

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

RETURN TO COUNTRY  
THE ABORIGINAL HOMELANDS MOVEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

MARCH 1987

Australian Government Publishing Service

Canberra 1987

© Commonwealth of Australia 1987

ISBN 0 644 06201 0

Printed in Australia by Pirie Printers Sales Pty Ltd, Fyshwick, ACT 2609

## GENERAL TERMS OF REFERENCE

That a Standing Committee be appointed to inquire into and report on such matters relating to the present circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and the effect of policies and programs on them as are referred to it by -

- (a) resolution of the House, and
- (b) the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

---

### MEMBERSHIP\*:

Chairman	..	Mr C.A. Blanchard, M.P.
Deputy Chairman	..	Mr D.M. Connolly, M.P. <sup>1</sup>
Members	..	Mr I.M.C. Cameron, M.P.
		Mr G. Campbell, M.P.
		Mr J. Gayler, M.P.
		Mr G.L. Hand, M.P.
		Mr M.J. Maher, M.P. <sup>2</sup>
Secretary to the Committee	..	Mr D.R. Elder
Inquiry Staff	..	Mr B. Pender
		Ms A. Collins
		Mrs M. Cranswick

---

\* Mr R.F. Shipton, M.P. resigned from the Committee on 23 March 1987 and is yet to be replaced.

1 Mr D.M. Connolly, M.P. replaced the Hon. P. Everingham, M.P. on the Committee on 19 September 1985.

2. Mr M.J. Maher, M.P. replaced Mr R. Price, M.P. on the Committee on 14 April 1986.



## CONTENTS

	Page No.
Glossary of terms	xii
Findings and Recommendations	xvi
Map of main areas of outstation activity	xxx
Conduct of the Inquiry	xxxii

### CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Terminology	
Defining homeland centres and outstations	1
History of the homelands movement	3
Aboriginal relationship to land	7
The disruption of Aboriginal relationships to land	9
The return to homelands	13
Government policy	16
Conclusion	18

### CHAPTER 2 - LOCATION AND NUMBERS

Introduction	22
Location	23
Population	25
Estimates of population and numbers of homeland centres	26
Department of Aboriginal Affairs	26
Aboriginal Development Commission	27

Page No.

Northern Territory Government	28
Conclusion	29
Demographic structure	30
Description of homeland centres	34
Physical environment	34
Social and cultural environment	35

**CHAPTER 3 - EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

Introduction	39
The role of the Commonwealth Government	39
Department of Aboriginal Affairs	40
Aboriginal Development Commission	44
Department of Social Security	45
Department of Employment and Industrial Relations	46
Education Portfolio	47
The role of State and Territory governments	48
Queensland	49
South Australia	50
Western Australia	51
Northern Territory	52
Conclusion	55

**CHAPTER 4 - FUTURE OF THE HOMELANDS MOVEMENT**

Introduction	59
Aboriginal motivation	60
Government policy	62
Nature of homelands movement in the future	64
Conclusion	70

## CHAPTER 5 - POLICIES TO CATER FOR HOMELAND CENTRES

Introduction	72
The range of future policies	73
Determinants of homelands policies	75
An Aboriginal initiative	75
Aboriginal aspirations	76
Effects on larger communities	77
Funding implications	78
Social impact of fully developing homelands	79
Permanency	80
Problems of locations of homeland centres	82
Summary of policy considerations	84
Implementation of policies	86

## CHAPTER 6 - FUNDING OF HOMELAND CENTRES

Introduction	90
Current funding arrangements for homelands	91
Commonwealth Government	91
State and Northern Territory governments	96
Royalty payments	99
Proposals for future funding arrangements	100
Redirection of funding	107
Conclusion	111

## CHAPTER 7 - RESOURCES FOR PROVIDING SERVICES

Introduction	113
Outstation resource organisations	113
Alternative structures	118
Staffing of outstation resource organisations	123

## CHAPTER 8 - THE ECONOMIES OF HOMELAND CENTRES

Introduction	130
The economic situation	131
Employment	131
Subsistence production	132
Artefact production	135
Other productive activities	139
Community Development Employment Project (CDEP)	142
Social security payments	145
Income of homeland dwellers	148
Expenditure and consumption patterns	151
Conclusions and recommendations	153

