

**Indigenous Australians and competition
and consumer issues:
A review of the literature
and an annotated bibliography**

J.C. Altman, S. McDonnell, and S. Ward

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Professor Jon Altman is Director, and Ms Siobhan McDonnell and Ms Sally Ward are researchers at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU.

Foreword

Late in 2000, I and others undertook some discussions with Dr David Cousins of the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission (ACCC) about research that could be undertaken auspiced by the ACCC on consumer and competition issues and Indigenous Australians. Subsequently, a number of organisations were invited to provide proposals to the ACCC to undertake such research for an initial 12 month period. In May 2001, the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University (ANU) was commissioned by the ACCC to undertake this research on the implications of the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (TPA) for Indigenous communities.

The project will be based on two key approaches, literature search and analysis and field-based data collection and analysis. Given the perceived dearth of research in this general area, the agenda for the project is negotiable within the broad parameters outlined in an agreement between the ANU and the ACCC. Priorities are established by a Project Steering Committee representing the ACCC (David Cousins and Petras Kruzas), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (Geoff Richardson and David Thompson) and CAEPR (myself). Simultaneously, CAEPR has established a Project Advisory Committee with membership drawn from within CAEPR (John Taylor, Boyd Hunter and myself); from the Division of Management and Technology at the University of Canberra (Anne Daly) and recently from the ANU's Law Faculty (Alex Bruce). CAEPR staff working on the project include Sally Ward, Siobhan McDonnell, David Martin and myself.

This initial project output sets out to identify and review relevant Australian and overseas research that is of relevance to Indigenous consumer protection and competition matters. This is the initial project output completed some five months into the project timeframe. Other field-based research that has now been completed has included brief pilot visits by David Martin to Aurukun on Cape York in August 2001 and by myself to Maningrida in central Arnhem Land in July 2001, and a more extensive visit to a number of localities in central Australia by David Martin and Siobhan McDonnell in August–September 2001. It is anticipated that field-based research results will form the second project output that will be submitted to the ACCC by the end of this year.

The literature search reported here indicates that most research has focused on issues associated with Indigenous community stores and consumer banking. The geographic focus of past research has been predominantly on remote and regional Australia, areas where remoteness and structural economic change have made these issues most significant. Although the research has had some focus on competition, most has been on consumer protection issues. It is expected that project research early in 2002 might alter somewhat to focus more on competition issues, most probably in particular industries that are of special significance to Indigenous communities.

The collaboration between all stakeholders in this project has been extremely positive and productive to date. I would like to thank the ACCC for sponsoring this research and I trust that this initial output will be of relevance both to policy makers and Indigenous interests when disseminated.

Professor Jon Altman
Director, CAEPR
March 2002

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABA	Australian Bankers' Association
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ALPA	Arnhem Land Progress Association
AMP	Australian Mutual Provident society
ANU	The Australian National University
ATM	Automatic Teller Machine
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Commission
BAC	Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CAFI	Centre for Australian Financial Institutions
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
CGC	Commonwealth Grants Commission
DIST	Department of Industry, Science and Tourism
EFTPOS	Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale
GETIC	Groupe d' Etudes Inuit et Circumpolaires
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HES	Household Expenditure Survey
HRSCFPA	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration
IBIS	Islander's Board of Industry and Service
MPA	Maningrida Progress Association
NARU	North Australia Research Unit
NWT	Northwest Territories (Canada)
OATSIA	Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
PBI	Public Benevolent Institution
TPA	Trade Practices Act 1974
TPC	Trade Practices Commission
*	See annotated published reference, Appendix 1
†	See annotated unpublished reference, Appendix 1

Executive Summary

This working paper is based on a literature search conducted to identify and review relevant Australian and overseas research that is of relevance to Indigenous competition and consumer protection matters. The focus of the literature search has been on matters of relevance to Indigenous communities throughout Australia related to the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (TPA). Results of the literature search suggest that most research conducted to date has focused on issues associated with Indigenous community stores and consumer banking. In addition, the geographic focus of past research has been predominantly on remote and regional Australia, areas where the structural impediments associated with remoteness may impede competition. Further, although the research has included some discussion of competition in Indigenous communities, it has mainly focused on consumer issues.

This working paper identifies a number of issues of importance in assessing TPA-related matters, mainly in remote Indigenous communities. These are:

- **Structural impediments, location and transport costs**

Structural features may explain the high prices charged in remote localities: these include restrictions on competition (i.e. closed markets); the nature of enterprises (not for profit and potentially inefficient) and the small populations of many isolated Indigenous communities and associated diseconomies of small scale (Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory 1999*).

- **Store quality, range of goods, health implications**

Health researchers have generated much of the literature about high prices in remote Indigenous community stores. The standard argument is that currently a high proportion of dietary intake is store based (most often the figure quoted is 90–95%). Consequently it is argued that there is a need for a supply of healthy food as well as consumer education about what food is nutritious. However, this work is challenged by researchers such as Harrison (1991*) who suggests that there are more complex cultural reasons for poor nutrition, beyond the supply of food at stores.

- **Multiple roles of stores**

The absence of other commercial institutions in remote Indigenous communities means that stores often have multiple roles. In the absence of institutions providing essential services stores must take on the role of providing these services. This is especially the case with stores that have been established as charitable organisations or social clubs and thus have a commitment to return any profits for community benefit. The multiplicity of functions provided by community stores creates difficulties and tensions in running commercially viable enterprises, in that each additional function increases the costs of running a store, and can place enormous pressures on management and staff (Bagshaw 1993*).

- **Commerce and culture**

The cultural context within which stores are established combined with their corporate structure often creates enormous pressure for stores to operate in a way that is not strictly commercial (Bagshaw 1982*). This tension between the commercial and the social is an issue that is reiterated in much of the literature and seems to represent the experience of community stores regardless of location and governance structure.

- **Governance and capacity building**

In relation to community stores, management is of crucial significance to Indigenous competition and consumer matters. Central to this analysis is the understanding that different governance structures can have major implications on the prices faced by Indigenous consumers in remote communities. Similarly, George (1996*) notes that while good management can have a positive impact on store pricing, poor management can result in stores incurring debts which are then paid for with higher prices.

- **Indigenous-specific ACCC investigations**

While the number of publicised investigations about Indigenous consumers and the TPA is limited, those that do exist indicate that the law can work to protect Indigenous consumers against breaches of the TPA.

- **Poor consumer information**

Consumers need to be aware of the TPA and the obligations it imposes on businesses before they can take action if there has been a breach. In the literature there is a general view that Indigenous people, and particularly those in remote communities are not aware of their consumer rights (see Aboriginal Consumer Education Project 1994*; Dee 1991*; Department of Fair Trading 1998*; Dodson 1995[†]).

- **Specific Indigenous consumer issues**

Specific Indigenous consumer issues identified by the literature may raise implications for the TPA in terms both of market structures which inhibit competition and of unconscionableness. Thus it may be that regulatory solutions should consider not just the education of Indigenous consumers but also structural reform to address issues of market failure.

- **Access to banking facilities**

In the context of a rapidly changing Australian financial sector, evidence is emerging that the availability of banking and financial services in rural and remote Australia is on the decline (HRSCEFPA 1999*; McDonnell & Westbury 2001). The removal of banking services from remote and rural communities has particular welfare implications for the relatively large, and increasing, Indigenous population of these communities.

- **Book-up**

Book-up is the practice of running up a tab (or book) with a store or merchant. One interpretation of book-up practices is that they result in exploitation of Indigenous consumers' lesser bargaining position and as such may be unconscionable. However, another possible interpretation of book-up is that it provides an essential service to Indigenous people who otherwise would not have access to credit. Thus it is possible that in some cases book-up has the potential to benefit Indigenous consumers.

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Introduction

In May 2001, the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University (ANU) was commissioned by the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission (ACCC) to undertake research on the implications of the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (TPA) for Indigenous communities. This research project has been driven by the following factors:

- Indigenous people are an important segment of the Australian population whose special characteristics need to be taken into account by the ACCC;
- recent visits by ACCC staff to remote Indigenous communities indicate that consumers and businesses are often unaware of their rights and obligations under the TPA; and
- the ACCC seeks to take a strategic approach to trade practices compliance and awareness within Indigenous communities. As part of this process it is sponsoring research to provide better awareness of relevant Indigenous cultural issues and of market practices affecting Indigenous communities.

The purpose of the TPA is to enhance ‘the welfare of Australians through the promotion of competition and fair trading and provision of consumer protection’ (s. 2 TPA). In terms of the work to be conducted in this project it is assumed that the most relevant parts of the Act will be: Part IV (which relates to restrictive trade practices), Part IVA (which relates to unconscionable conduct) and Part V (which relates to consumer protection). Publicised ACCC investigations in Indigenous communities to date include: the *Norwich, Colonial and Mercantile Mutual Insurance* investigations (1992), the *Collier Encyclopedias* investigation (1995), the *Saunders Sons and Associates Pty Ltd* investigation (1995), the *Baldwin’s Tractor and Truck Wreckers* investigation (1999) and the *Islander’s Board of Industry and Service* (IBIS) investigation (2000). Areas covered by these seven investigations included the provision of insurance, the selling of encyclopedias, a car selling scheme and attempted price fixing by a tractor mechanic. The investigations all involved consumer protection provisions of the TPA with the exception of the *Baldwin’s* investigation, which involved attempted price fixing, and the IBIS investigation which involved Goods and Services Tax (GST) pricing.

This joint ACCC—CAEPR project, which will extend over a twelve month period and has two elements, a literature search and field-based primary data collection and analysis. Primary emphasis will be given to fieldwork and related analysis. In relation to the literature search, this working paper sets out to identify and review relevant Australian and overseas research (e.g. from the USA and Canada) that is of relevance to Indigenous consumer protection and competition matters. This working paper and literature review is the initial project output which was provided five months into the project timeframe.

The focus of the literature search has been on TPA-related matters of relevance to Indigenous communities throughout Australia, rather than on broader issues concerning Indigenous communities and their engagement in business activities (which has already been widely explored in CAEPR literature). To this end the literature identifies a number of issues of importance in assessing TPA-related matters, mainly in remote communities. These are:

- structural impediments, location and transport costs
- store quality, range of goods, and its health implications
- the multiple roles of stores
- governance and capacity building
- commerce and culture
- indigenous-specific ACCC investigations
- poor consumer information
- specific Indigenous consumer issues
- access to banking facilities

- book-up, and
- international best practice

Finally, the paper concludes by outlining some emerging research issues.

Background

Some contextual comments need to be made at the outset. It is appropriate that the ACCC is sponsoring some preliminary work in this area because there has been little rigorous research on the issue of competition and fair trading in relation to Indigenous people in Australia. Historically, perhaps, there has been a tendency to see many Indigenous communities as operating beyond the market. Certainly this is the case in terms of the physical distance of most remote Indigenous communities from major metropolitan centres (Levitus 2001). There has also been a degree of institutional distancing, in that specific Indigenous institutions (such as community stores) have been established which allow a high level of community control over trade. These institutional structures may also show a willingness on the part of Indigenous consumers to tolerate inefficiency associated with what has sometimes been regarded (perhaps erroneously) as a natural monopoly.

Self-determination and land rights legislation

Some of the factors that have influenced developments in the modern policy era and especially since the early 1970s, when the overarching policy of self-determination was introduced, have included growth in the Indigenous community sector, with many community businesses being community owned and controlled. In addition, the progressive introduction since the 1970s of land rights legislation in many jurisdictions, and particularly in remote regions, has provided traditional owners of land a right to restrict (or limit) the entry of commercial or private sector interests. A variety of institutional trading forms have developed with the predominant type being the community owned not-for-profit corporation, frequently operating as a charitable organisation, often with public benevolent institution (PBI) status.

Historically, such developments have not been uncontested, especially in situations where the traditional owners of Aboriginal land have been able to exercise a degree of control over trading enterprises located on their lands. At times there has been an uncomfortable accommodation between traditional owners, as a sub-group, and consumers (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) more generally. To some extent, such institutional arrangements have not been conducive to external intervention, even in the face of consumer complaint, because consumers are often members of the incorporated community store board. In other situations the trader has been a state instrumentality, often with a community services obligation and subsidy (see e.g. Arthur 1990 on IBIS stores in the Torres Strait); or else the trader has been a private sector interest but with an unequal patron–client relationship with consumers (for example, in the pastoral zone where Aboriginal communities have been located on excisions from non-Aboriginal owned pastoral leases).

Absence of competition

Absence of competition and the associated costs for consumers have received wider public policy attention in the broader 'National Competition Policy' framework since the Hilmer Report (1993). To some extent, the absence of competition, especially in remote communities, has been based in part on their remoteness and invisibility from wider public scrutiny. It has also been assumed by many writers that the diseconomies of small scale (owing to small community size) and associated high transport costs explained reported differences in the prices of remote store-bought commodities when contrasted with prices in capital cities or larger urban situations.

Cost of living

It is interesting from this perspective to note that a concerted effort to establish the cost of living at remote Indigenous communities has been largely limited by an absence of statistical information. In particular, there have been few, if any, studies that have rigorously examined Indigenous expenditure patterns and set these against income. This contrast with data on the wider Australian community provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) regular Household Expenditure Survey (HES). From its establishment in 1990, CAEPR has on a number of occasions made cases to the ABS to include an Indigenous identifier in the HES so that any particularities of Indigenous expenditure could be assessed (see Altman 1992; Altman et al. 1997; Altman & Taylor 1996; Smith 1991a*, 1991b*). Without such information it is difficult to assess the overall economic impact of price differentials on Indigenous consumers. Indeed the literature suggests that while researchers have alluded to these differentials there has been little attempt to break data down into analysable components such as structural factors (e.g. freight costs), inefficient store practices, unconscionable conduct and cultural practices which may hinder commercial objectives.

Self-provisioning

Opportunities exist in some situations for people to switch between purchased commodities and services and self provisioning. This is again a contested area of research and one that is largely limited, in the literature, to discussions of foodstuffs: some researchers suggest that in remote communities over 90 per cent of foods are purchased (Lee, O'Dea & Mathews 1994*), others argue that in some contexts the proportion might be as low as 50 per cent (Matsuyama 1991*). Some governmental investigations and reports have been premised on assumptions about high levels of reliance on store-bought goods (e.g. the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory's *Inquiry into Food Prices in the Northern Territory* 1999*). These assumptions however, are in fact based on estimates and generalisations that date back to the late 1970s and mid 1980s (see Cutter 1978; Fisk 1985*; Young 1984*). Part of the inconsistency stems from the diversity of ecological, geographic and economic circumstances that remote communities face, for example whether people live in townships, town camps or outstations, coastal or desert locations, and whether they live near regional centres and have access to vehicles. There has been a tendency in policy discussions to largely overlook the value (in terms of imputed income and/or consumption patterns) of informal economic activity (Altman & Allen 1992; Altman et al. 1997; Smith & Roach 1996).

Community stores and financial services

In the absence of any comprehensive information on Indigenous expenditure patterns and hence on issues such as the adequacy of income for meeting basic nutritional dietary requirements, it is not surprising that debates about the impacts of monopoly (absence of competition) and consumer interests have tended to focus on two broad areas: the apparently inefficient nature of community stores (although again little rigorous effort has been made to differentiate between high prices that are explicable in terms of structural factors as opposed to either inefficiency or unconscionable practice) and more recently, the inefficiency and then absence of financial services in remote communities. To generalise somewhat, it is probably fair to say that historically the former issue was linked primarily to debates about Indigenous health status in the 1980s, and the latter to the consequences of the deregulation of the Australian financial system, and its impact primarily on non-Indigenous people in regional Australia, in the 1990s. Interestingly, the economic decline in regional Australia in the 1990s has highlighted more starkly for policy makers some of the issues that Indigenous communities have grappled with for decades.

Approach

To date an annotated bibliography of 87 items has been prepared, the majority of which are publicly available, published items. The focus has been on the arbitrarily defined 21-year

period between 1980 and 2001. The international focus has been on Canada, the USA and New Zealand; inquiries to date in these countries have yielded little research of either stand-alone or comparative value.

A graduate research associate, Sally Ward, was engaged to undertake the literature search. During the three-month period from June to August she compiled the annotated bibliography attached at Appendix 1. In developing this bibliography, an attempt has been made to comment on the overall quality of research undertaken. However, it is recognised that issues associated with competition and consumer protection are often a by-product of research primarily undertaken on other issues, hence it is not appropriate to be overly critical. For example, many of the studies that comment on the lack of competition in the retail sector at remote Indigenous communities, and associated problems of consumer exploitation, have been undertaken from the perspective of health and access to healthy dietary options.

The primary method of collecting material for the bibliography was by searching the library catalogues of CAEPR, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the ANU's library system, and indirectly, the ACCC, and then cross-referencing the results of these searches with the reference lists of relevant publications.

