so-called transients are relatively long-stayers for periods greater than two months. While these may ultimately return to a usual place of residence the issue of their service requirements whilst away from home becomes pertinent. Apart from the obvious question of accommodation needs, there may also be implications for their employment, health, education and training needs. At the very least, recognition needs to be given to the servicing role that central places fulfil on behalf of adjacent hinterlands.

Of particular note here is a requirement that temporary residents be included in estimations of household size and composition contrary to current ABS practise. While visitation to households may be an infrequent occurrence in the general Australian population, this is not the case for Indigenous households (Smith 1992). If the census is not providing such information, and as the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey failed to adequately identify visitors (Taylor 1996), then it is essential that other mechanisms are established to gauge the impact of short-term mobility on overcrowding in dwellings. While not advocating measures of perceived need, it is possible that one reason for substantial gaps in housing need between the normative census-based measures of Jones (1994) and the more qualitative Phase 1 results of the 1992 ATSIC Community Housing and Infrastructure Need Survey (Jones 1994: 146) was the recognition by key informants and reference groups in the latter case of the added burden on households of frequent visitors. If a similar needs assessment is attempted in the future, it would seem advisable to attempt to quantify the impact of mobility by at least establishing the largest number of visitors to each household over, say, a 12 month period.

Finally, while this paper has mostly focused on the impact of short-term mobility from an urban perspective, many of the same issues apply in other contexts, for example, in terms of the interactions between outstations and associated host townships as well as within communities themselves. The urban focus presented here is to a large degree data-driven. The fact is, census data inadequately represent outstation populations. In any event,

usual place of residence data, which are required for migration analysis, are coded to Statistical Local Area level only while outstations exist below this scale. Clearly, the census is also the wrong tool for identifying movement within communities, a point which has been demonstrated empirically (Martin and Taylor 1996). Aside from a select few case studies of varying style and coverage (Loveday and Lea 1985; Loveday 1987; Altman 1987, 1988: 185-88; Young and Doohan 1989; Davies and Harrison 1993; Pholeros, Rainow and Torzillo 1993; Moisseeff 1994; Cooke and Langton 1995; Smith and Smith 1995) this leaves a considerable data gap in terms of assessing the impact of short-term mobility and raises the potential role of future survey work in filling the void (Taylor 1996).

The basic policy issue at stake here is how to most effectively plan for a population which is mobile over the short-term. How is the need for services best defined and provided for when individuals shift location, even within the same locality? Fundamental to considering this are the simple facts of how frequently movement occurs, who is involved and why? More practically, there is also the question of whether appropriate planning frames can be devised that encompass the spatial range of mobile populations. Some of the issues surrounding the development of regionally-oriented systems of gathering and presenting Indigenous socioeconomic data have been outlined elsewhere (Young and Doohan 1989; Young 1990; Taylor 1992, 1993; Martin and Taylor 1996). In each of these discussions, the recommendation to enhance understanding of short-term population mobility is considered crucial.

Some opportunity for enhanced understanding of the spatial pattern of short-term movement will be available following release of 1996 Census data which will include information on usual residence one year ago. Analysis of this, combined with the cross-tabulation of place of enumeration by place of usual residence should provide a comprehensive picture of movement patterns and enable the identification of service catchment areas. More detailed information, however, regarding frequency and impact of short-term movement between communities or within communities will need to be obtained by community-based research. At the same time there is some potential for a future National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey to assist by identifying sub-groups in the population who are most prone to frequent mobility and by exploring reasons for population movement (Taylor 1996).

Note

1. A broad customised definition of metropolitan is used here to include all capital cities as well as those regions encompassing Townsville and Cairns. This classification was empirically derived from the inter-regional pattern of short-term population shift.

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