## CHAPTER 9 - LAND TENURE 163

Introduction	163
South Australia	163
Northern Territory	164



	Page No.
Western Australia	167
Queensland	169
Conclusions and recommendations	169
<b>CHAPTER 10 - INFRASTRUCTURE IN HOMELAND CENTRES</b>	
Extent of need	173
Water	175
Housing and shelter	180
Ablution facilities	191
Electricity	192
Sewage disposal	193
Communication and transport	194
Issues involved in provision of infrastructure	199
Extent and definition of standard of infrastructure	199
Planning and co-ordination of provision of infrastructure	202
Permanency of homeland centres and duplication of services	204
Appropriate technology	206
Responsibility for provision of infrastructure	207
<b>CHAPTER 11 - EDUCATION SERVICES IN HOMELAND CENTRES</b>	
Educational demands of homelands people	212
Types of homeland centre schools	214
Educational approaches in homeland centres	215
Northern Territory	215

	Page No.
Western Australia	218
South Australia	220
Queensland	221
Compulsory education	222
Standard of education	226
Aboriginal involvement in homelands education	232
Alternative approaches	234
Adult education and training	236
Responsibility for providing education facilities to homeland centres	239

#### CHAPTER 12 - HEALTH SERVICES IN HOMELAND CENTRES

Introduction	246
Health service provision to homeland centres	248
Health staffing in homeland centres	250
Health education	253
Traditional medicine	253
Aboriginal involvement	254
Data collection	255

CHAPTER 13 - CONCLUSION	257
-------------------------	-----

#### LIST OF APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1	List of organisations and individuals who made submissions	263
APPENDIX 2	List of witnesses	265
APPENDIX 3	List of Exhibits	275

		Page No.
APPENDIX 4	List of communities and homeland centres visited	278
APPENDIX 5	Homeland centre communities	281
APPENDIX 6	Department of Aboriginal Affairs Departmental Guidelines	309
APPENDIX 7	Summary of position on excisions from pastoral leases in the Northern Territory	312
APPENDIX 8	Northern Territory Government procedures for excisions from pastoral properties	316
APPENDIX 9	Summary of position on excisions from pastoral leases in Western Australia at January 1987	321
APPENDIX 10	Extract from Commonwealth Government's preferred national Aboriginal Land Rights model	324
APPENDIX 11	Northern Territory Government standards for essential services in minor communities	326
APPENDIX 12	World Health Organisation's definition of primary health care	332

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aboriginal Assistant Teachers/Education Workers	Often unqualified Aboriginal people who teach in schools with a predominantly Aboriginal population. In some cases Assistant Teachers have had some teacher training. In homeland centres they are often the only teachers in the school and are supported by periodic visits from professional teachers.
Aboriginal Health Workers	Often unqualified Aboriginal people who provide primary health care in Aboriginal communities which are not supported by professional health services.
Assimilation policy	The general governmental policy towards Aboriginal people from about 1940 to the early 1970s. The assimilation policy was defined by the Native Welfare Conference in 1961 as follows:  The policy of assimilation means that all Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, as other Australians.
bush tucker	Traditional food sources collected and hunted by Aboriginal people and includes berries, seeds, tubers, kangaroos, wallabies, lizards, snakes etc.
CDEP	Community Development Employment Program - a form of economic support paid in bulk to Aboriginal communities in lieu of unemployment benefits.

Central and Western Deserts	A broad term to define much of central Australia. As used in the Report it includes the Pitjantjatjara Lands, the former Central Reserve area, the Gibson, Great Sandy, Great Victoria and Tanami deserts.
Centre	Central Australia, often used to refer to the southern section of the Northern Territory.
clan	A group of people who claim to be descended from the same putative ancestor or ancestress. Most Aboriginal clans are patrilineal, i.e. descent is traced through males. The clan is also the land owning group.
decentralisation	The movement of Aboriginal people from large communities with a mixture of clan and tribal groups, to smaller more homogeneous communities made up of closely related people.
estate	Estate is an area of land owned by a clan.
excision	An area of land legally excised from a pastoral lease to provide a living area for Aboriginal people.
Feppi	Northern Territory Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group.
former settlements, Aboriginal towns, missions, larger communities, central communities, reserve communities	The Committee uses all these terms in the Report to refer to communities like Yuendumu, Papunya, Yirrkala, Maningrida, Ernabella, Warburton, etc. from which Aboriginal people have moved to their homelands.
homeland centres/ outstations	The Committee defines homeland centres and outstations in the report as 'small decentralised communities of close kin, established by the movement of Aboriginal people to land of social, cultural and economic significance to them'.