The Internet was also used for locating research centres and government agencies and their publication lists. Key words used in library and Internet searches included 'Indigenous', 'remote', 'trade practices', 'consumer', 'competition', 'transport' and 'stores'. Items were selected for inclusion in the bibliography based on their relevance to issues relating to Indigenous consumers and markets in remote communities. Liaising with key researchers also proved fruitful; for example Dr Elspeth Young had done some comparative work in Canada. Indigenous organisations such as the Nganampa Health Council, Redfern Legal Centre, Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA) and the Islander Board of Industry and Service were also contacted for advice on relevant reports and other publications.

Many researchers and government bodies in the USA, New Zealand and Canada were contacted via e-mail. Overseas agencies approached include the US Federal Trade Commission, US Department of Commerce's Economic Development and Administration section, New Zealand's Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Ministry for Maori Affairs and Ministry of Maori Development, Canadian Co-operatives Association, Aboriginal Business Canada, Canadian Consumer Information Gateway, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and the new Government of Nunavut. Contacts in New Zealand's Ministry of Consumer Affairs were unaware of any relevant research that has been conducted in the area but suggested that the size and regional dynamics of New Zealand meant that consumer issues were more easily resolved than they might be in Australia. The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development provided some interesting material, but with limited scope for comparison.

Major findings

The major findings from this literature search are presented as the annotated bibliography (Appendix 1), and this working paper which is an analytical summary of the material contained in the bibliography. The annotated bibliography includes a brief description and critical analysis of the value of the research to this project's terms of reference. Each entry provides a number of key words and also demarcates the jurisdiction where research was undertaken.

The major findings from the literature are presented under key sub-headings, which are interrelated. For example, location and transport costs are associated with structural features of remote communities; and these are then linked with health issues, and so on.

Structural impediments, location and transport costs

Structural features may explain the high prices charged in remote localities: these include restrictions on competition (i.e. closed markets); the nature of enterprises (not for profit and potentially inefficient); and the small populations of many isolated Indigenous communities

and associated diseconomies of small scale (Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory 1999*).

A major focus of many studies contained in the literature has been the high prices found at remote community stores. This is an issue that is patently obvious to researchers and visitors to these communities. Higher prices are often assumed to be indicative of the remoteness of many Indigenous communities and the additional impost on prices due to transportation costs (note that while frequent reference is made to Indigenous communities, most are in fact mixed and also have non-Indigenous residents and consumers).

There is a general consensus in the literature that costs associated with remoteness exacerbate prices in remote communities. This is generally documented with reference to a basket of goods. Young (1984^{*}) conducted the most comprehensive study of community stores in the early 1980s. Young's research ranged from the Kimberley to Cape York and south to the Pitjantjatjara lands where she collected comparative data on prices at a number of stores. Others have undertaken similar studies, for example Crough and Christopherson (1993^{*}) in the Kimberley (see also Leonard et al. (1998^{*}) in Cape York; Sullivan et al. (1987^{*}) in the Kimberley; Tregenza & Tregenza (1998^{*}) in Central Australia). Each of these studies compares the price of a basket of goods in remote Indigenous communities with prices at nearby or distant urban centres. For example Sullivan et al. (1987^{*}) show that in some Kimberley communities a basket of goods costs 45 per cent more than it would in Perth. Recently in the Northern Territory the Legislative Assembly (1999^{*}) has inquired into high food prices at remote communities. As a result the Northern Territory Government's Territory Health Services (2000^{*}) now collects information on prices for a basket of goods at a number of community stores and compares them with prices in Darwin and other regional Northern Territory centres.

Most of these studies raise more issues than they address and have methodological shortcomings, in that they engage in analysis based on incomplete data sets. In particular:

- There is an assumption that store expenditure reflects household expenditure and in the absence of HES data there is little attempt to quantify other expenditures.
- Given that geographic remoteness is identified as a key determinant of marginal cost, there is little attempt to actually isolate the transport cost component of marginal cost (as distinct from just quoting freight charges) vis-à-vis other factors like small markets, inefficiency, poor management practices, and so on.

There is limited effort to contrast costs which are associated with remoteness (transport costs and costs associated with attracting suitably qualified staff) with a range of factors that may reduce the costs associated with remote stores, like low or non-existent commercial rentals or the economic benefits of monopoly and the high market concentration of consumers.

Focus on how affordable a 'healthy' basket of goods are does not look at Indigenous consumers' actual consumption patterns. Thus the work by Tregenza and Tregenza (1998[†]) and the Northern Territory Government (2000^{*}) on designing a basket of goods that meets the health needs of a family, while useful for nutritional analysis, does not indicate what people are actually consuming or how much they are paying for a more representative basket of goods.

There is an assumption that high prices at stores have serious implications on the standard of living of Indigenous people in remote communities. In particular, Tregenza and Tregenza (1998[†]) note that people are probably unable to eat a healthy basket of goods as their food costs would exceed an average family of six's income from welfare payments. However, the relationship between income and affordability of goods has rarely been rigorously tested. Earlier research, for example by Harrison (1991^{*}) who worked with the Tiwi, challenges the point of view that income levels are an issue: Harrison was of the view that there is sufficient income to purchase healthy food. Rowse et al. (1994^{*}) show that children do not lack cash for shopping (contra Musharbash 2000^{*}); it is just that they spend it on food with poor nutritional value. A review of information on Indigenous expenditure patterns by

Smith (1991a*) indicates a disproportionate Indigenous expenditure on the basics of food and non-alcoholic beverages; however, since then there have been efforts to increase Indigenous payment for housing and rental and this has extended demands on Indigenous household incomes.

Store quality, range of goods, health implications

Health researchers have generated much of the literature about high prices in remote Indigenous community stores. The standard argument is that currently a high proportion of dietary intake is store based (most often the figure quoted is 90–95%). Consequently it is argued that there is a need for a supply of healthy food as well as consumer education about what food is nutritious. This work is challenged by researchers such as Harrison (1991*) who suggests that there are more complex cultural reasons for poor nutrition, beyond the supply of food at stores. In addition, other researchers such as Meehan (1982*), Altman (1987c*) and Matsuyama (1991*) argue that there is a far greater contribution to diet from subsistence (non-market) activities than the 5–10% that is generally reported. The focus of Meehan's, Altman's and Matsuyama's research was Arnhem Land outstations rather than townships or communities formed of Indigenous people who may have been displaced from their traditional hunting areas. However, given improved road communications and networks between town and country it is possible that people in some regions may be less reliant on stores for foodstuffs than is assumed in mainstream health research (Altman & Johnson 2000*).

The impetus for the recent Northern Territory Legislative Assembly Inquiry (1999*) was the view that cost influences dietary choice and health status, a view replicated in research on prices at stores undertaken by the Northern Territory Government (1995*, 2000*), Queensland Health (1995*) and Taylor and Westbury (2000*). In addition, the inquiry was established to examine the perception that prices in remote community stores were higher than properly functioning markets would dictate.

In relation to health matters, there is a body of research that reports that many stores in fact cross-subsidise nutritious foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables so as to ensure that they are relatively cheap (Young 1984*). For example, Wells (1993*) notes that ALPA stores have mixed objectives of competitive pricing and nutrition, with priority being given to the cross-subsidising of healthy foods. Similarly Goto (1999*) provides interesting information on gross expenditure at the Maningrida Progress Association store in Maningrida, but provides limited analysis of how prices are determined. Store policies such as cross-subsidisation are expressions of the stores' two-fold roles as both commercial enterprises and community services, roles discussed in greater detail below.

The multiple roles of stores

The absence of other commercial institutions and service providers in remote communities means that stores often take on multiple roles. This is especially the case with stores that have been established as charitable organisations or social clubs and thus have a commitment to return any profits for community benefit. For example, a store will operate as the bank and the post office because otherwise such services would not exist (Altman 1987a*). In addition, the literature emphasises the role of community stores as the provider of essential services, such as food and drink and banking services, particularly to elderly and less mobile members of remote communities. Writers such as Young (1984*) argue that the essential services provided by stores include retailing, banking and social operations which fulfil social economic and educational functions and ensure the physical wellbeing of the community.

The multiplicity of services provided by community stores creates difficulties and tensions in the attempt to run commercially viable enterprises: each additional function increases the costs of running a store, and can place enormous pressures on management and staff (Bagshaw 1993*). Young (1982*, 1984*) provides a thorough account of the multiple roles of stores in the 1980s, although more recently, following the introduction of the Rural Transaction Centre Program, there has been a trend towards greater diversity in service

delivery agencies. Whether this will mean that stores will no longer have to provide such a multiplicity of functions remains to be seen.

A problem that is often identified with stores is that there is a high turnover of management and staff (Bonner 1988^{*}). This can be linked to problems associated with a multiplicity of functions. One of these functions can be the use of the store as a source of employment and training for Indigenous staff, which may have negative impacts on efficiency and thus on price levels. There is also a view that having a store which also functions as a bank can be negative (see below) especially in situations where shopkeepers hold bank-books, and now credit cards and EFTPOS cards (Centre for Australian Financial Institutions 1998^{*}).

Economists like Stanley (1985^{*}) have viewed stores as enterprises that might potentially facilitate community economic development. The Government of Western Australia (1994^{*}) highlights the fundamental tensions in running a store as a community service or commercial enterprise (as does Young 1984^{*}). The authors of this government report offer some technical solutions to problems such as inaccurate billing (or meeting cultural obligations by undercharging kin) and pilfering (see also Bagshaw 1993^{*}; George 1996^{*}), some of which have been adopted in the better managed stores.

Commerce and culture

The cultural context within which stores are established combined with their corporate structure often creates enormous pressure for them to operate in a way that is not strictly commercial (Bagshaw 1982^{*}). This issue is linked to the multiplicity of roles that stores play (as outlined above) and raises the question: are stores about culture business or money business (Martin 1995^{*})? Or as the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory (1999^{*}) asked, are these commercial or social enterprises? Where stores are not privately owned, as is generally the case, the distribution of store profits is a problematic area. Young et al. (1993^{*}) address this issue in relation to ALPA and find that the financial arrangements made ('for the benefit of the community') between ALPA, community councils, traditional owners and the community itself can be complex and confusing. The tension between the commercial and the social is reiterated in much of the literature, and seems to afflict community stores irrespective of their location and governance structure. It is a dilemma that is addressed indirectly in matters such as alcohol sales (Martin 1998^{*}), cross-subsidisation of healthy food (McMillan 1991^{*}) and the meeting of cultural obligations both by consumers and store staff (Bagshaw 1993^{*}; Young 1987^{*}, 1995^{*}). This issue is closely related to the governance of stores.

Governance and capacity building

Store management is of crucial significance to Indigenous competition and consumer matters. The Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory's Inquiry into Food Prices (1999^{*}) lists four different models of store management and draws out the implications for cost structure, and thus prices, which flow from each of these models. Central to this analysis is the understanding that governance structures can have major implications on the prices faced by Indigenous consumers in remote communities. Similarly, George (1996^{*}) notes that while good management can have a positive impact on store pricing, poor management can result in the incurring of debts which are then paid for with higher prices. George concludes that while retail pricing policy is usually set by store management, the factors which are most likely to influence it include the indebtedness of the community, community council intervention, reliance on external advice on retailing practice, and mismanagement which results in wholesalers withdrawing from stores or charging higher fees based on the riskiness of the operation.

In relation to capacity building, even in the 1980s there was a view that Indigenous people needed to get involved in management (Ellanna et al. 1988^{*}). In the US context, Henson and Nathan (1998[†]) suggest that running stores is an important element of Native American empowerment. Young et al., (1993^{*}) criticise ALPA for inadequate involvement of Aboriginal people in management, but their view is based on a somewhat uncritical acceptance of

Aboriginal perspectives. From such a perspective, Pearson (2000*) advocates Indigenous control over community enterprises, including stores.

Much of the discussion of ‘capacity building’ focuses on Indigenous management without clearly highlighting the nature of impediments and barriers, or addressing how cultural inhibitors may be overcome. Young (1981*, 1982*) raises issues about Indigenous capacity to manage stores but there has been limited progress in employing Indigenous store managers in the last 20 years. Much discussion is rhetorical. In addition, there is also an inadequate focus on the question of how governance can impact on the operations of stores, and on the need to train Indigenous Boards in matters corporate governance, especially in situations where Board members are also powerful figures in the community. For example, it is not unusual for Board members to believe that all responsibility rests with management rather than with the Board. Taylor and Westbury (2000*) highlight how important it is for Boards to work with management.

Indigenous-specific ACCC investigations

As already mentioned, publicised ACCC investigations in Indigenous communities to date include: the *Norwich, Colonial and Mercantile Mutual Insurance* investigations (1992), the *Collier Encyclopedias* investigation (1995), the *Saunders Sons and Associates Pty Ltd* investigation, the *Baldwin’s Tractor and Truck Wreckers* investigation (1999) and the IBIS investigation (2000). The insurance investigations concerned the misleading and unconscionable provision of insurance policies to Indigenous people located in remote communities. The conduct which gave rise to these investigations involved misrepresentations and inadequate explanation of policies before purchase, and a general failure to assess the needs of policyholders. In many cases the policies sold were ‘highly inappropriate for the individuals concerned’ (Trade Practices Commission (TPC) 1994: 2). In addition, the TPC (now the ACCC) noted that ‘[t]he agents appear to have sold policies that generated the greatest commission, rather than the most appropriate benefits to policyholders’ (TPC 1994: 2). Misrepresentations made to Indigenous people during the sales of policies included: that the purchase of an investment policy was necessary because the government would not provide pensions for people when they retired, and that the purchase of a personal superannuation policy was ‘compulsory’ (TPC 1994). In response to TPC litigation each of the insurance companies involved refunded policy-holders’ premiums with interest. Moreover, Colonial Mutual agreed to pay \$715,000 into a trust fund for the consumer education of Indigenous people and Norwich agreed to fund the employment of a community consumer adviser (discussed in greater detail below).

In the *Collier Encyclopedias* investigation the companies Family Educational Publishers Pty Ltd and Lyscard Pty Ltd admitted that they used high-pressure sales techniques resulting in breaches of the TPA. The sales of Collier encyclopedia’s occurred mainly to Aboriginal consumers located in Ngukurr, Naiyu Nambiyu (Daly River), Borroloola, Elliot, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. Encyclopedia salespeople were found to have engaged in unconscionable, and misleading and deceptive conduct, and to have made false representations that consumers would get a gift following their purchase. Following TPC investigations the companies involved agreed to offer full refunds for the purchased encyclopedias. In the *Saunders* investigation a referral and pyramid selling scheme which targeted Aboriginal communities was stopped following Commission intervention. Under the scheme Saunders claimed that members of the scheme could obtain a car to the value of \$10,000 if they paid \$200 to join, and also introduced others to the scheme.

In the *Baldwin’s Tractor and Truck Wreckers* investigation, it was found that the company attempted to induce a competitor to provide Tia Tuckia, an Aboriginal community in South Australia, with an inflated quote for repairs because Baldwin’s had already quoted for the job and did not want to be undercut. Following ACCC investigations Baldwin’s admitted that its conduct breached the TPA. Further, Baldwin’s agreed to a court enforced undertaking that it would:

- never engage in price fixing conduct again;
- perform 65 hours of free labour for Tia Tuckia;

- pay the ACCC's investigation costs;
- apologise in writing to Tia Tuckia and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission; and,
- publish an apology in *The Koori Mail*, a publication circulated nationally among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Finally, the ACCC brought an action against IBIS for a breach of the price exploitation provisions of the TPA. IBIS operates 14 general stores in the outer Torres Strait Islands and a large supermarket on Thursday Island. ACCC investigations showed that, following the introduction of the GST prices of some goods at IBIS stores had increased by more than 10 per cent, with the price of some items, including those which should have been GST-free, increasing by 22 per cent. Following ACCC investigations IBIS offered the communities in which it operates refunds and a one-month 5 per cent discount on all grocery items. In addition IBIS placed notices in its stores apologising for its pricing mistake and undertook to institute a trade compliance program to ensure that its future conduct is less likely to contravene the Act.

The seven investigations outlined above seem to indicate that Indigenous people in remote communities may be particularly vulnerable to misleading practices, and that people or corporations operating in these areas should be particularly aware of their obligations under the TPA. Part IV A of the TPA deals with unconscionable conduct. Under s. 51AA dealings will be held to be unconscionable if one party is at a special disadvantage with respect to another party, and the other party takes advantage of this (*Blomley v Ryan* (1956) 99CLR362, *Commercial Bank of Australia v Amadio* (1983) 151CLR497). Indigenous people do not however, constitute a particular class of 'special disability' with respect to unconscionable dealings. Rather, the culmination of a series of factors such as low levels of education, low levels of literacy, low levels of consumer awareness (*Amadio*) as well as factors such as remoteness and the lack of an ability to get independent legal advice (*Insurance* investigations, *Collier Encyclopedias* investigation) all operate to ensure that a higher standard of probity should exist for transactions that take place with Indigenous people in remote communities. Thus the conclusion of the TPC in the *Collier Encyclopedias* investigation was that the companies involved:

took advantage of their stronger bargaining position in relation to the consumers who were in disadvantaged circumstances as persons from non-English speaking backgrounds, living in remote communities with limited education, limited ability to understand written and spoken English and limited exposure to legal dealings and high pressure salesmen.

In conclusion, while the publicised investigations about Indigenous consumers and the TPA are limited, the investigations that do exist indicate that the law can work to protect Indigenous consumers against breaches of the TPA.

Poor consumer information

In the literature there is a general view that Indigenous people, and particularly those in remote communities, are not aware of their consumer rights (see Aboriginal Consumer Education Project 1994*; Dee 1991*; Department of Fair Trading 1998*; Dodson 1995[†]). Disadvantage and poor literacy (Department of Industry, Science and Tourism (DIST) 1997) as well as limited access to information about finance and cost of finance (HRSCEFPA 1999*) are key barriers to Indigenous consumers exercising their consumer rights. Further, Cultural Perspectives (1998[†]) suggests that Indigenous people's poor understanding of consumer rights may be coupled with the cultural practice of being non-confrontationist (the public setting of the shop) and this can make them vulnerable to exploitation.

Consumers need to be aware of the TPA and the obligations it imposes on businesses before they can take action if there has been a breach. This is recognised in the ACCC's *Corporate Plan and Priorities 2001–2* which states that the ACCC seeks to achieve compliance with the TPA through, amongst other things, consumer education (ACCC 2001: 8). The *Insurance* investigations demonstrated that there may be a very low degree of

understanding amongst Indigenous people about their consumer rights, and the responsibilities of businesses in providing goods and services. A low level of Indigenous consumer awareness is evident in the settlement with Norwich Insurance company which included, amongst other things, five year funding for the employment by the Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Community Council of an adviser to assist people with consumer problems (TPC 1994: 1). It remains to be seen whether Indigenous peoples' awareness of their consumer rights has increased since these investigations took place, in 1993–94.

One way of generating a better understanding of their rights amongst Indigenous consumers is through education. There is enormous variability in the quality of information available to Indigenous consumers. Marks (1995^{*}) argues for culturally-informed provision of consumer education, though he (or she?) does not expand on this point to describe what such a strategy might consist of. The authors of the *Grin and Bear It* report (Aboriginal Consumer Education Project 1994^{*}) recognise that orally-based information media such as workshops or contact with Aboriginal liaison officers may be the most appropriate means of consumer education.

There is some evidence to suggest that Indigenous consumers may be brand loyal and so not responsive to some forms of consumer education (McMillan 1991^{*}). Experience from ALPA suggests that the relative inelasticity of demand relating to some items may mean that Indigenous people could fall prey to exploitative pricing on some goods (McMillan 1991^{*}). However, this evidence can be contrasted with that of Scrimgeour et al. (1994^{*}) found that education strategies can influence people into making healthier choices, and Wells (1993^{*}) expresses the view that people respond quickly to advertising for particular products.

Specific Indigenous consumer issues

The literature identifies a number of key areas in which Indigenous consumers are vulnerable, and which raise implications for the TPA. These areas include:

- *Taxi services* The literature contains allegations that taxi drivers overcharge for services to town camps around Alice Springs (Commonwealth Ombudsman 1997^{*}). In addition, it has also been noted that taxi drivers often hold onto bank key-cards (Westcombe 1998^{*}) which may indicate the presence of a structural monopoly.
- *Alcohol purchasing* The Commonwealth Ombudsman (1997^{*}) notes instances of Indigenous people being overcharged for alcohol.
- *Monopoly selling* There are accounts of Indigenous customers being prevented from shopping at other retail outlets because of their dependence on book-up which may be a reflection of a market structure that inhibits competition (Commonwealth Ombudsman 1997^{*}).
- *Used-car dealers* There is evidence of cars being sold at prices significantly above market rates to Indigenous customers (Commonwealth Ombudsman 1997^{*}). Mechanical repairs for cars have also been identified as being priced at above market rates for Indigenous consumers (Cultural Perspectives 1998[†]).
- *Book-up practices* (see discussion below).
- *Door-to-door sales* The TPA investigations detailed above indicate that Indigenous people may be particularly vulnerable to representations made by door-to-door salespeople.

Areas identified by the literature raise implications for the TPA both in terms of market structures which inhibit competition and of unconscionableness. While overcharging for goods and services is itself not a TPA issue, evidence that overcharging is directed towards Indigenous consumers may be suggestive of a relationship of vulnerability consistent with unconscionableness. However, it must be remembered that Indigenous consumers do not constitute a class of 'special disability'. Rather, under s. 51 AA if it can be shown that the Indigenous consumers involved in these transactions are at a special disadvantage with respect to the business involved, and the business has taken advantage of this, then the transaction will be unconscionable (s. 51 AA). Similarly, it may be that the factors to be considered in assessing unconscionability, as outlined in s. 51 AB (2), are present in some of

these transactions. Finally, the research identified in these areas seems to indicate that potential Indigenous consumer difficulties stem from both unconscionable practices and monopolistic market structures. Thus it may be that regulatory solutions should consider not just education of Indigenous consumers but also structural reform to address issues of market failure.

More general consumer issues are also identified within the literature. For example, Aboriginal people being sold items that do not suit their needs because it is assumed that they will not complain (Cultural Perspectives 1998[†]) or being refused service at stores after complaining about high prices (Srivastava 1998*). However, in all of this material little attention is paid to the cultural practices that may inform the choices Indigenous people make about where they shop, or how they consume. Thus there is little analysis of how or why these exploitative practices are taking place, beyond the statement that they occur.

Access to banking facilities

Following the rapid deregulation of the Australian financial system it is perhaps not surprising that a great deal has been written in recent times on issues associated with banking and access to consumer banking facilities. Banking services are increasingly being considered essential services in rural and remote communities (HRSCEFPA 1999*; McDonnell & Westbury 2001). In the context of a rapidly changing Australian financial sector, evidence is emerging about the declining availability of banking and financial services in rural and remote Australia (HRSCEFPA 1999*; McDonnell & Westbury 2001). The removal of banking services from remote and rural communities has particular implications for the relatively large, and increasing, Indigenous population of these communities. Further, the trend from cheque based to electronic based welfare payments will further compound these problems (Westbury 1999*). Problems associated with Indigenous people moving from cheque to electronic based welfare payments are being addressed in part by a pilot banking project being conducted by Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs (*Land Rights News* 2001*).

In relation to Indigenous people, the provision of access to credit is viewed by some writers as providing a means for breaking out of 'the poverty trap' (Stegman 1999). In addition to the problems caused by the general removal of banking services from rural and remote Indigenous communities, Indigenous people may face additional barriers to accessing credit. Indigenous entrepreneurs can face problems in accessing loans if they have a limited credit history and no collateral (McDonnell 1999*). Many Indigenous households are impoverished and lack savings, Commonwealth and State legislation prohibits the use of communal Aboriginal land as collateral, and Indigenous people have few employment opportunities in rural areas from which to earn income and accumulate equity (ATSIC 1998: 22–3). Additional barriers to the provision of credit are that Indigenous communities often lack the infrastructure needed to support banking and financial services and that there is a high cost in both delivering and accessing financial services in remote communities (Westbury 1999*: 13). Moreover, some Indigenous entrepreneurs lack the technical literacy to access the range of electronic, telephone and Internet based banking and financial services that are available. Cerexhe (1998*) highlights the point that financial literacy training for Indigenous people is urgently required.

It is clear that there is a lack of competition in the provision of banking services to many rural and remote communities, with the major banks withdrawing banking services from these regions. Some writers suggest that the provision of electronic banking services may provide a solution to this problem (Leonard et al. 1998*; Walker et al. 1997). However, Singh (1999*) and Westbury (2000*) note an Indigenous cultural preference for face-to-face banking, a preference that would not be met through the provision of electronic services.

Finally, the lack of access to normal banking facilities has resulted in other institutions like stores and art centres become alternate credit facilities (Matsuyama 1991*). While stores and other institutions are clearly providing much needed banking services, the provision of these services by informal, unregulated providers can create relationships between banking service providers and Indigenous consumers that are open to abuse. In addition, the

provision of banking services community stores must increase the cost structure of those stores, which, in turn, may increase the prices paid by all Indigenous consumers.

Book-up

Book-up is the practice of running up a tab (or book) with a store or merchant. The literature suggests that book-up is a common system of credit provision in regional and remote community stores. Traditionally the security provided on book-up has consisted of stores or merchants having welfare cheques sent to them directly, and operating 'book-up' arrangements, whereby they cash cheques on the basis that the proceeds will be used to buy supplies or pay off part of a book-up loan. This practice is described by the Commonwealth Banking Ombudsman:

There are instances of storekeepers in remote areas in town being the address point for Department of Social Security (DSS) cheques. In some instances this has created a 'capture' situation in that Aboriginal customers are extended a line of credit and storekeepers insisted on signing over DSS cheques to meet accumulated debts. This had led to exploitative pricing of goods by some storekeepers and customers being prevented from purchasing elsewhere ... It appears that social problems are not simply a factor of insufficient or poorly distributed income but also the fact that a significant proportion of income is 'ripped off' (1997*: 11–12).

More recently, as Indigenous people have been switching to electronic banking there is evidence that some storeholders and other book-up merchants are holding onto key-cards and/or PIN numbers as security for book-up loans (Renouf 2001[†]).

Researchers such as Renouf are concerned by cases of book-up where key cards and/or PIN numbers are kept by stores (Renouf 2001[†], Aboriginal Consumer Education Project 1994*; Commonwealth Ombudsman 1997*). Renouf (2001[†]) argues that the use of key cards as a form of security constitutes exploitation of consumer's lesser bargaining power because, in part, consumers do not have access to other financial services. Further, there are numerous accounts of Indigenous customers being prevented from shopping at other retail outlets because of their dependence on book-up (Commonwealth Ombudsman 1997*). In addition, fees charged by book-up providers are often exorbitant.

One interpretation of book-up practices is thus that they result in exploitation of Indigenous consumers' lesser bargaining position and as such may be unconscionable. For example, in accordance with the factors specified in s. 51 AB (2) it could possibly be argued that an Indigenous consumer who enters into a book-up arrangement, who has low level of literacy and education (s. 51AB (2)(a)), and who is pressured into using book-up arrangements on the basis that there are no other financial services available to them and they were hungry and needed food (s. 51AB (2)(b)), and who is required to leave their key-card and PIN number as security (s. 51 AB (2)(c)) may be the victim of unconscionable conduct. This is particularly so if the fees charged for book-up are exorbitant compared with the fees charged for other financial services (s. 51 AB [2](d)). This last point however rests on the problematic assumption that Indigenous consumers particularly those in remote areas, have access to credit from alternate financial sources. Another possible interpretation of book-up is that it provides an essential service to Indigenous people who otherwise would not have access to credit. Thus it is possible that in some cases book-up has the potential to benefit Indigenous consumers.

Renouf (2001[†]) outlines many of the complexities involved in book-up. For example, it can operate as a symbiotic relationship and can be a source of free credit especially in community-owned stores that charge no interest (see Cerexhe 1998*; Srivastava 1998*). The complexities associated with the use of book-up by Indigenous consumers demonstrates the need to identify and analyse any TPA implications in a culturally-informed way that addresses the question of why Indigenous people continue to participate in relationships which are, or have the potential to be, exploitative. This question will be taken up in forthcoming research.

Book-up as a practice clearly has a cost for stores in terms of administration of the book-up system and bad debts. For example Sullivan et al. (1987*) note that book-up was largely eliminated in the Kimberley due to the large debts it incurred to the communities. Young (1984*) notes the problems that book-up creates for store management and some of the ways in which the impact of such problems can be minimised. Finally, Taylor and Westbury (2000*) see book-up as a double-edged sword: on the one hand community members are guaranteed access to foodstuffs and store owners are guaranteed reimbursement, but on the other hand it can perpetuate welfare dependency and it provides little incentive for people to develop skills in operating in the cash economy.

International best practice

Our attempts to interrogate international published literature have been largely unsuccessful, possibly owing to the project time frame and our interrogation methods. One reason for the lack of international material could be that such research as it exists is focused on regional rather than Indigenous-specific issues.

The international comparative material that we have found is of two types. First, researchers in North America dealing with the practices of enterprises and stores in Indian and Inuit communities have reached similar conclusions to Australian researchers. For example, Henson and Nathan (1998[†]) suggest that greater involvement in store management is a means to economic empowerment and Ketilson and MacPherson (2001*) highlight structural, locational and scale-related issues that undermine store effectiveness in Canada.

Second, some Australian researchers, most notably Young (1987*, 1995*) and Young et al. (1993*) compare the Australian and North American experience, and demonstrate the many similarities in competition issues between 'northern' remote regions on both continents. Such similarities can include high structural costs, harsh environments, lack of competition, lack of capital, and cultural norms that may undermine conventional business practice.

Interestingly, there is no overseas literature that we were able to locate that looks at the Australian situation from an overseas comparative perspective.

Emerging research issues

A key over-arching issue emerging from the literature is that as consumers Indigenous people, especially in remote communities, are disadvantaged, both in terms of the prices that they pay for goods (and services) and their consumer rights awareness. Much of this disadvantage is structural reflecting high relative welfare dependence and poverty and poor socio-economic status reflected in low educational levels, poor literacy, poor housing, and poor health.

Much of the existing research is under-theorised and lacks analytical and methodological rigour. Hence while transport costs are highlighted as a major cause of price differential, there is no clear-cut research that demonstrates its actual impact; instead final retail price is often provided as proof per se of high transport costs when many other factors could contribute to high prices. There is, for example, surprisingly little analysis of store mark-up policy, cross-subsidisation, the not-for-profit corporate structure of many community stores or other factors that might influence prices. Some of the most detailed research, for example by Young (1984*), is in need of updating owing to very different conditions in remote communities today (e.g. better communications, greater competition, and easier travel to competitors outside the community).

Some of the existing mechanisms which can monitor store prices such as those put in place by the Northern Territory Government's 'market basket survey' provide a potentially useful mechanism for the external monitoring of store performance. Unfortunately, individual store survey results are not readily available (owing, perhaps, to concerns about commercial confidentiality) and it is unclear if store management boards receive the

feedback on relative store performance which would assist capacity building (as distinct to store managers, who often collaborate in data collection).

A number of fundamental issues that dominate economic policy debates more widely, especially from the 1990s onward, appear to be generally overlooked in the literature. First, there is the issue of competition. A brief pilot study by Altman at Maningrida in July 2001 suggests that intra-community competition in the retail sector and extra-community competition in barge transport is having an influence not just on reducing prices but also on improving the quality of services. Countering the potential appeal of competition as an agent of change are issues associated with economies of scale: there is a need to contrast the potential benefits of each. This pilot study will inform later research in this project.

A second issue is that of corporate structure. There is a perception in the literature reviewed (and in some government policy) that it is Indigenous engagement with the private sector that is most at risk of exploitation and that the profit motive is somehow linked to unconscionable practice. While there is some reference to Indigenous rent seeking behaviour and unacceptable practices like 'pilfering', these are largely understated as issues for rigorous research. The potential inefficiency associated with not-for-profit corporate structures is similarly under-researched, as is the potential for joint venturing to be an efficient corporate model.

As elsewhere in Indigenous policy there is some tendency to mix policy goals at the community, government and regulatory levels. Hence there is a recognition that suppliers of goods and services at remote Indigenous communities may pursue multiple goals and may even be funded to do so, for example, as employment training schemes or as emerging enterprises. In addition, in a cross-cultural setting all consumers may not be equal, for example some may have special rights and privileges based on customary entitlements that are locally sanctioned but that may disadvantage other consumers. This is part of the reality of contemporary Indigenous community politics and a part of the tension in articulation with the wider Australian society and its institutions.

Most of the literature deals with competition and consumer protection issues coincidentally, being primarily focused on other issues such as the impact of high store prices on health status or the development potential of community stores as enterprises. Much of the research is somewhat anecdotal, describing the store situations sometimes in great detail, but explaining store (and other service delivery) inefficiency in general terms of locational and cultural factors rather than absence of competition or poor governance. Too much of the literature is either detailed and narrowly focused on a particular community or else wide ranging but lacking in empirical detail. This suggests that a regional focus, such as that being undertaken by CAEPR in Central Australia as part of the next stage of this project, might be desirable: it will provide a more comprehensive 'regional' analysis of the issues facing Indigenous consumers.

Finally, discussion of specific consumer issues in the available literature is of limited value. Little attention is paid to the cultural practices that may inform the choices made by Indigenous people about where they shop, or how they consume. Thus there is little analysis of why or how possibly exploitative practices are taking place. A key emerging area of research is thus the need to identify and analyse prospective breaches of the TPA in a culturally-informed way that addresses the question of why Indigenous people continue to participate in relationships which are, or have the potential to be, exploitative.