homelands	Traditional country of Aboriginal people.
Kava	Prepared from the plant <u>Piper Methysticum</u> <u>Forest</u> and is an intoxicating substance. Used as a ceremonial beverage in South West Pacific countries and now introduced into northern Australian Aboriginal communities.
'killer' herd	A herd of cattle kept purely for the purpose of local consumption.
kinship	Cultural system for classifying genealogical relationships.
Miller Report	Report of the Committee of Review on Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs, August 1985.
outstation resource organisations	Resource agencies, normally located in a major community, which service a range of homeland centre communities.
'Protection' policy	Policy adopted by governments towards Aboriginals from the late 19th century. It was designed to protect Aboriginal people by segregating them on to special reserves and having special legislation passed to control many aspects of their lives.
Seaman Report	The Aboriginal Land Inquiry Report by Paul Seaman, Q.C., September 1984, into land rights in Western Australia.
Top End	The northern section of the Northern Territory.
WAALCIP	Western Australian Aboriginal Land and Communities Improvement Program.
Wet	The rainy season in norther Australia, normally from about December to March.
WHO	World Health Organisation.

Woodward Report

Aboriginal Land Rights Commission,  
Second Report, April 1974, by  
A.E. Woodward.

wurlies, humpies,  
wiltjas, lean-tos

Traditional and semi-traditional  
Aboriginal shelters

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Definition

The Committee has defined homeland centres or outstations as:

small decentralised communities of close kin established by the movement of Aboriginal people to land of social, cultural and economic significance to them. (Para. 1.15)

### Numbers

The Committee has identified 588 homeland centre communities throughout Australia with a total population of about 9500. As well 111 excision communities in the Northern Territory with a population of about 3900 are listed at Appendix 5 and the Committee considers that a number of these would fit its definition of 'homeland centre' and thus should be added to figures for the total number and population of homeland centres. It should be noted that 135 of the homeland centres listed at Appendix 5 had zero population at the time the sueveys, on which the Committee's statistics are based, were undertaken. This reflects the degree of fluctuation in populations of homeland centres. (Para. 2.23)

The Committee recommends that:

1. all agencies involved in developing policies and programs for homeland centres improve their collection of statistics on homeland centres to better determine their need for the provision of facilities and services. (Para. 2.22)



## Policies to cater for homeland centres

The Committee recommends that:

2. the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs redraft its Program Guidelines to establish appropriate policies that take account of the aspirations of homeland groups, including those on pastoral properties, and the parameters within which it is prepared to accept the aspirations of the homeland groups. (Para. 5.39)
3. other Commonwealth Government departments and agencies involved in providing programs to homeland communities develop policy guidelines for the provision of services to homeland centres that reflect the positive nature of the movement. (Para. 5.39)
4. the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs consult with State and Territory governments about the development of appropriate policies and standards towards homeland centres which reflect the positive nature of the movement and the desire of governments to support the movement. (Para. 5.41)

## Funding of homeland centres

The Committee recommends that:

5. the Commonwealth Government continue to provide 'seeding' funding for the establishment of new homeland centres through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' support for outstation

resource organisations. The level of this funding should be increased in response to the growth of the homelands movement and the increasing needs of homeland dwellers. (Para. 6.39)