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Appendix 1.

Indigenous competition and consumer issues: An annotated bibliography, 1980–2001

By Sally Ward

Part A: Published material

Aboriginal Consumer Education Project 1994. *Grin and Bear It: Experiences of Aboriginal Consumers in Rural New South Wales*, New South Wales Department of Consumer Affairs, Parramatta.

Key words

Competition, stores, financial services, consumer literacy, culture.

Geographic area

Rural New South Wales.

A major incentive for this project was the perception that Indigenous people in NSW were not making use of Consumer Affairs' services. Aboriginal people in rural NSW try to shop in larger towns and regional centres because they recognise that these outlets sell a wider range of items at cheaper prices than do community stores. However most of the people surveyed for this report had no option but to buy essential items from their community stores, so that the degree to which competition exists may be low. The book-up system can further compound a lack of competition, for example in one community people had no option but to shop at the local supermarket because the store manager had given them credit and kept their bank books. Consumer literacy programs in rural and remote NSW must take into account Indigenous people's unique interactions with the marketplace. Cultural norms may affect a variety of experiences including the use of change rooms, refunds and budgeting.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) 1994. *Recognition, Rights and Reform: A Report to Government on Native Title Social Justice Measures*, ATSIC, Woden.

Key words

Economic development, enterprise.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

This report contains a section on Aboriginal economic development. Some of the key recommendations are directed at the need for government to support Indigenous enterprise development in communities and put mechanisms such as tax incentives in place to encourage Indigenous businesses.

Altman, J.C. 1982. 'Maningrida outstations: A preliminary economic review', in E. Young and E.K. Fisk (eds) 1982. *Small Rural Communities*, Development Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Expenditure, outstations, store pricing, freight, diet, cash.

Geographic area

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

In 1979 Altman recorded expenditure patterns on the outstations surrounding Maningrida by joining the fortnightly visits made by the supply truck from Maningrida Progress Association (MPA). He found that the 'bush price' is the shop (the MPA store) price plus 10 per cent. However with standard store mark-ups and freight costs the overall mark-up on many basic goods bought at outstations was over 100 per cent. Altman noted the sharing and kin-based distribution of cash and also documented the significant savings made by communities for procuring larger items, particularly four-wheel drive trucks. Low quantities of protein-rich foods were being purchased from the supply truck, from which the author deduces the significant part played by bush foods in the diets of Gunwingu people. He estimated that bush foods produced 81 per cent of protein consumed by people at Momega and 46 per cent of kilocalories. Such data brings into question estimates that over 90 per cent of total energy intake in remote communities comes from store-purchased food.

Altman, J.C. 1987a. 'The economic impact of tourism on the Mutitjulu community, Uluru (Ayers Rock-Mount Olga) National Park', *Department of Political and Social Change Working Paper No.7, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra.*

Key words

Competition, stores, service delivery.

Geographic area

Central Australia.

The Ininti store and BP service station owned by the Malpa Trading Company were established in 1972 and until 1984 enjoyed a monopoly. While initially established to cater for tourists, with the growth of the Mutitjulu community, the store increasingly began catering for community needs. In short, the Malpa Trading Company is more than a narrowly focused commercial enterprise. The store acts as both a post office and a bank, extends credit to members of the community, and provides employment and training for Anangu people. Despite the community focus, sales to tourists still accounted for a significant proportion of sales. Malpa maintained a variable mark-up policy on goods popular with tourists, which to some extent subsidised cheaper goods for Anangu.

Altman, J.C. 1987b. 'The economic impact of tourism on the Warmun (Turkey Creek) community, East Kimberley', *East Kimberley Working Paper No. 19, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, ANU, Canberra.*

Key words

Expenditure, competition, store governance.

Geographic area

East Kimberley, Western Australia.

As part of his broader study, Altman addresses expenditure patterns in the Warmun community. He demonstrates that, in terms of housing costs, the cost of living in the community is much reduced compared with the rest of Australia. In part this is due to the provision of housing owned by Warmun Community Inc., which also owns the local general store. Because of the remoteness of the community, goods and services in the area are relatively expensive when compared to urban Australia. However, Altman finds that in a regional context, the community ownership of the store does help to reduce the prices of goods. The store does not pay rental fees or any repayments on business loans and has no need to maximise profits.

Altman, J.C. 1987c. *Hunter-Gatherers Today: An Aboriginal Economy in North Australia*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

Key words

Expenditure, competition, income, diet, outstations.

Geographic area

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

Altman highlights the difficulties faced in attempting to determine expenditure patterns among people living at Momega outstation and surrounds in the Maningrida region of Arnhem Land. Expenditure patterns are inconsistent for two main reasons. Firstly, market goods arrive at outstations about every fortnight and local people are thus captive consumers using a supply monopoly. Secondly, outstation residents have little control over their cash incomes: most rely on welfare cheques which often do not arrive. Market foods accounted for approximately 54 per cent of total expenditure at Momega. While this figure cannot be directly compared to those offered by Lee, O'Dea and Mathews (1994*) and Young (1984*) (which relate to diet rather than expenditure), they do indicate that the reliance on procurement of foods from stores differs widely between communities. For more on indigenous household expenditure see Smith (1991a*, 1991b*).

Altman, J.C. and Johnson, V. 2000. 'CDEP in town and country Arnhem Land: Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 209*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Income, savings, outstations, financial services, diet.

Geographic area

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

The authors highlight some of the key differences between Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme operations in Maningrida community and those at surrounding outstations. The Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) makes mandatory deductions from people on the CDEP payroll in a savings scheme called 'truck accounts'. The scheme is for people who have no access to credit facilities such as the Traditional Credit Union and is mainly used by outstation residents. Truck accounts are used either to save enough to purchase four-wheel-drive vehicles from Darwin or to save toward paying off truck repair bills from the BAC workshop. Altman and Johnson suggest that because of higher costs of food provision to outstations than to Maningrida itself and the high level of saving for vehicles, people must be engaging in significant levels of subsistence activity thereby reducing their need for shop-bought food. Clearly these significant savings raise questions about the validity of estimates made by Lee, O'Dea and Mathews (1994*) concerning the high percentage of energy provided from community store foods.

Anderson, C. 1982. 'The Bloomfield community, North Queensland', in E. Young and E.K. Fisk (eds) 1982. *Small Rural Communities*, Development Studies Centre, The ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Stores, financial services, diet, store pricing, culture, expenditure.

Geographic area

North Queensland.

Anderson conducted fieldwork in the late 1970s in the isolated community of Wujalwujal, north of Cairns. The research focuses on the mission store that operated until 1980. The store served as a bank, post office and mission office. Mission staff opened social security

cheques and money for rent and other bills were deducted unless residents were opposed to this practice. In 1978 only 106 out of 664 transactions were booked-up. In 1978 prices at the store were 34 per cent higher than in Brisbane. Goods were marked-up by 40 per cent (including 15% for freight) a profit that did not go back into the community. Anderson recognises the significant part that bush food plays in Kuku-Yalanyji people's diets and also notes that women tend to do the main food purchasing at the store. Aboriginal people tended not to enter the store when European people were doing their shopping and they also made purchases item by item rather than all at once. This practice has been documented elsewhere (see Westbury 2000*). It makes it easier for people to know how much money they have left to spend and they can avoid being embarrassed by not having enough cash for requested items. Of the 35 per cent–45 per cent of income not spent at the store most of it was spent on taxis to Cooktown and charter flights to Cairns.

Australian Bankers' Association n.d., Submission to The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Financial Institutions and Public Administration, *Inquiry into Alternative Banking Services in Regional and Remote Australia*.

Key words

Financial services, competition.

Geographic area

Regional and remote Australia.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the submission emphasises the demographic changes and depressed economy in rural Australia in recent years and encourages the reader to view the submission in that context. Changes in banking are also being driven by the increase in competition that has occurred due to government policy changes over the past 15 years. The Australian Bankers' Association (ABA) encourages people to make use of alternative means of accessing their funds, namely through EFTPOS, ATMs, giropost and telephone banking services. Self-service banking is discussed as a means of overcoming the disadvantage of distance but the ABA accepts that existing services do not cater for all the needs of customers in rural and remote areas. The ABA is willing to work with government and community groups to educate people in coming to terms with these alternative means of banking. The elderly and those with disabilities are singled out as groups with special needs, but Indigenous people with low numeracy or literacy levels are not mentioned.

Bagshaw, G. 1982. 'Whose store at Jimarda?: Delivery and distribution of Western foodstuffs in an Arnhem Land community', in P. Loveday (ed.), *Service Delivery to Outstations*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Outstations, stores, store governance.

Geographic area

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

The store at Jimarda outstation was established in 1975 as a bush branch of the Maningrida Progress Association (MPA). With a previous system of fortnightly on-the-spot purchases, the store was envisioned as a small-scale larder from which people could draw over a longer period of time. This paper tells the story of the problems that beset the Jimarda store as it tries to make up its shortfalls by increasing mark-ups. The tensions over the deficits indirectly resulted in two local groups challenging one another over ownership of the store, a conflict in which the MPA was not an adept mediator.

Bagshaw, J. 1993. *Stores and Stories: Northern Territory Aboriginal Communities*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Store, store governance.

Geographic area

Northern Territory.

Bagshaw and her husband were employed as store managers and store advisers all over the Northern Territory during the 1970s and 80s. The book is an anecdotal and rather paternalistic account of their experiences at places such as Hermannsburg, Yuendumu, Maningrida, Katherine and Utopia. Despite the unscholarly nature of the account it does discuss many of the difficulties which were encountered over a significant period of time.

Bonner, N.T. 1988. *Always Anangu: A Review of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal Communities of Central Australia*, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra.

Key words

Store governance, store pricing.

Geographic area

Central Australia.

Most of the ventures that have been made into the market economy on Anangu lands have enjoyed only limited success. Bonner cites the reasons for this as the restraints that store work places on mobility, store workers and managers mostly seeing their roles as a short-term means to an end rather than longer-term career opportunities and the desire to distribute resources to kin rather than to strive for profit-making. Among Bonner's recommendations are the following:

- that stores' operations be clearly defined to reflect their employment policy, social and economic functions, profit distribution policy and training function;
- that stores be subject to community councils;
- that the work undertaken by Anangu Winkiku Stores be encouraged and expanded;
- that the potential for stores to train locals in financial management be recognised;
- that store accounting systems be compatible with those of other stores and councils and integrated into a training program; and
- that if CDEP is to be utilised in stores then the savings it provides should be passed on to consumers in the form of price reductions.

Brady, M. and Martin, D.F. 1999. 'Dealing with alcohol in Alice Springs: An assessment of policy options and recommendations for action', *CAEPR Working Paper No.3*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Alcohol, international, expenditure.

Geographic area

Alice Springs, Northern Territory.

This paper examines the 'supply' side of excessive alcohol consumption and related behaviour. The Northern Territory has a high ratio of liquor outlets per capita. International evidence suggests that increased availability encourages consumption and the authors bring this evidence to bear on the situation in Alice Springs. Australian evidence shows that

excessive Aboriginal alcohol consumption can be modified by changes in the hours and days of opening of liquor outlets. In Tennant Creek restrictions were put in place after local concerns were voiced by health workers and Council members. The changes were in part intended to allow for purchases of food and other items before the spending of entire weekly pay cheques on alcohol. It was found that changes in the hours or days of sale do not affect overall consumption rates but do produce reductions in alcohol-related antisocial behaviour.

Byrnes, J. 1988. *Enterprises in Aboriginal Australia: Fifty Case Studies*, The Rural Development Centre, University of New England, Armidale.

Key words

Enterprise, stores.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

While based on empirical research conducted by the author, this publication contains no interpretation or analysis. It presents fifty 'representative' case studies of Aboriginal enterprises scattered over the country. Brief descriptions of the enterprises (which include several stores) are arranged under the following headings: objectives, achievements/progress, funding support, legal structure, decision-making, employment, strengths/skills/resources to start enterprise, skills needed, skills being developed, enterprise support available, support needed, problems encountered and advice for setting up a similar business.

Centre for Australian Financial Institutions (CAFI) 1998. *Banking in the Bush: The Transition in Financial Services*, Report prepared for the Australian Bankers Association, The University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba.

Key words

Financial services, cash, store pricing.

Geographic area

New South Wales and Queensland.

As a follow-up to a 1996 survey, residents from two towns in Queensland and four in New South Wales were surveyed on the effects of the recent closure of their local bank branches. Indigenous residents were not targeted specifically and the towns were rural rather than remote. One of the major findings of the study concerned the drain of cash from rural communities as residents increasingly travel to bank as well as shop in regional centres. Range of goods and convenience came above pricing as the main reasons why people shopped elsewhere. However people recognise the need to support local business and travelling to bank and shop elsewhere occurs much less frequently than it did in the 1996 survey.

Cerexhe, P. 1998. 'Black money business', *Consuming Issues*, No. 74: 6–10.

Key words

Financial services, cash, culture, savings, stores, ACCC/TPA.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

This article outlines several key issues in relation to Indigenous access to financial services as well as discussing some of the ways in which certain organisations have been tackling them. The author uses no empirical research but approaches the issues from a perspective

that incorporates cultural attitudes (such as sharing) toward money. Difficulties in saving money are addressed in this cultural context and the Traditional Credit Union is presented as a 'success story' which provides education in financial literacy as well as access to credit. With the lack of bank branches in rural and remote areas many people have had to rely on stores for their financial services. Quoting Gordon Renouf the most relevant section of the article discusses cases of unconscionable conduct by store managers in relation to book-up practices. The lack of electronic banking services in certain remote areas can result in payment problems that can also be exacerbated by people's mobility. The ACCC's legal proceedings against three life insurance companies are also outlined.

Commonwealth of Australia Ombudsman 1997. *One Size Does Not Fit All: Own Motion Investigation into the Department of Social Security's Service Delivery to Clients in the Town Camps of Alice Springs*, Commonwealth Ombudsman, Darwin.

Key words

Financial services, income, culture, service delivery, competition.

Geographic area

Alice Springs, Northern Territory.

This investigation was conducted after it was reported that up to 40 per cent of Indigenous people in Alice Springs town camps received insufficient income support. The Department of Social Security (DSS) has erred toward standardising its administrative approach nationally rather than developing sub-systems designed to meet the needs of particular groups. The DSS has recognised that the national computer-driven system may not meet the needs of all clients. While research has been conducted on the needs of remote area clients, no significant changes have been implemented in response. The DSS's administrative systems are premised on the client having access to a certain level of social infrastructure such as banks, transport, communication and mail services. People in remote areas often have no adequate access to this infrastructure to a level that meets the requirements of the DSS. Problems with the DSS's service delivery are grouped into four categories: language/cultural, socioeconomic, administrative and statutory. Some the more dubious activities taking place in town camps are book-up practices, exploitative pricing of goods, customers being prevented from shopping elsewhere, the exploitation of town camp people by some small businesses in Alice Springs, taxi drivers overcharging and selling alcohol illegally in camps and Indigenous customers being overcharged for alcohol. The report recognises that the DSS is not responsible for these events but that it could ameliorate the situation by making administrative changes. For example, the report recommends that the DSS could address the problem of town camp people being 'captives' of local retailers in two ways. It could register retailers who receive cheques as fit and proper persons who are then held accountable for the dispersal of all cheques received. Secondly, in the event that the DSS is given an address that has previously found to be exploitative, an Aboriginal Islander Liaison Officer be sent to discuss the matter with the client. Another recommendation is the provision of payment points that allow for partial withdrawal of monies, providing greater control over spending.

Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC) 2001. *Indigenous Funding Inquiry: Draft Report*, CGC, Canberra.

Key words

Service delivery, freight.

Geographic area

Remote Australia.

Chapter eight of the report focuses on infrastructure and the provision of services. There have been disagreements as to who is responsible for service provision in small remote communities. Although community stores are not a topic specifically addressed, the provision and maintenance of power supplies (particularly for refrigeration of fresh produce), access roads, airstrips and barge landings can all have significant impact on the functioning of stores in remote areas. The National Aboriginal Health Strategy is responsible for the difficult and involved task of measuring need and resource allocation. The level of need is determined based on the state of existing infrastructure and on project sustainability, in terms of employment, community support, interaction with CDEP and capacity for management of the program.

Crough, G. and Pritchard, B. 1991. *Too Poor to Pay Tax? Aborigines and the Australian Taxation System*, A report prepared for the Central Land Council (CLC), CLC, Alice Springs.

Key words

Income, expenditure, freight.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

The findings of this report indicate that despite their high level of unemployment Aboriginal people make substantial income taxation payments through indirect taxation, including sales taxation and fuel taxation. For Aboriginal people in remote communities these taxation payments significantly increase the costs of goods and services, costs that are already affected by high transport charges. Petrol tax impacts on Aboriginal people in remote areas substantially because of their high reliance on motor vehicle transportation and their relatively low incomes. The disadvantage is partially offset by the Petrol Freight Differential Subsidy scheme offered to Australians living in remote areas by the Commonwealth Government. The authors note however, that at the time of writing the level of freight subsidies had been reduced. From data obtained from an Alice Springs petrol wholesaler servicing remote communities in the south-west of the Northern Territory, it was found that each resident in these areas contributed an average of \$151 per annum to governments in petrol tax.

Crough, G. and Christophersen, C. 1993. *Aboriginal People in the Economy of the Kimberley Region*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Market basket survey, stores, store pricing.

Geographic area

Kimberley region, Western Australia.

High transport costs are one of the reasons for the high cost of living in the Kimberley region and in particular for Aboriginal people living in the more remote parts of the region. The results of a 'market basket' survey similar to that conducted in the Northern Territory are presented. The price of goods in the market basket purchased from community stores in the Kimberley region was 61 per cent higher than in Perth.

Crough, G. Howitt, R. and Pritchard, B. 1989. *Aboriginal Economic Development in Central Australia*, Report for the combined Aboriginal organisations of Alice Springs, Alice Springs, NT.

Key words

Economic development, stores, store governance.

Geographic area

Central Australia.

One major part of the research conducted for this report was to assess the size of the Aboriginal contribution to the Central Australian economy. It was estimated that about one-third of the Central Australian economy, or \$184 million, derives from the Aboriginal sector. In a discussion of the retail sector it is signalled that Aboriginal employment in this industry is relatively low, with only 6 per cent of employed Aborigines in retail work. Under the auspices of local policies of employment and development, many communities were encouraged during the 1980s to purchase local stores. Some of the stores failed as a result of a lack of external support and back up services. To overcome these problems Anangu Winkiku Stores was set up to provide management advice to communities on request, and part of its role was to install its own managers in stores that are in financial difficulties.

Dee, B. 1991. 'Sharp practices, Aboriginal consumers and the Trade Practices Act', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, June Issue: 8-9.

Key words

ACCC/TPA, consumer rights.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

The 1986 amendments to the TPA cover unconscionable conduct (s. 52A) that provides prohibition in cases involving transactions for consumer goods. Dee outlines the amendments and briefly describes three case studies involving the s. 52A amendment and Indigenous consumers. Section 52A contains a discretionary element to which the courts may turn in determining whether or not conduct is unconscionable. Unconscionable acts may include those that use undue influence, pressure or unfair tactics upon a consumer. They can be acts that knowingly take advantage of consumers who have misapprehended the nature of the transaction. The TPC (now the ACCC) can take legal action against corporations which have breached s. 52A.

Department of Fair Trading. 1998. *Aboriginal Action Plan, August 1998*, New South Wales Department of Fair Trading, Parramatta, NSW.

Key words

Consumer rights, consumer literacy.

Geographic area

New South Wales.

This action plan was instigated by the discovery of a general lack of awareness among Indigenous people of consumer rights and the Department of Fair Trading's services. In consultation with communities it became apparent that the main areas of consumer concern were tenancy rights, business contracts and discrimination. Much of the plan centres on a scheme to employ more Indigenous staff to act in consultation, education and mediation roles. Partly due to its focus on future plans rather than outcomes, the publication comes across as a rather superficial public relations exercise.

Department of Industry, Science and Tourism, 1997. 'The consumer education needs of rural and remote Australians', *Issues Paper 4*, September 1997, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Key words

Consumer literacy.

Geographic area

Rural and remote Australia.

The aim of the report was to glean, from a survey conducted in 1996, the education and information needs of consumers in rural and remote Australia as well as the preferred means of information delivery. A questionnaire was sent randomly to 1000 households in rural and remote areas and there was no breakdown of data based on ethnicity. The report does however make mention of the disadvantage of Aboriginal people based on reference to the *Grin and Bear It* report (Aboriginal Consumer Education Project 1994). In general, consumers felt disadvantaged compared to their urban counterparts in terms of variety, access to goods and services and costs. In terms of preferred means of obtaining information, the highest percentage of people (though only 26%) stated a preference for newspapers, magazines and newsletters, that is, media demanding literacy.

Ducret, A. 1993a. 'The sale of insurance at Aboriginal communities', *Criminology Australia*, January/February Issue: 6–8.

Key words

ACCC/TPA, consumer literacy.

Geographic area

Remote northern Queensland.

The Trade Practices Commission (now the ACCC) successfully took court action against two large insurance companies who were selling insurance schemes to people Indigenous communities. This article offers a legal overview that generalises in order to pick out the common threads in the cases. Factors in the cases include the low incomes of the Indigenous consumers (most of whom were on CDEP scheme payments), low levels of literacy and the unconscionable conduct of the salespeople. The TPA was central to the court action.

Ducret, A. 1993b. 'Trade Practices Commission's exposure of exploitation of Aboriginals', *Australian Journal of Corporate Law*, 3 (3): 1–11.

Key words

ACCC/TPA, consumer literacy.

Geographic area

Remote Queensland and remote Northern Territory.

Ducret examines the difficulties of applying the TPA to the conduct of insurance agencies who sold policies to Aboriginal people living in remote Queensland and Northern Territory communities. Certain provisions under the *Insurance Contracts Act* (1984) created uncertainties in the application of the TPA. The setting of time limits for an action against misleading conduct to commence in court was another problem. Ultimately the difficulties remained untested as the companies settled the litigation on terms favourable to the Aboriginal people involved.

Duhaime, G., Franchette, P., Langlais, J.F., and Strong, T.L. 2000. *Nunavik Comparative Price Index*, Groupe d' Etudes Inuit et Circumpolaires, Université Laval.

Key words

Market basket survey, store pricing, international.

Geographic area

Nunavik, northern Canada.

The main objective of this research was to compare prices of goods and services in the Nunavik region with the south of the Province of Quebec, as well as making comparisons between Nunavik villages. For methodological as well as practical reasons, a comparison of what consumers pay for goods and services was the methodology chosen rather than a cost of living investigation. From this methodology however, the general picture to emerge is that cost of living is significantly higher in this northern region of Canada than in more densely populated urban areas such as Quebec city. The authors note the difficulties involved in trying to 'translate' statistical techniques used by Statistics Canada to a cultural and geographic reality for which they were not designed. The categories used for data collection were thus modified to suit the particular region. They were food, housing, hunting and fishing, household operations and personal care. On the whole these categories represent a broader range of issues analysed than in much of the Australian research, which has tended to focus on food only. Using a market basket survey method similar to that adopted in many Australian studies it was found that overall, grocery stores in Nunavik are 69.1 per cent more expensive than those in the Quebec city area. Under the category of hunting and fishing it is recognised that transport costs (including the purchase and operation costs of hunting vehicles) make up a large part of the price differentials between Nunavik and Quebec city. Consumers in Nunavik are severely restricted in their ability to exercise consumer choice due to a narrow range of retailers and products. One means of overcoming this has been through the use of mail ordering, which is associated with high shipping costs. Unlike much Australian research, the report urges caution in interpreting the data and there is some attempt to qualify the results in terms of considering other factors that may contribute to, or in fact skew, key findings. For example the report recognises that food obtained by hunting and fishing as well as the cheaper housing supplied for residents of the Nunavik region may, to some extent, help offset the higher prices of goods and services. There are many similarities between the findings in this report and those in some Australian research. They include relatively low Indigenous incomes, a high proportion of household budget spent on foodstuffs, irregular supplies (particularly of fresh food), limited access for seeking redress for faulty goods, high transport costs and high costs of communication services (compounded by a wide dispersion of family members).

Ellanna, L., Loveday, P., Stanley, O. and Young, E.A. 1988. *Economic Enterprises in Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Enterprises, stores, alcohol, store governance.

Geographic area

Remote Northern Territory.

The object of this study was to identify the opportunities for Aboriginal enterprises in Yuendumu and Burunga-Wugularr in the Northern Territory. Intensive fieldwork was conducted in the communities and their surrounds. The two stores in Burunga-Wugularr both stocked alcohol and this was signalled as a key source of conflict. The selling of alcohol brings into focus the quandary that seems to dominate the running of remote stores in general: that is, whether stores should focus on profits or on community wellbeing. The sale of alcohol was very profitable for the stores but concerns were raised about its impacts on local people. There is a reasonably detailed discussion of the stores in Yuendumu (one of which was established in 1959 and is one of the biggest stores in Central Australia) including an analysis of profits and their distribution. In 1986 the Yuendumu store employed six Indigenous and six non-Indigenous staff. The lack of Indigenous input in management, and the secrecy involved in financial matters are signalled as key areas of concern. The sole recommendation in relation to stores in the report is that more effort be put into training Indigenous store managers.

Fisk, E.K. 1985. *The Aboriginal Economy in Town and Country*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

Key words

Diet, outstations.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

Fisk draws on broader research and estimates that for the Aboriginal population as a whole, less than 5 per cent of food consumption comes from non-market production. On outstations on the other hand, the estimate is that 70 per cent of total food consumed is produced by subsistence hunting and gathering (a figure that contrasts with that of Lee, O'Dea and Mathews 1994*).

George, K.L. 1996. *Community Stores and the Promotion of Health: An Assessment of Community Stores and their Functions in the Promotion of Health in Aboriginal Communities*, A report to the Health Department of Western Australia, Nanga Services, Subiaco WA.

Key words

Stores, diet, financial services, store pricing, store governance.

Geographic area

Remote Western Australia.

A cross-section of remote community stores in Western Australia was surveyed with an eye to examining the role of stores in remote Aboriginal health. The report provides some historical background on remote stores, though in general the empirical data are rather 'thin' and poorly analysed. The report recognises that remote stores act as more than mere retail outlets and often function as pseudo-banks. Emphasis is placed on the importance of good store management, which can have a positive impact on store prices. With poor management a store may incur debt which can in turn result in higher prices paid by the community. Retail pricing policy is usually set by store management and factors which are most likely to influence it include the indebtedness of the community, community council intervention, reliance on external advice on retailing practice, and mismanagement which can lead to a lack of access to the most economical wholesalers. Retail prices incorporate transport costs, wastage and pilfering. The majority of food suppliers in all of the stores surveyed obtained their goods in Perth. The report makes several general recommendations including subsidisation for fruit and vegetables, greater scrutiny of management and greater accountability.

Goto, Y. 1999. 'Store food: A case study of the food supply in Maningrida from 1988-1995', *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology* 24 (1): 141-98.

Key words

Stores, store pricing, diet, freight.

Geographic area

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

Goto presents a largely quantitative profile of the Maningrida store's provision of foodstuffs over a seven-year period, based on the store's ordering data. Store pricing is not addressed specifically, the focus being on the quantities of different types of food being ordered over time. From these statistics and with a view to improve the health of Indigenous people, Goto makes several recommendations (aimed both at store managers and Indigenous consumers). Groceries are transported to Maningrida by a weekly barge from Darwin while

fruit and vegetables arrive by air bi-weekly. Goto's data are compared with that of Lee, O'Dea and Mathews (1994*) as well as data from the ABS. When compared to fruit ordered into the Maningrida store, the national per capita consumption rate is found to be almost five times higher. In 1991 the mark-up on chilled items dropped by 30 per cent and in grocery items by 10 per cent which affected consumer demand and lead to supply increases. After the introduction of a shuttle bus service larger quantities of food and of heavy goods were purchased. The analysis of reasons for changes in the supply of items is somewhat insubstantial, especially lacking is any consideration of cultural or simply general consumer-based factors.

Government of Western Australia 1994. *Task Force on Aboriginal and Social Justice: Report of the Task Force, Vol. 2, Government of Western Australia.*

Key words

Stores, store pricing, freight, governance, financial services, consumer literacy.

Geographic area

Western Australia.

The report contains an appendix on Aboriginal community stores (a background briefing paper prepared for the Task Force). The fundamental dilemma of whether a store should be run as a community service or as a commercial enterprise is noted. Similarly all the usual difficulties that afflict remote community stores are addressed such as prices of goods, freight discounts generally being unavailable because of a lack of competition, staffing issues, a limited range of goods, the added function as a bank, pilfering and storage. However the authors appear to place great (and perhaps misguided) faith in technological solutions. For example book-up can, apparently, be solved using computer software which can provide customers with details of their spending and not allow them to go over their credit limit. Similarly, pilfering can be remedied by point of sale technology that can calculate stock losses and adjust prices to counter such losses. Perhaps as a reflection of their lack of rigorous empirical research the authors believe such measures to be 'culturally appropriate'. This clearly ignores the low levels of literacy, numeracy and awareness of consumer rights among remote Indigenous people and would obviously require significant training and education programs.

Green, D.H. and Green, M.B. 1987. 'The food retailing structure of the Northwest Territories', *Arctic*, 40 (2): 123-30.

Key words

International, stores, store pricing, freight.

Geographic area

Northwest Territories, Canada.

The three main types of food retailers—independents, chain stores and cooperatives—operating in the Northwest Territories (NWT) of Canada are compared. Empirically the data are rather 'thin', relying purely on a mail survey. Of NWT residents, 85 per cent are Indigenous and many parallels can be drawn with remote Australian community stores, though this is not discussed in the paper. Poor management, lack of profit motivation, high transport costs and high food prices were all found to be issues in the stores surveyed. Perhaps the central contrast to Australian data is the greater range of products available in the NWT food outlets. The authors conclude that these stores have adapted to the small isolated markets by expanding their merchandise line to include more variety.

Harrison, L. 1991. 'Food, nutrition and growth in Aboriginal communities', in J. Reid and P. Trompf (eds), *The Health of Aboriginal Australia*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney.

Key words

Diet, stores, store pricing, income.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

Harrison is interested in the political, sociocultural and economic aspects of nutrition. Her data are drawn from previous studies and she notes that food costs in remote community stores are far higher than those found in other centres. Aboriginal people's incomes are generally low but, on available evidence, Harrison states that store food needs can be met by low levels of income with surplus left for other items.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration (HRSCEFPA) 1999. *Regional Banking Services: Money Too Far Away*, HRSCEFPA, Canberra.

Key words

Financial services, income, financial literacy.

Geographic area

Rural and remote Australia.

Like clean water, health care and education, access to financial services is viewed as an essential service. This report outlines the changing nature of banking in rural and remote areas, notes the impact of these changes and highlights alternative means of providing such services. There is no particular reference made to the impact of bank closures on Indigenous communities. This is surprising and disappointing given the high concentration of Indigenous people in rural and remote areas. What makes this omission even more surprising perhaps, is that the report does make mention of other specific groups who may be particularly affected by changes in the delivery of banking services. These groups include the elderly, people with disabilities, low-income earners and welfare recipients. However in the context of steps which have already been taken in providing alternative financial services in rural and remote communities, the Traditional Credit Union in the Northern Territory and the Aboriginal Credit Union of Victoria are reviewed in a favourable light. Westpac has developed an in-store branch concept where basic teller services are provided within stores in rural and remote communities. This model satisfies the need for face-to-face banking services. The committee recommends that in the event of closures bank customers are provided with education and training so as to better make the transition to alternative, and most likely electronic, services.

Ketilson, L.H. and MacPherson, I. (eds) 2001. *Aboriginal Co-operatives in Canada: Case Studies, June 2001*, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa.

Key words

International, enterprise, store governance, freight.

Geographic area

Canada.

The co-operative movement began in Canada in the 1950s. Co-operatives grew in number and were found in almost every community by the 1980s by which time their membership

was between 90 and 97 per cent aboriginal. This report presents case studies of 13 different co-operatives in Canada covering a broad spectrum of aboriginal enterprises including fishery, financial, housing and consumer co-operatives. It is presented in part as a guide for those interested in developing a co-operative. The co-operative model is congruent with self-determination, it can ensure the continuing aboriginal ownership of resources and can be useful in fostering growth and sharing accountability and responsibility. Many of the difficulties mentioned in the case studies are similar to those encountered in remote Australia, for example the high transport costs and the difficulties of building viable businesses in small communities. Underlying these issues is a lack of well-trained people—both elected and employed—which has undermined the ability of people to enter leadership roles within the co-operatives. As in Australia, a key problem has, been at a managerial level where most managers are non-aboriginal people from the south. The case studies discuss issues such as financial and organisational structure, education and training, barriers to development and future developments.

Land Rights News 2001. 'Town campers banking on the future', *Land Rights News*, June 2001, 3(6): 5.

Key words

Financial services, financial literacy.

Geographic area

Alice Springs, Northern Territory.

Centrelink's move to replace cheque payments with the depositing of money into bank accounts has prompted Tangentyere Council to develop a pilot banking project in Alice Springs. Indigenous participants will be taught about key cards and the electronic transfer of funds in an environment in which they will feel comfortable. Initially 30 customers of the Tangentyere Bank Agency will be offered assistance until they become proficient in the use of ATMs and become self-reliant. They will then be replaced with another 30 people. People who have gained these skills will have the option of leaving their key cards with the bank or taking them with them.