6. the Commonwealth Government also provide 'special' funding to homeland centres for development programs such as CDEP, for training, and for housing and enterprise development through the Aboriginal Development Commission. (Para. 6.39)
7. the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs co-ordinate the provision of services to homeland centre communities through the outstation resource organisations and endeavour to reduce the fragmentation in the delivery of services. Para. 6.39)
8. State and Territory governments provide funding to homeland centres for the 'essential' facilities and services which they are obliged to provide to all their citizens. These 'essential' facilities and services include water supply and reticulation, roads and airstrips, other infrastructure items such as housing and shelter and education and health services. The level of this funding should be increased in response to the growth of the homelands movement and the increasing needs of homeland dwellers. (Para. 6.39)
9. Commonwealth and State and Northern Territory governments consult about detailed arrangements for the sharing of funding responsibility for homeland centres. (Para. 6.39)

10. the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs consult with State and Northern Territory governments prior to initiating an inquiry into the long term effects of the homelands movement on the major communities and the direction of government policy and funding in view of these effects. (Para. 6.46)

## Resources for providing services

### Outstation resource organisations

The Committee recommends that:

11. the Department of Aboriginal Affairs provide additional funding support to outstation resource organisations in recognition of their vital role in supporting the homelands movement. (Para. 7.12)
12. the outstation resource organisations be primarily responsible for the establishment of new homeland centres, the co-ordination of the provision of facilities and services to existing centres and the advising of homelands people. (Para. 7.12)
13. the outstation resource organisations be representative of homelands people, enable the organisations to reflect the needs and desires of homelands people and remain organisations which homeland dwellers can effectively administer. (Para. 7.12)

## Community government

The Committee recommends that:

14. Community Government proposals should involve close consultation with homeland dwellers about their participation in Community Government Councils. (Para. 7.20)
15. where Community Government Councils are established with the consent of, and to include, homeland centres, their relative autonomy within the Councils be retained. (Para. 7.20)

## Community advisers

The Committee recommends that:

16. Commonwealth and State and Northern Territory governments provide funding to establish training courses for community advisers prior to their appointment to provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to undertake their role. (Para. 7.28)
17. Aboriginal communities be informed of the existence of these courses and be provided with assistance to enable their existing advisers to undertake the courses. (Para. 7.28)
18. once community advisers courses have been established, the completion of a course should be considered an essential qualification for obtaining a job as a community adviser. (Para. 7.28)

## The economies of homeland centres

### Traditional subsistence production

The Committee recommends that:

19. the Department of Aboriginal Affairs fund detailed studies of the nature and extent of the contribution made by subsistence production to the economies of desert outstations. (Para. 8.13)
20. resource organisations servicing homeland centres be provided with additional resources to improve the subsistence base of homeland centres. Areas that should receive attention include:
  - the intensive cultivation of traditional fruits and vegetables;
  - location of resource rich areas;
  - improvement of people's access to resource rich country by the provision of basic roads and water sources. (Para. 8.62)

### Art and craft industry

The Committee recommends that:

21. a comprehensive review of the development of the Aboriginal art and craft industry and the marketing of Aboriginal art and craft be undertaken with emphasis being given to the maximisation of the return to artists, this being the means by which the art and craft industry can support the homelands movement. (Para. 8.24)

## Access to social security

The Committee recommends that:

22. the Department of Social Security implement as a matter of urgency measures identified in the Report on Aboriginal Access to Department of Social Security Programs to improve the access of Aboriginal people, particularly homeland dwellers, to social security benefits to which they are entitled. (Para. 8.46)
23. the Department of Social Security investigate other ways in which the access to social security benefits by Aboriginal people can be improved. (Para. 8.46)
24. in conjunction with the implementation of measures to improve Aboriginal access to its programs, the Department of Social Security assess the extent of non-receipt of benefits by Aboriginal people who have an entitlement. (Para. 8.46)

## Support for economic independence

The Committee recommends that:

25. Community Development Employment Programs be extended to all homeland centres which wish to participate in the programs. (Para. 8.72)
26. the flexibility of Community Development Employment Programs and community decision-making about expenditure of funds be emphasised in the administration of the programs in homeland centres. (Para. 8.72)

27. where homeland centres make requests for the administration of CDEP by their resource organisations, these requests be acceded to. (Para. 8.72)
28. capital and employment subsidy assistance be provided to income generating projects which homelands people wish to establish with particular priority being given to projects in the art and craft industry. (Para. 8.72)
29. technical assistance advice and training be provided to homeland dwellers in relation to projects they wish to undertake. (Para. 8.72)