Lee, A., O'Dea, K. and Mathews, J.D. 1994. 'Apparent dietary intake in remote Aboriginal communities', *Australian Journal of Public Health*, 18 (2): 190–7.

Key words

Diet, stores

Geographic area

Remote Australia.

The focus of this article is on nutrition and health rather than stores per se. However, in an attempt to gather data on remote Indigenous diet, the store-turnover method was applied to three central desert stores and three northern coastal stores. Intakes of refined sugar, fatty meat and white flour were high and intakes of dietary fibre and some minerals and vitamins were low. The authors state that it has been estimated (and these data are gleaned from estimates made in 1978, 1984 and 1985) that over 90 per cent of the total energy intake in remote communities comes from purchased foods.

Lee, A.J., Bailey, A.P.V., Yarmirr, D., O'Dea, K. and Mathews, J.D. 1994. 'Survival tucker: Improved diet and health indicators in an Aboriginal community', *Australian Journal of Public Health*, 18 (3): 277–85.

Key words

Diet, stores, store governance, freight.

Geographic area

Minjilang, Northern Territory.

A health and nutrition project was conducted in the Minjilang community on Croker Island and its success is attributed to the high level of community involvement at all phases. The community has one ALPA-owned store with two Indigenous store-workers. The store-turnover method was used in association with medical indicators. Intervention strategies were put in place during the project in an attempt to produce better health and nutrition outcomes for locals. Unlike other projects there was no attempt to manipulate prices, but rather simply to provide greater choice for customers by offering and promoting a wide range of good quality and nutritious foods. The article relates the story of a store manager being unwilling to order a larger variety of produce. The local council then arranged for a regular air charter to transport healthy foods from a mainland mining town. After some weeks the store manager bowed to economic pressure and restocked lines of fresh fruit and vegetables and wholemeal bread in the stores. Local people thus realised their consumer power.

Lee, A.J., Smith, A., Bryce, S., O'Dea, K., Rutishauser, I.H.E., and Mathews, J.D. 1995. 'Measuring dietary intake in remote Australian Aboriginal communities', *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, 34: 19–31.

Key words

Diet, stores.

Geographic area

Northern coast and central desert.

Five different methods of measuring dietary intake are applied in two remote communities and their practicality, acceptability and validity compared. The method favoured by both the communities and the researchers was the store-turnover method in which the mean daily store turnover is used to approximate the mean daily dietary intake. Part of the potential of this method of data collection lies in its comparability with similarly collected data, dating back as far as 1978, that food purchased from stores accounts for over 90 per cent of nutrient intake in remote communities.

Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory 1999. *Inquiry into Food Prices in the Northern Territory*, Vol.1, August 1999, Legislative Assembly, Darwin.

Key words

Food prices, market basket survey, competition, store governance, diet.

Geographic area

Northern Territory and comparisons with Queensland.

The inquiry investigated the impact of food prices both in urban centres and remote communities. Prices in a number of Northern Territory locations were compared with locations in other states. Darwin and Cairns prices compared reasonably, as did Alice Springs and Mt. Isa, but the price levels found in Katherine and Nhulunbuy were found to be unjustified. The report contains a breakdown of the comparison of prices of items in the market basket. It was found that '[s]ome of the major centres and all of the remote communities in the Northern Territory are disadvantaged in terms of price, variety and quality of food supplied, particularly perishable foodstuffs' (p. 7). Food prices in the Northern Territory will only come down when the population is high enough to be conducive to greater competition. Reasons for higher costs include transport, stock spoilage and also where management regards a store less as an economic enterprise and more as a pool of funds for other community interests. It was found that higher food prices affect people's buying patterns and this created problems for nutrition. The committee recommended that

an inquiry be undertaken to review store management and operation practices in remote communities. Given the central role of management in issues relating to pricing and nutrition, the report was enriched by a discussion of four different models of store management and their relative effects on pricing. Bush tucker is not addressed as the report operates on the premise that 95 per cent of food eaten in Aboriginal communities is purchased in stores. This figure originates in rather vague estimates made in 1978 by Cutter, 1984 by Young and 1985 by Fisk. Fisk in fact estimates that 95 per cent of food consumed by the Aboriginal population *as a whole* is purchased from stores (see also Young's 1984 reference). In his work on Maningrida, Altman (1987c) indicates that reliance on stores for food may be much lower in outstation communities.

Leonard, D., Moran, M., McLachlan, L., Johnson, G., Hallen, G., Adams, M. and Tropical Public Health Unit. 1998. *A Report on the Food Supply to the Indigenous People of Cape York Health District*, Tropical Public Health Unit for North Queensland, Cairns.

Key words

Diet, stores, store pricing, market basket survey, freight, financial services.

Geographic area

Cape York.

This report is compiled from a health and nutrition perspective and contains a draft food and nutrition policy for remote community stores. The stores examined were Lockhart River, Aurukun, Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw. A 'healthy shopping basket' was used to compare pricing of healthy foods. It was found that during the wet season Cape York communities pay between 30 per cent and 75 per cent more for the shopping basket than people in Cairns do. Sea freight added between \$0.60 and \$0.80 per kg and contracted air freight added \$1.50 and \$2.50 per kg to the cost of fruit and vegetables. EFTPOS facilities were introduced into all the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (OATSIA) stores during 1997 and it was suggested that this may help individuals manage their money and resist the pressures to share income. However there is no mention of whether appropriate education was provided during the introduction of these electronic services. There is a fundamental confusion in communities as to whether remote community stores exist as a social service to communities or whether they operate solely to generate profit. The role of store management in providing and promoting healthy foods is emphasised. For example in OATSIA-run stores a policy was implemented of reducing the profit margin on fresh fruit and vegetables, training in fresh produce management and better storage facilities. Bush foods and seafoods are recognised as a significant factor in the diet and social lives of local people, though a lack of vehicles and boats is a constraint on subsistence related activities.

McDonnell, S. 1999. 'The Grameen Bank micro-credit model: Lessons for Australian Indigenous economic policy', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 178*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Financial services, enterprise, culture.

Geographic area

Australia, Canada and America.

Micro-credit models such as that developed by the Grameen Bank work to extend small loans to people who are too poor to qualify for commercial lending schemes. Case studies from Canada and America show that it is possible to successfully replicate micro-credit schemes among indigenous communities in developed countries. However, McDonnell argues, policy-makers may encounter some unique challenges in attempting to implement

such programs in Indigenous communities in Australia. Low population density, welfare payments, investment opportunities and particular cultural practices will all need to be addressed if micro-credit is to become a viable option for Indigenous entrepreneurs in Australia.

McMillan, S.J. 1991. 'Food and nutrition policy issues in remote Aboriginal communities: Lessons from Arnhem Land', *Australian Journal of Public Health*, 15 (4): 281–285.

Key words

Diet, store prices, stores, culture.

Geographic area

Arnhem Land.

Much of the literature to date on stores in Indigenous communities has been written from a health and nutrition perspective. McMillan outlines the main issues that affect food availability and nutrition policy in remote communities. The Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA) attempts to negotiate a path that both improves the health of Indigenous people and maintains economic viability. The demand for food is affected by factors such as price, price of substitutes, income, Aboriginal buying habits and seasonality. Perhaps of most relevance here is that, in ALPA's experience, Aboriginal people will pay almost anything for something they want and if something they do not want is offered for free it is near impossible to give it away. This pattern could clearly lead to the exploiting of Indigenous consumers by increasing the prices on popular items. Another important factor of which ALPA was aware was that brand loyalty was often high but that it may be a matter of low literacy levels (people may select goods by recognising packaging rather than reading brand names), a factor which made it difficult to introduce consumers to cheaper generic house brands. Factors affecting supply include consumer demand, stock management, carrying capacity and deliveries, all of which can in turn affect pricing.

Marks, G. 1995. 'Sold out: The violation of the consumer rights of Aborigines', *Alternative Law Journal*, 20 (4): 190–193.

Key words

Consumer rights, service delivery, consumer literacy.

Geographic area

Remote Australia.

In 1985 the United Nations adopted the Charter of Consumer Rights. According to the Charter consumers are entitled to have access to adequate food, clothing and shelter, health care, education and sanitation. This article examines several areas in which Indigenous consumers in remote areas have been denied their consumer rights. For example sophisticated sanitary facilities have been installed in communities accompanied by little or no explanation or information on why they were introduced or how to use and maintain them. The article focuses on the need for culturally informed education programs in remote communities.

Martin, D.F. 1995. 'Money, business and culture: Issues for Aboriginal economic policy', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 101*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Expenditure, culture, income.

Geographic area

Cape York, Queensland.

This paper provides a cultural analysis of the use of money by the Wik people of Aurukun, Cape York Peninsula. It presents data on incomes and expenditures on a weekly aggregated basis over a twelve-month period, and argues for a distinctive Aboriginal 'economy' in which it is social rather than material forms of capital that are the subject of competition.

Martin, D.F. 1998. 'The supply of alcohol in remote Aboriginal communities: Potential policy directions from Cape York', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 162*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Alcohol, store governance, enterprise.

Geographic area

Cape York, Queensland.

Martin argues that the supply side of alcohol must be controlled if alcohol consumption is to be lowered. A number of Cape York communities have their own canteens run by the local Council. Martin states that there is an irreconcilable tension between Council's statutory role to foster and promote community wellbeing and law and order, and their dependence on the profits made from liquor sales. This tension runs parallel to the fundamental dilemma facing community stores of how to run a business as both a successful community service and a viable financial enterprise. Martin suggests that to overcome the dilemma faced by Councils, a Regional Alcohol Trust could be set up so that any profits made from alcohol could be used for alcohol education programs and more broadly, resourcing community development initiatives. Evidence from one Cape York community suggests that demand for alcohol is essentially independent of its price. McMillan's (1991) findings that Aboriginal people would pay almost anything for something they want supports this. Further this attitude encourages practices such as selling 'sly grog' for exorbitant prices (Martin recorded poor quality cask wine selling for between \$100 and \$150 per cask).

Matsuyama, T. 1991. 'Sharing and money in an Aboriginal outstation', in N. Peterson and M. Toshio (eds), *Cash, Commoditisation and Changing Foragers*, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka.

Key words

Outstations, diet, cash, culture, financial services.

Geographic area

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

Matsuyama's paper looks at the impact money has had on the outstation community of Gamardi in Arnhem Land. The study relies on data collected on visits to the community during 1984, 1986 and 1988. Purchased food was estimated to provide 50 per cent of daily dietary intake, a figure that contrasts markedly with estimates of Lee, O'Dea and Mathews (1994*). During the period of data collection food was generally purchased every 10 days either from the mobile shop that came once a fortnight or by visiting Maningrida or Ramingining. The author contends that purchased food is not shared nearly as much as bush tucker is. In relation to store credit, the Arts and Crafts Centre at Maningrida is said to provide credit for several local artists against their future productions.

Meehan, B. 1982. *Shell Bed to Shell Midden*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

Key words

Diet.

Geographic area

Coastal Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

Meehan set out to investigate the role of shellfish in the economy of the Anbarra of the northern coastal region of Arnhem Land. She measures the gross weight, protein content and energy content of shellfish, other bush foods and bought foods. Though not a focus of her research, she finds that purchased food makes up a much less significant part of Anbarra diet than that estimated by Lee, O'Dea and Mathews (1994). Meehan's data (like Altman's 1987c data) suggest that Lee et al.'s estimate that over 90 per cent of the total energy intake in remote communities comes from purchased foods may need qualification.

Musharbash, Y. 2000. 'The Yuendumu community case study', in D.E. Smith (ed.), *Indigenous Families and the Welfare System: Two Community Case Studies*. CAEPR Research Monograph No. 17. CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Cash, income, culture, service delivery.

Geographic area

Yuendumu, Northern Territory.

Musharbash presents an analysis of data on the appropriateness of policy frameworks and the delivery of welfare payments and services in Yuendumu. Concern was raised by some members of the community about the lumping together of 'kids' money' into one cheque (the Family Allowance). This policy makes it difficult to determine exactly the amount of money that 'belongs' to individual children (an issue compounded by high mobility), the conviction being that a child's money belongs to the individual child. The author recommends that a 'Kids' Care Card' be trialed by DFACS and Centrelink. The card would function as a reusable debit card into which Centrelink would make welfare payments. Each child would be allocated a card that would have a set number of 'designated carers' as signatories. This approach could be relevant to the concerns raised by Rowse et al. (1994*) about children's access to nutritious foods.

Northern Territory Government 1995. *Northern Territory Food and Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan 1995–2000*, Territory Health Services, Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

Key words

Stores, economic development, freight, diet.

Geographic area

Northern Territory.

The key priority for this plan was to improve the quantity, quality and affordability of the food supply in remote communities. Various actions to this end include:

- promotion of self-sufficient food production by Aboriginal communities;
- development of business management skills among local leaders to help facilitate the local control of food supply which, if successful, will lower food costs, provide community employment and economic development;

- develop model food policies and food supply guidelines for stores;
- investigate food transport issues;
- establish a food and nutrition training package for store workers; and
- investigate means of making book-up more equitable.

Several goals and targets were outlined, some of which focus on remote Indigenous communities, and the year 2000 is cited as the time by which certain aims will be achieved.

Northern Territory Government 2000. *Market Basket Survey of Remote Community Stores in the Northern Territory 2000*, Territory Health Services, Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

Key words

Market basket survey, store prices, stores.

Geographic area

Northern Territory.

The survey was conducted in mind of the figure that 95 per cent of foods eaten in remote Aboriginal communities is purchased at community stores. The reference for this figure is Lee, O'Dea and Mathews (1994), which states the figure of 'over 90 per cent' based on estimates made by others in 1978, 1984 and 1985. Using a similar approach to Tregenza and Tregenza, the researchers created a hypothetical family and a market basket (which met the family's nutritional and energy requirements). Remote community stores across five districts in the Northern Territory were surveyed and compared both with the supermarket in the given districts and with a corner store. The report provides quantitative data on food pricing, quality and availability. There is however, little analysis of the findings, leaving questions of consumer spending patterns, cultural factors and pricing policy unexplored. For example it was found that overall it was 38 per cent more expensive to buy the same basket of goods in Northern Territory remote stores than in a Darwin supermarket and 28 per cent more expensive than in a Darwin corner store. However, there is no mention of the part played by transport costs in such findings. Nor is there mention of competition issues, whether prices were always found on goods, or whether any unconscionable conduct was unearthed during research.

Pearson, N. 2000. *Our Right to Take Responsibility*, Noel Pearson and Associates, Cairns.

Key words

Economic development, income, enterprise, service delivery.

Geographic area

Cape York, Queensland.

Pearson contends that Indigenous people's right to self-determination is ultimately the right to take responsibility. Dominant in Pearson's argument is the right of Indigenous people to build and participate in a real economy, one that is not based on welfare. Pearson is critical of the current CDEP model but recognises that often these payments are the dominant resource inputs to communities. He is concerned that inputs immediately get sucked out of the community through the mostly non-Indigenous owned businesses that supply goods and services. He argues for the development of internal economies and enterprises through the training of Indigenous communities in business and investing in the general economy.

Povinelli, E.A. 1993. *Labor's Lot: The Power, History, and Culture of Aboriginal Action*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Key words

Stores, book-up, diet, culture, alcohol.

Geographic area

Cox Peninsula, Northern Territory.

Povinelli's account centres on the Belyuen community on the Cox Peninsula. Local Aboriginal productivity and the hunter-gatherer economy are key concerns as well as Belyuen people's selective engagement with the non-Aboriginal economy. In 1984–85 there were two stores on the Peninsula, the community store and another 15 kilometres away that was attached to the Mandorah Pub, the latter holding a virtual monopoly on alcohol. The food from grocery stores provided approximately 80 per cent of the total caloric needs of Belyuen. At the Belyuen community store, profits exceeding a certain dividend were used to finance community projects. A third store, the Alewa Grocery Store, opened in 1988 with higher quality goods, a larger range and, initially, cheaper prices. Consequently, most Belyuen income was spent at the new store. As Povinelli highlights, Belyuen money flows along a wide system of kin, cards, and domestic and ceremonial obligations. By encouraging locals to spend their money in the form of credit, store owners attempt to control the direction of this flow. That is, in a restricted monetary system, businesses look for ways of extending their share of the market. Towards this goal both the Belyuen and Alewa grocery stores began extending credit to their customers. The Alewa storekeepers ran into some financial difficulty and began to send out legal notices to customers advising that they pay their bills. For non-drinking locals unable to pay their debts the answer was to minimise their patronage of the store and simplify their diet (as well as presumably relying more heavily on bush and sea foods). After some time negotiations were initiated whereby arrangements were made for people to make lower repayments than had previously been asked and customers were promised that new items would be stocked.

Report of the Select Committee of the House of Assembly on Food Prices, November 9 1984, Newfoundland.

Key words

Store prices, market basket survey, freight, international.

Geographic area

Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.

A committee was established to determine what factors may contribute to the higher prices of foodstuffs in Newfoundland and Labrador and to recommend how prices might be reduced. Similar methodologies to those used in Australia were employed, including the use of a market basket, although the stores surveyed were not always small community stores and were often supermarkets including those in cities. As in remote Australia, isolation from distribution centres is one of the key reasons for higher food prices, particularly because of freight costs. A direct positive correlation was found between the distance of the store from the capital city of St. Johns and the price of food. Consumers in the more remote regions were found to be paying more and having less to choose from at their stores. The committee found that those communities with the highest populations tended to pay slightly more for their food. It was found that the operation of government stores in remote areas was unnecessarily complex and inefficient and this also contributed to the higher prices of foodstuffs. In another parallel to Australian data it was found that consumers are brand-loyal and will pay almost anything to buy some particular brands. Recommendations made by the committee include improving freight services, handing over government owned stores to the private sector, establishing community gardens, increasing access to training

and education for management and staff, increasing consumer awareness, and increasing the buying power of small independent retailers by banding them together.

Rowse, T., Scrimgeour, D., Knight, S. and Thomas, D. 1994. 'Food-purchasing behaviour in an Aboriginal community: Results of a survey', *Australian Journal of Public Health*, 18 (1): 63–7.

Key words

Diet, stores, expenditure, income.

Geographic area

Central Australia.

A central Australian community of 925 people (866 of whom are Indigenous) was surveyed over a two-week period in December 1989. The community had four food retail outlets including a supermarket, a butcher and two take-aways. One of the clearest findings of the survey was that women are by far the main food purchasers compared to men. Another key finding was that children have sufficient disposable income to provision themselves without adult supervision, thus determining their own diets, mostly from the take-away stores (see also Musharbash 2000). This article focuses very much on improving health outcomes; there is little analysis of cultural and financial factors, though it is noted that the cycle of expenditure is determined by CDEP and welfare payments.

Scrimgeour, D., Rowse, T. and Knight, S. 1994. 'Food-purchasing behaviour in an Aboriginal community: Evaluation of an intervention aimed at children', *Australian Journal of Public Health*, 18 (1): 67–70.

Key words

Diet, store governance.

Geographic area

Central Australia.

Two years after the initial study (Rowse et al. 1994) this follow-up study evaluates an intervention strategy which had been implemented in the interim. The strategy provided healthier choices for children using tactics such as putting fruit rather than confectionary at the checkout and labelling 'healthy food' items. Overall there was an improvement in the food-purchasing behaviour of children over the two-year period. The success of the intervention program is attributed to community involvement, good personal relationships between outsiders and community residents, especially with store managers, and ensuring the availability of a wide variety of food.

Singh, S. 1999. 'Electronic money: Understanding its use to increase the effectiveness of policy', *Telecommunications Policy*, 23: 753–73.

Key words

Financial services, culture, income.

Geographic area

Australia and Asia-Pacific region.

This article does not specifically address Indigenous peoples' experiences of electronic money. However in light of the deregulation of financial services in rural and remote regions, and the closure of many bank branches, a discussion of using electronic money is revealing. The article presents a users' perspective on electronic money and in doing so focuses on the social and cultural context in which money is used. It is argued that pricing policies ignore the effects of trust, comfort and habit in banking behaviours. Indigenous

consumers may be particularly excluded from electronic banking due to low literacy and/or numeracy and a preference for face-to-face transaction services.

Smith, D.E. 1991a. 'Aboriginal expenditure patterns: An analysis of empirical data and its policy implications', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 9*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Expenditure, income.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

Smith compares Indigenous household expenditure data gleaned from empirical research with data obtained from the HES conducted by the ABS. She uses expenditure categories such as food, housing and transportation, and finds that the emergent patterns from low-income Indigenous households are indicative of poverty. A key finding is that the high proportion of income spent on basic commodities means that many households do not have the resources to pay for service provision. While expenditure data are sparse, Smith notes that, overall, Aboriginal people spend in the range of 33 to 65 per cent of their income on food and non-alcoholic beverages. In comparison, 20 per cent of income amongst the lowest income quintile group in the total population is spent on food. Given the high proportion of Aboriginal people living in rural and remote areas and their high mobility rates, transport costs are surely a considerable aspect of expenditure (see also Crough & Pritchard 1991*). This is particularly the case where levels of car ownership are low and public transport is unavailable, making people reliant on taxis.

Smith, D.E. 1991b. 'Toward an Aboriginal household expenditure survey: Conceptual, methodological and cultural considerations', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 10*, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Expenditure, culture, cash.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

Rigorous research on the cost of goods and services in remote communities is difficult to conduct given the lack of data on Aboriginal household expenditure. Smith argues that the HES, which measures mainstream patterns, is not an appropriate model for obtaining Aboriginal expenditure data, particularly due to the dynamic nature of Aboriginal households. Furthermore any survey of Aboriginal expenditure may be difficult to formulate given Aboriginal conceptions of economy, money and spending which may differ from those of the wider community (see also Martin 1995*). Other complicating factors include the nature of cash redistribution and sharing in Aboriginal communities and subsistence production and exchange (which can be seen as an expenditure equivalent).

Srivastava, S. 1998. 'Indigenous consumers in the Northern Territory', *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, 4 (11): 17-18.

Key words

Consumer rights, ACCC/TPA, stores, financial services, competition.

Geographic area

Northern Australia.

Srivastava is a solicitor at the North Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service in Darwin. From a legal perspective, the lack of access for Indigenous people, particularly those in remote communities, to financial literacy, consumer rights information and interpreters is at the root of many difficulties people encounter with shops and financial institutions. Another fundamental problem is the lack of commercial competition in remote communities, which can develop into exploitative relationships between store owners and community members. The author lists several cases relating to Indigenous people and consumer law, many of which involve unconscionable conduct (as defined under the TPA) by store keepers. Cases include customers being refused service after complaining about exorbitant prices, book-up arrangements where the consumer is not told that they are being charged 15 per cent interest per annum, and reports of unscrupulous car dealers.

Stanley, O. 1982. 'Some problems in the provision of banking facilities in remote Aboriginal communities', in P. Loveday (ed.), *Service Delivery to Remote Communities*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Financial services, income.

Geographic area

Remote Australia.

Banks face many difficulties in providing Indigenous Australians living in remote communities with banking facilities. This paper focuses on the provision of services through private bank agencies, a phenomenon that has now all but disappeared in remote regions. Problems with the provision of services included the following: it is not a profitable exercise for banks, there is insufficient cash available given the mostly welfare-based nature of the local incomes, and there are security issues such as theft and inadequate reporting of agency business. The solutions for such problems offered by the author include a better management selection process and staggering welfare payments over time. H.C. Coombs on the other hand, reportedly proposed that people who only use the service to cash cheques should be charged and the bank paid a subsidy from the (then) Department of Aboriginal Affairs. It is interesting to note that even in this era when banking services were more accessible, stores sometimes assisted agencies by cashing cheques.

Stanley, O. 1985. 'Economic development problems in remote Aboriginal Communities', in P. Loveday and D. Wade-Marshall (eds), *Economy and People in the North*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Economic development, store governance, store prices.

Geographic area

Remote Australia.

Stanley's paper aims to examine the ways in which remote Aboriginal communities follow the paradigm of underdeveloped countries which has been developed in the economic development literature. He also pessimistically discusses the long-term development of these communities. Stanley notes the key role of store managers who can, for example, manipulate prices by making basic foodstuffs cheaper and making beer, tobacco and soft drinks more expensive to encourage better health.

Sullivan, H., Gracey, M. and Hevron, V. 1987. 'Food costs and nutrition of Aborigines in remote areas of northern Australia', *The Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol. 147: 334–7.

Key words

Market basket survey, stores, store prices, financial services.

Geographic area

Kimberley region, Western Australia.

A locally-relevant market basket was devised in order to measure the cost of food purchases for Indigenous people in the Kimberley region. It was found that prices in community-run stores were 45 per cent higher than in Perth. The remote area allowance of \$22.50 is well short of the differential cost of the market basket (\$86.76) in West Kimberley Aboriginal communities. The authors state that book-up had largely been eliminated at the time of writing due to the serious financial burden that it had placed on the communities. The decline in book-up may have contributed to the fall in food prices in the Kimberley in the months preceding the study.

Taylor, J. and Westbury, N. 2000. *Aboriginal Nutrition and the Nyirrangulung Health Strategy in Jawoyn Country*, CAEPR Research Monograph No. 19, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Stores, diet, store prices, store governance, financial services.

Geographic area

Katherine East, Northern Territory.

Community stores are highlighted as one of the key structural elements that impede better nutrition in the Katherine East region of Jawoyn. While focusing on nutrition this study uses a systems framework which helps to trace linkages between food supply, distribution, consumption and nutrition and it also takes socioeconomic factors such as income into account. Taylor and Westbury found that store management (managers as well as committees) played a vital role in the price, quality and variety of foodstuffs found in stores. They stressed that it is important to get store managers on side in any efforts to improve nutrition in communities. The ALPA food policy is discussed and reviewed in terms of what has changed since its implementation. Factors influencing the prices of foods are many and varied. They include production costs, demand, and international price fluctuations as well as transport, storage and handling costs and taxes. The Community Market Basket Survey—conducted by the Northern Territory Government Health Services—operates in Burunga and Wugularr and, by providing comparative data with other remote stores can act as a monitoring device. Book-up is discussed as a 'double-edged sword'; on the one hand users of the system are guaranteed access to foodstuffs and store owners are guaranteed reimbursement, while on the other hand it perpetuates welfare dependency, and provides no incentive to develop skills in dealing with the cash economy.

Wells, S. 1993. *Taking Stock: Aboriginal Autonomy Through Enterprise*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Stores, economic development, store governance, consumer literacy.

Geographic area

Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

This book is a record of the ALPA's achievements, activities and the hurdles it has faced over a twenty-year period from 1972 to 1992. Economic independence and community development through Aboriginal-owned, managed and staffed community stores was a key vision at ALPA's inception. Since its inception ALPA has envisioned itself as both a commercial venture *and* an alternative development agency servicing communities. Perhaps inevitably then, much tension has occurred between the commercial aspects and the community aspects of ALPA's activities. ALPA's prices are not exorbitant compared to many remote stores, but they do receive complaints about pricing which ALPA interprets as a reflection of the lack of knowledge about how stores actually operate, in terms of ordering, transport, stocking shelves and payment of goods. To address this lack of awareness, an education program was implemented aimed both at storeworkers and communities. The program addresses the key question of 'what happens to all the money that goes into the store?' ALPA found that the cheaper 'No Name', 'Black and Gold' and 'Homebrand' brands were very difficult to sell, partly because of communities witnessing major brand advertising on television.

Westbury, N. 1999. 'Feast, famine and fraud: Considerations in the delivery of banking and financial services to remote Indigenous communities', CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 187, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Financial services, culture, income.

Geographic area

Remote Australia.

Westbury identifies the main barriers to the delivery of financial services to Indigenous people in central Australia as well as highlighting potential initiatives for overcoming those barriers. The technological and regulatory changes being made to financial services mean that Indigenous people, and particularly those in rural and remote areas, are being further marginalised from such services. The key barriers to improving service delivery are income and welfare dependence, infrastructure shortfall, cultural factors, the nature of Centrelink payment delivery, the 'feast and famine' cycle and banks' lack of cross-cultural awareness. Electronic services, Indigenous credit unions and the maintaining of bank agencies where possible, can all ameliorate the problem when provided with proper support and education. However Westbury notes that if responses are to have a truly positive impact they must be community oriented. A closer working relationship between Centrelink and banks is one of the key recommendations made which ultimately may lead to Indigenous people having greater access to appropriate financial services and greater economic independence.

Westbury, N. 2000. 'What's in it for Koories? Barwon-Darling Alliance credit union and the delivery of financial and banking services in north-west New South Wales', CAEPR Working Paper No. 7, CAEPR, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Financial services, cash, stores, savings, income.

Geographic area

North-west New South Wales.

Banks play a critical role in enabling people to manage their finances and budget for their households. The deregulation of financial services has had a disproportionate effect on many Indigenous people in regional and remote areas because of their low income levels, reliance on welfare payments and low levels of financial literacy. Bank accounts are often seen by Indigenous people primarily as a means to obtain cash from their wage or welfare payments, not as a means to generate savings. Bank branches have been closing at a rate of five branches per month in regional and rural New South Wales. This means a significant

reduction in the possibility for people in these areas to access face-to-face financial services. Branch closures can mean that there is more need for book-up style credit schemes as stores increasingly take on pseudo-banking roles. Some Indigenous people have raised concerns about the embarrassment of having to access financial services in the more public arena of stores. This is particularly the case where people are not sure of their account balance and may need to make numerous withdrawals. Financial literacy is a key consideration in the transition from face-to-face financial services to those accessed through machines. The services provided by the Traditional Credit Union are discussed in this report, highlighting many advantages such as access to face-to-face services with Indigenous staff, easy access to account balances (unlike EFTPOS), access to affordable loans and assistance with saving regimes.

Westcombe, R. 1991. 'Bad money business', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, June Issue: 6–7.

Key words

Financial services, culture.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

Based on broad observation Westcombe signals the key areas that can cause difficulties for Indigenous people in accessing credit. Aborigines in small country towns are harder hit economically than urban and remote outstation communities because they are less able to fall back on traditional supports, while also being only partially accepted into the socioeconomic patterns of broader society. Low incomes coupled with kin-based sharing obligations can cause financial hardship, making budgeting very difficult. The culture gap makes financial planning problematic, particularly in relation to negotiating business transactions. Unconscionable conduct or misleading practices on the part of credit providers can have severe affects on consumers. Westcombe recommends that any response to such problems needs to stem from community derived programs.

Westcombe, R. 1998. 'Hard shopping', *Consuming Interest*, 74: 17–19.

Key words

Consumer rights, consumer literacy.

Geographic area

New South Wales.

The author discusses what has happened since the report *Grin and Bear It* (which Westcombe authored) by the Aboriginal Consumer Education Project of the New South Wales Department of Consumer Affairs (1994*). The report examined experiences of Indigenous consumers in New South Wales. In this article the reader is presented with several 'success stories' which have occurred since the report (and some follow up workshops aimed at informing Indigenous consumers of their rights) as well as a list of problems still facing Indigenous consumers. Such problems include discrimination resulting in their being charged at higher rates for some goods and services, and banking cards being held by traders, taxi drivers and bank staff.

Young, E. 1981. *Tribal Communities in Rural Areas*, Development Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Stores, store governance.

Geographic area

Northern Territory.

The main socioeconomic components of the communities of Yuendumu, Willowra and Numbulwar are discussed in this study. The brief general discussion of stores in these communities focuses on the lack of success in placing Aboriginal management into stores. Young argues for greater Aboriginal participation in the running of stores and recommends the provision of training to this end.

Young, E. 1982. 'Aboriginal community stores: A service "for the people" or "by the people"', in P. Loveday (ed.), *Service Delivery to Remote Communities*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Stores, store governance, competition, cash.

Geographic area

Northern Territory.

Young uses case studies from Yuendumu, Willowra and Numbulwar to examine the main challenges involved in maintaining retail services in remote areas. Young found that on average 80 per cent to 90 per cent of community income was being spent in their stores. While stores managed by non-Indigenous people often fail, the failure rate is higher for stores run 'by the [Indigenous] people'. After reviewing the history of community stores Young notes three main detrimental legacies which have contributed to their contemporary development. Firstly, Aboriginal involvement, and particularly management, remains at a very low level. Secondly, given the monopoly that tends to exist for remote stores and their dual function as a cash outlet, Aboriginal people have had little opportunity to learn how to manage their cash in a broader context. Finally, providing an essential service 'for the people' took precedence over the provision of stores 'by the people'. The two key problems with operating and maintaining stores is the lack of facilities for training Aboriginal staff, particularly in management roles and the lack of service and support given, particularly in the financial side of operations. Addressing these challenges at a community level is the way forward.

Young, E. 1984. *Outback Stores: Retail Services in North Australian Aboriginal Communities*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Stores, financial services, freight, store governance, store pricing, diet, culture.

Geographic area

Northern Australia.