#### Land tenure

The Committee recommends that:

30. where homeland groups lack secure tenure to land, the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs seek to obtain secure land tenure for these groups as a matter of priority. Secure tenure should include access to areas of land sufficiently extensive to allow homeland groups to engage in economic activities designed to improve their self-sufficiency. (Para. 9.20)
31. in the case of homelands groups seeking excisions from non-Aboriginal pastoral properties, the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs negotiate with State and Northern Territory governments to establish guidelines and procedures for excisions in accordance with the 'Community

Living Areas' section of the Commonwealth Government's preferred model on Aboriginal land rights. (Para. 9.20)

32. the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs monitor progress on the agreement of excision areas for Aboriginal homeland groups on non-Aboriginal owned pastoral properties, and in the event of unreasonable delays, the Minister consider options open to the Commonwealth Government to obtain better progress. (Para. 9.20)

#### Infrastructure in homeland centres

##### Water supplies

The Committee recommends that:

33. newly establishing homeland groups be provided with a basic water supply sufficient to allow them to demonstrate a commitment to their homeland centres. (Para. 10.23)
34. priority be given to providing all permanent homeland centres with adequate quantities of good quality water, with more extensive reticulation being undertaken where housing and ablution facilities are provided. (Para. 10.23)

##### Housing

The Committee recommends that:

35. the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Development Commission undertake a



survey of the housing needs of Aboriginal people in homeland centres in co-operation with State and Northern Territory Housing Commissions and the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Construction. The survey should identify the number and type of houses required. (Para. 10.50)

36. the Aboriginal Development Commission provide at least a share of its housing funding to homeland centres to reflect the proportion of homeland centre population within the total Aboriginal population. (Para. 10.50)

37. the State and Northern Territory Housing Commissions provide at least a share of Commonwealth State Housing Agreement funding for Aboriginals to homeland centres to reflect the relative proportion of homeland centre population within the State or Territory's total Aboriginal population. (Para. 10.50)

38. agencies funding housing in homeland centre communities set standards for the construction of this housing and ensure that work is fully completed and standards are met. (Para. 10.50)

39. homeland centre people be closely consulted about their housing needs, be presented with a range of options from which to choose their housing requirements and be involved to the greatest extent possible in the construction of housing in homeland centres. (Para. 10.50)

## Transport

The Committee recommends that:

40. the Department of Aboriginal Affairs provide funding assistance to outstation resource organisations for the purchase of vehicles for newly emerging outstation groups where assistance is not available from other sources. (Para. 10.65)

## Methods for providing infrastructure

The Committee recommends that:

41. the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, as the co-ordinating body for homeland centres, develop a statement of 'basic needs' of homeland dwellers and that these 'basic needs' provide the basis, in close consultation with homeland dwellers, for the minimum provision of facilities and services to homeland centres. (Para. 10.81)
42. facilities and services be provided to homeland centres in accordance with a plan and priorities developed in close consultation with particular homeland centres and the outstation resource organisations. (Para. 10.84)
43. increased assistance be provided to organisations concerned with the development of appropriate technology for remote Aboriginal communities, and the extension of this technology into the communities. (Para. 10.93)

## Education services in homeland centres

The Committee recommends that:

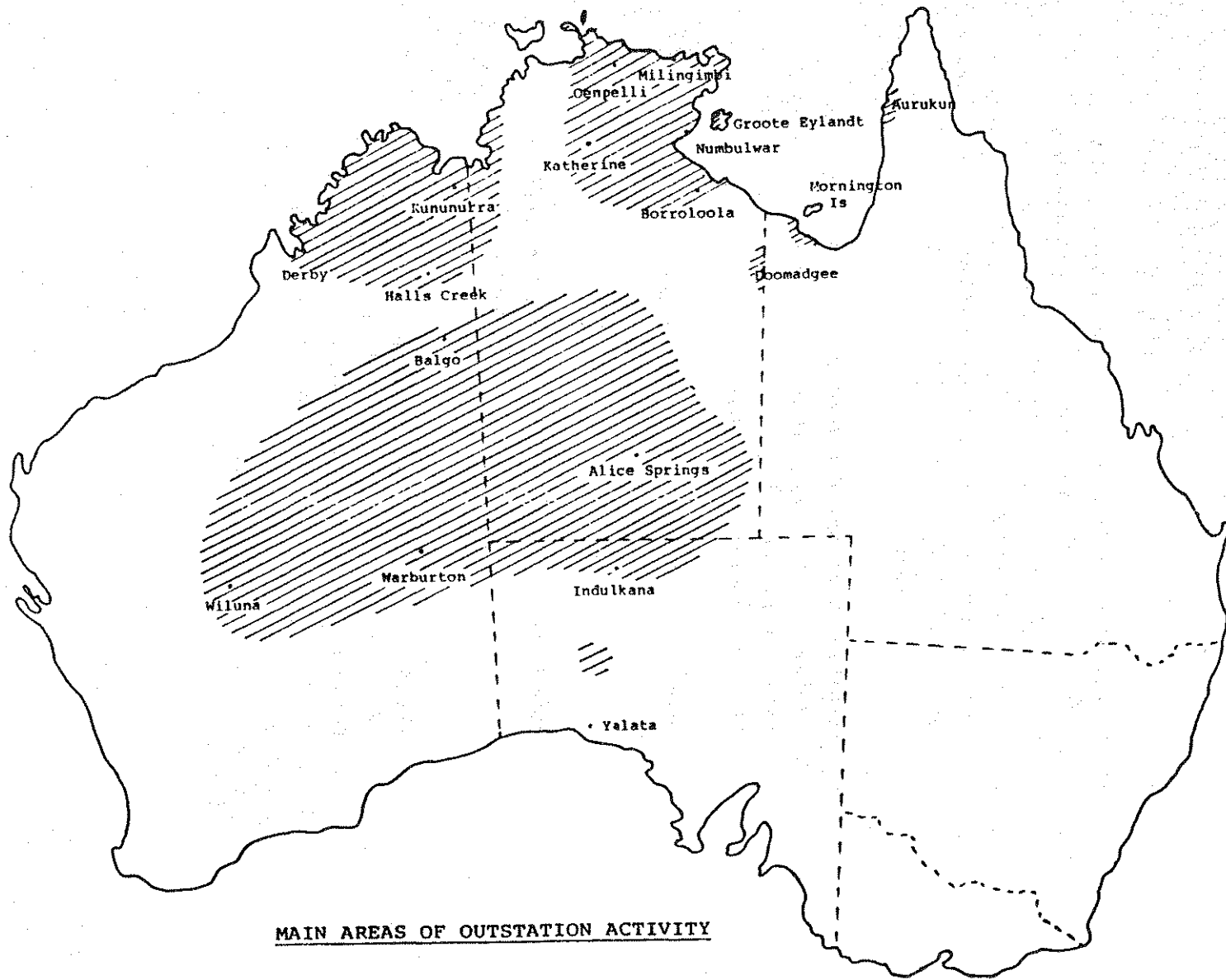
44. State and Northern Territory Education Departments closely consult with all established and newly establishing homeland centres about the nature of the education services they desire with a view to establishing these services in the communities. (Para. 11.41)
45. priority be given to the development and implementation of appropriate training programs for Aboriginal Assistant Teachers and Education Workers in homeland centre schools to enable them to upgrade their skills and knowledge to provide a higher standard of education to homeland communities. (Para. 11.55)
46. in conjunction with the implementation of training programs, the status of Aboriginal Assistant Teachers and Education Workers in homeland schools be recognised by the provision of better employment conditions and an appropriate career structure. (Para. 11.55)
47. appropriate curriculum materials for homeland communities be developed to at least the upper primary level. State and Territory Aboriginal Education Committees and homeland communities should be involved in the development of curriculum materials. (Para. 11.55)
48. professional teachers visiting Aboriginal homeland schools do so on a frequent and regular basis where possible. (Para. 11.55)