This work is one of the only publications of its size that is entirely dedicated to a thorough discussion and rigorous analysis of stores in remote communities. Young conducted fieldwork in regions spread from the Kimberley to Cape York and south to the Pitjantjatjara lands. The resulting data are largely comparative, using numerous detailed case studies. The cultural factors that affect many aspects of the running of stores are taken into account at every step of her discussion. Stores in remote communities are an essential service, and this assumption forms the basis of Young's analysis. Their functions are broad and include retailing, banking and financial operations, social, economical, and educational functions and ensuring the physical wellbeing of the community. Hence Young's framework is informed by these diverse roles. Problems that stores face in association with isolation include difficulties accessing transport and communication services. Ownership of stores is largely in Aboriginal hands, whereas management is most often non-Aboriginal, and for staff employment, figures suggest that the split is fairly even. Details of variations between

each of the stores pricing policies are provided as well as a discussion that illuminates the reasons behind many of the differences. For example, among ALPA stores mark-ups are not designed to make high profits and are differentially applied so that basic foodstuffs are reasonably cheap. On the other hand Aurukun store has higher mark-ups to cover the higher freight costs but another contributing factor is that the store is the main income-generating component within the community-owned enterprise organisation. The market basket cost \$549.90 in the ALPA-owned Yirrkala store compared to \$663.10 in Aurukun. Using the market basket survey, information on costing was standardised to give a Consumer Price Index used to compare all the case studies with their neighbouring towns. When stores operate as credit agencies they provide an important service, but in order to run smoothly and to avoid store closures several mechanisms should be put into place, for example placing a limit on the amount individuals can book-up or restricting book-up to non-tobacco and soft drink sales such as was implemented in Mowanjum. In relation to nutrition Young states that there are no detailed analyses of the percentage of purchased food that make up Aboriginal diets in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. She estimates that it exceeds 80 per cent and in some places is well over 90 per cent. Stores are also discussed in terms of education and social interaction and the Aboriginal-European interface. If nothing else this volume highlights an incredible diversity in the practices, policies and situations faced by stores in remote Indigenous communities.

Young, E. 1987. 'Commerce in the bush: Aboriginal and Inuit experiences in the commercial world', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 2: 46–53.

Key words

Stores, international, culture, freight, competition, store governance.

Geographic area

Remote Australia and remote Canada.

Young notes some basic challenges which many Indigenous people both in remote Australia and in Canada must face in the commercial world, namely isolation, the fulfilment of kinship obligations which can undermine conventional business practice, high freight costs and a chronic shortage of capital. The structure of Inuit stores differs from their Australian counterparts in two main ways, namely the development of Inuit producer cooperatives and the competition with the large and well-established trader, the Hudson's Bay Company. Non-Indigenous people still largely manage Inuit stores, as is the case in Australia. Young stresses the importance of placing control of stores in Aboriginal hands and believes that the success of a store should be judged on social as well as economic grounds.

Young, E. 1988. 'Aboriginal economic enterprises: Problems and prospects', in D. Wade-Marshall and P. Loveday (eds), *Northern Australia: Progress and Prospects*, Vol. 1: *Contemporary Issues in Development*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Economic development, enterprise, stores, culture, store governance.

Geographic area

Remote northern Australia.

Opening her paper Young highlights the interconnection between self-determination and social, economic and political development. What follows is a discussion of the opportunities for, and existing problems with, Aboriginal economic enterprises in remote communities. Young divides the reasons for failure of such enterprises into two groups, those endemic to northern Australia in general and those specific to Aboriginal enterprises. In the first group Young signals isolation, the poverty of the local resource base, the dominance of external operators in ownership, marketing and finance, and demographic factors. Factors that may negatively impact specifically on Aboriginal enterprises include

cultural attitudes and behaviours and the nature of non-Indigenous support including managerial and associated needs. To illustrate these problems Young discusses the pastoral industry and retail stores and the fundamental tension between the commercial and social aspects of community stores is again raised. She estimates that in the remote parts of northern Australia, around 90 per cent of peoples' daily sustenance is procured from stores. However there is no empirical evidence provided in the text to support this figure. Yuendumu is discussed to illustrate the range of problems that afflict enterprises in remote areas. In terms of prospects for Aboriginal enterprises, Young signals the artefact industry as holding the potential for great success.

Young, E. 1991. 'Australia, Canada and Alaska: Land rights and Aboriginal enterprise development', in P. Jull and S. Roberts (eds), *The Challenge of Northern Regions*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Economic development, enterprise, cash, international.

Geographic area

Australia, Canada and Alaska.

Of only peripheral relevance (though international comparative data are used), this article stresses the importance of the economic context in which self-determination and community development operate. Land rights settlements in Alaska, Canada and Australia are discussed and it is argued that land rights should, though rarely does provide economic development for Indigenous people through enterprise. Young adopts a broad approach to enterprise that incorporates both cash and non-cash activity (see also Altman 1987c). Enterprise thus includes subsistence, pastoralism, the art and craft industry, tourism and mining ventures.

Young, E. 1995. *Third World in the First: Development and Indigenous Peoples*, Routledge, London.

Key words

Economic development, stores, culture, store governance, international.

Geographic area

Australia and Canada.

This book addresses how development has affected Indigenous people in Australia and Canada and explores alternative strategies that may be available. In chapter seven, 'Aboriginal community stores and development', Young notes that community stores are one of the few services in remote communities that are expected to contribute to the economy by generating profits. They also act as places for people to congregate where cultural norms of reciprocity and kinship obligations are played out. In commercial terms, the performance of the store can be affected by the high costs of operation, problems of undercapitalisation and cash flow, and by staffing and management difficulties. Isolation from external markets, variation of trading patterns, and harsh environments contribute to the high operational costs for example heating or cooling costs of stores both in the Arctic and in central Australia. Young bases her analysis on the tension, which occurs because of the dual and often conflicting role of the store as both the provider of an essential community service, and as an economic enterprise. In broader terms the former is accompanied by a whole host of social and cultural functions and the latter can tie the community more closely to industrialised society and the mainstream economy. Bureaucrats and policy-makers, says Young, have not properly taken this dichotomy into account. In addressing how stores can tread this tightrope Young turns to several models including the Arctic Co-operative, the Federation des Co-operatives du Nouveau-Quebec, ALPA, Anangu Winkiku Stores and Yanangu Stores, and examines in some detail the ways

in which each are run. Young also discusses the merits and difficulties of stores run as individual-owned small businesses, which in order to succeed must overcome many hurdles which are less problematic for community-owned stores and co-operatives. The fundamental challenge remains, how to 'provide a socially appropriate store (a service) that remains financially viable (an enterprise)' (p. 236).

Young, E., Crough, G. and Christophersen, C. 1993. *An Evaluation of Store Enterprises in Aboriginal Communities*, NARU, ANU, Darwin.

Key words

Stores, enterprise, store governance, international.

Geographic area

Central Australia, Arnhem Land (Northern Territory) and North America.

In this volume Young compares support organisations for Aboriginal community stores in Arnhem Land, central Australia and North America. The Australian organisations discussed are ALPA, Anangu Winkiku Stores and Yanangu Stores. The second section of the book contains Crough and Cristophersen's rather critical analysis of ALPA. Support organisations help to provide better services to customers. ALPA's work includes the bulk ordering of stock, appointing and supporting managers, encouraging employment of Aboriginal staff through training programs, and an accountancy service. In similar ways to ALPA, Anangu Winkiku Stores assists nine stores, including five stores outside of Pitjantjatjara lands. Yanangu has six member stores and specialises in wholesale distribution. The main comparisons to be made between these three Australian organisations and those in North America are their functioning in a cultural context, their support for self-determination and their attempts to reconcile the social and economic functions of stores. ALPA and the North American organisations differ mainly with respect to the nature of their political origins. The former was set up on a top-down basis that is reflected still today, with limited Indigenous participation in senior positions. The piece by Crough and Cristophersen is based on interviews with Aboriginal people who patronise ALPA stores. Tensions arise when discussing the degree to which ALPA is an 'Aboriginal organisation'. What happens with the dividends from ALPA stores is another point of conflict as 'community purposes' can be rather a loosely defined agenda. It is stated that in some communities dividends benefit a relatively small group of people. The authors suggest that ALPA may need to review their pricing policy and lower their store prices in a structured manner, which would reduce dividends but benefit all of their community members.

Part B: Unpublished material

Cultural Perspectives. 1998. Gabami Report: Aboriginal Consumer Issues and Education Strategies, Unpublished report prepared for the NSW Department of Fair Trading, June 1998.

Key words

Consumer literacy, consumer rights, culture, service delivery, financial services.

Geographic area

New South Wales

The central aim of this research project was to identify the key needs of Aboriginal consumers in different areas (urban, rural and remote) of New South Wales paying particular attention to cultural issues that may affect consumers. The research sought in part to determine the level of awareness of the role and functions of the New South Wales Department of Fair Trading. In order of importance, the main consumer and fair trading issues reported by Aboriginal people were: tenancy issues, access to goods and services,

consumer service, equitable prices, financial matters and car purchasing and mechanical repairs. Taxis were singled out as a particularly problematic service with many people stating that taxi drivers refused to pick up Aboriginal people or asked that their keycard be provided by way of insurance. A poor level of service was also cited as a common problem, for example where Aboriginal people were sold items that did not suit their needs because the salesperson assumed that there will be no complaint. Many Aboriginal people can feel shame acutely and may be less likely to 'cause a scene' as a result. Some people also felt that where prices were not marked on goods they were charged at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal people would be. There was also perceived to be a lack of access to information on financial services including redress for faulty goods, contracts, bank fees and credit arrangements including book-up. It was found however that people in the younger age group were more aware of their consumer rights and were relatively confident in exercising them. The preferred means of information dissemination were found to be face-to-face discussion with an Aboriginal liaison officer, television and radio, and then pamphlets and posters. This data stands in contrast to the findings of the Department of Industry, Science and Tourism (1997) report which did not single out Indigenous-specific educational needs.

Dodson, M. 1995. 1995 Ruby Hutchison Memorial Address on World Consumer Rights Day, March 12, 1995, Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs, Canberra.

Key words

Consumer rights, consumer literacy.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

Dodson states that one can examine any one of the eight consumer rights adopted by the United Nations in almost any context and show that it has been violated in Aboriginal communities. He considers these rights in the context of Indigenous health care consumption. The case of a tobacco company promoting cigarettes in an Indigenous community in the Top End is highlighted as an example of the lack of the right to safety. In a positive example consumer education strategies in Minjilang community led to greater provision of nutritious foods in the community store. The right to choose, says Dodson, is farcical in remote communities where stores are stocked with a narrow range of overpriced goods. To protect Indigenous consumers in keeping with international standards, government needs to act on what it hears from Indigenous voices.

Henson, E. and Nathan, L. 1998. 'Tool of sovereignty: The Crow commercial code', Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development Report No. 98-4, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge.

Key words

International, competition, enterprise, economic development.

Geographic area

Montana, USA.

Certain socioeconomic factors on the Crow reservation in Montana are similar to those in remote Aboriginal communities in Australia. Crow country covers 2.29 million acres and has a population of 6,600 and an unemployment rate of 78 per cent. The per capita income is between one half and one quarter that of residents in surrounding counties. The reservation has one IGA supermarket and two other enterprises. Residents must travel to other towns between 12 and 60 miles away for some goods and almost all services. The level of competition is clearly minimal. Crow entrepreneurs struggle to get enterprises off the ground: there are difficulties in obtaining loans as the relationship between banks and Indigenous entrepreneurs has a strained history. The complete absence of financial institutions on Crow country is one reason that off-reservation investors are reluctant to

invest in the community. Other reasons include the low physical capital, poor roads and an underdeveloped labour force. The authors argue that the implementation of a Crow Commercial Code, with an appropriate judicial system to enforce it, would stimulate economic development on Crow country. A commercial code specifies the conditions under which businesses may operate and the rules they must follow as well as the mechanisms under which commercial disputes will be resolved. More specifically, a code covers sales and leases, shipping of goods and bank deposits, and outlines rights and obligations within contracts and transactions. The authors argue that a code would clarify and strengthen the relationship between business and government in Crow country. The implementation of a this code would stimulate investment from outside the reservation and create enterprise development among Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Lumbu Indigenous Community Foundation 2001. Financial Services and Indigenous Australia Roundtable, Unpublished summary of meeting April 2001.

Key words

Financial services, consumer literacy.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

The roundtable was convened 'to expand relations between Indigenous Australia and the Financial Services Sector' (p. 4) and was launched with a \$20 million commitment from the Department of Family and Community Services. The summary attempts to outline some general areas of future research. Most relevant aspects of the discussion centre on a commitment to building financial literacy and consumer awareness in Indigenous communities in forms which are culturally relevant.

Martin, D. 1993. Autonomy and Relatedness: An Ethnography of Wik People of Aurukun, Western Cape York Peninsula', PhD thesis, Department of Anthropology, ANU, Canberra.

Key words

Cash, alcohol, culture, expenditure, stores.

Geographic area

Cape York, Queensland.

Martin's thesis provides a detailed account of a remote Aboriginal community in Cape York. Through a sustained examination of the principles and values which Wik people bring to everyday life, the thesis elucidates social process in such areas as the raising of children, gender relations, the utilisation of cash, gambling, work, alcohol consumption, and conflict and violence. In particular, there is a highly detailed treatment of the cultural understandings underlying the use of cash incomes (primarily welfare based), using data on community-wide weekly aggregate incomes and expenditures over a twelve-month period. The data include expenditure patterns in the store, alcohol canteen, and food takeaways. In relation to alcohol purchases, the data suggest that demand is highly price-inelastic.

Northern Territory Government n.d. Northern Territory Food and Nutrition Policy Action Plan 2001–2006, Territory Health Services, Northern Territory Government.

Key words

Diet, service delivery.

Geographic area

Northern Territory.

This publication reviews the 1995 Northern Territory Food and Nutrition Policy and identifies directions for public health and nutrition for the five-year period. Food supply (affordability, quality and quantity) is the main focus in servicing the needs of remote Indigenous communities.

Queensland Health 1995. Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Food and Nutrition Strategy, Queensland Health, Brisbane.

Key words

Diet, stores, enterprise, financial services.

Geographic area

Queensland.

This strategy document provides a framework aimed at improving the health and nutrition of Indigenous people in Queensland. Stores can obviously play a pivotal role in nutrition, particularly in remote communities. The report highlights the importance of Indigenous involvement in food-related business and enterprise and identifies the need to work with community stores to this end. The coordination between money supply and food supply should be investigated, including issues such as access to banking services. The authors recommend that community stores be reviewed and evaluated in terms of practices and policies, in comparisons with other States. Programs for store managers and staff are recommended with particular reference to stock management, food handling, nutrition and marketing strategies. Store pricing is not directly addressed.

Renouf, G. 2001. Some Consumer Problems with the “Book Up” System, Unpublished Consultation Paper prepared for the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, May 2001.

Key words

Financial services, consumer rights, stores, cash, competition, ACCC/TPA.

Geographic area

Australia-wide.

Book-up can result in financial hardship for its users through the exploitation of their weaker bargaining power. In cases where stores are sent social security cheques (addressed ‘care of’ the store) a captive market is gained which can result in price exploitation. Renouf notes that in stores which do not label their prices people paying by book-up may end up being overcharged compared to those paying with cash, although no empirical evidence of this practice has been found. It is important to note that book-up is not always seen in negative terms by consumers who use it. Advantages can include not having to carry around one’s key card or cash (and therefore not having to hand out cash or relinquish access of the card to family members) and having help in using the card. In most rural and remote communities (although book-up has also been found to occur in Darwin and regional centres) face-to-face banking services have closed, or may never have existed. Thus book-up can offer consumers a personal encounter when dealing with financial matters. In terms of the TPA, book-up may result in cases of a lack of competition (consumers tend to be tied to using only one store) and unconscionable conduct.

Tregenza, J.D. and Tregenza, E.J. 1998. Anangu Pitjantjatjara Services Resource Management Project.*Key words*

Store pricing, market basket survey, expenditure.

Geographic area

Central Australia.

Empirical research was conducted with the aim of informing local Indigenous people about resource management issues. Cost of living was an important element within this and, using a health framework, research was conducted on income and store pricing. Bush tucker is often only accessible with a vehicle and according to the authors most Anangu get most of their foodstuffs from community stores. A hypothetical family income was calculated at \$600 per week, and a 'stores box' was created based on the needs of keeping the hypothetical family healthy for one week. Using the stores box a survey was conducted across all eight stores on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands as well as in three Alice Springs stores by way of comparison. It was found that average regional prices are 23 per cent higher than in Alice Springs; the report does not make mention of whether this may be due, at least in part, to transport costs. The survey determined that the average price of the weekly stores box came to \$500 per family per week. Based on this model it was found that an Anangu family would spend 85 per cent of their income on health necessities. It was found that many people may have income levels less than their cost of living. It was calculated that a 40 per cent reduction in store prices of the specified items would result in 50 per cent of income being spent on the healthy food basket. Such a pricing structure could not be borne by the stores. Other relevant findings include: prices not being shown on goods in some stores, in one community the cash register was not used in the store and store management and policy were not effectively controlled by local councils. Also, the increase in employment of non-local, non-Indigenous staff was resulting in higher prices. A computer program for checking store prices and nutrition for food baskets was developed during the course of research and the authors are creating a regional stores policy which it is hoped will be completed in September 2001 and may include a pricing policy.