49. the National Aboriginal Education Committee, in consultation with State and Territory Aboriginal Education Consultative Committees and the State and Territory Education Departments, assess as a matter of priority alternative approaches to providing educational services to homeland centres to enable a higher standard of education to be available to homeland communities. (Para. 11.56)
50. State and Northern Territory governments closely involve their respective State and Territory Aboriginal education consultative groups in the development of their homelands education policies and provide the groups with the necessary resources to obtain the views of homelands people about their educational needs. (Para. 11.63)
51. State and Northern Territory education authorities research the use of new and alternative technologies in homeland centre education. (Para. 11.70)
52. the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Industrial Relations be provided with additional assistance for Vocational Officers to identify and arrange suitable training courses for homeland communities which meet the priorities of homelands people for adult education and training. (Para. 11.75)
53. State and the Northern Territory Departments of Technical and Further Education identify the adult education and training needs of homeland communities and provide appropriate programs to homelands people. (Para. 11.78)

## Health services in homeland centres

The Committee recommends that:

54. to improve the health status of people living in homeland centres improvements in environmental health conditions in the communities, such as provision of adequate quantities of good quality water, reticulation, and the provision of ablution and sewage disposal facilities are urgently required. (Para. 12.4)
55. training programs for Aboriginal health workers resident in homeland centres be expanded so that a basic health care service can be provided to all homeland communities. (Para. 12.16)
56. greater effort be made to train and recruit suitable professional staff to areas servicing homeland centres. (Para. 12.19)
57. appropriate induction and on-the-job training programs be developed for professional staff servicing homeland areas. (Para. 12.19)
58. the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, in consultation with State and Northern Territory Departments of Health and Aboriginal Health Services, develop an improved health data collection system including data on the health status of homeland dwellers. (Para. 12.27)



MAIN AREAS OF OUTSTATION ACTIVITY

## CONDUCT OF THE INQUIRY

The Inquiry into Aboriginal Homeland Centres was referred to the Committee on 24 June 1985 by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Clyde Holding M.P.. The Inquiry was referred to the Committee by the Minister after the Committee had considered a range of possible inquiries and decided that the area of homeland centres was one that was urgently in need of a detailed investigation. The Committee wrote to the Minister asking if he would refer an inquiry into homeland centres to it and the Minister agreed to do so.

The Committee was asked by the Minister to inquire into and report on:

The social and economic circumstances of Aboriginal people living in homeland centres or outstations, and the development of policies and programs to meet their future needs.

The Inquiry was advertised in national newspapers throughout Australia in July 1985. The Committee sought submissions from Commonwealth, State and Territory government departments and agencies involved in the provision of services to Aboriginal homeland communities and from Aboriginal organisations and groups servicing homeland centres. The Committee also invited submissions from individuals with a particular interest in the area of Aboriginal homeland centres. Written submissions were received from 44 organisations and individuals. A list of

organisations and individuals who made submissions is at Appendix 1. The submissions were published in separate volumes and consisted of over 2100 pages of evidence. A number of these submissions were from Aboriginal organisations.

The Committee examined 111 witnesses in relation to their formal submissions at public hearings which were held in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Alice Springs, Darwin and Canberra. The names of witnesses and the organisations they represented are listed at Appendix 2. The transcript of oral evidence taken at public hearings comprised 1250 pages of evidence. The transcripts of evidence to the Inquiry are available for inspection at the House of Representatives Committee Office, the Australian National Library and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library. The Committee also received a number of documents unsuitable for incorporation in the transcript. These documents were treated as exhibits and a list is at Appendix 3.

As well as receiving formal written submissions and conducting formal public hearings the Committee travelled extensively throughout Australia visiting homeland centre communities. A list of places visited by the Committee is at Appendix 4. These visits were of particular value as they allowed the Committee to talk to people in homeland communities about the reasons why they had moved to homelands and the difficulties they were experiencing. The Committee adopted a quite different practice from that it has used in the past in visiting homeland centres in desert areas. Instead of flying into communities and staying for brief periods the Committee chartered a bus and travelled over a period of a week through homeland areas. This practice was adopted in visiting the Ngaanyatjarra and Pitjantjatjara homeland areas. In northern Australia it was often only possible to visit homeland communities by light aircraft. On the visits the Committee made to homeland communities it received particular assistance from Aboriginal organisations servicing the area and the Committee



would like to extend its thanks to those organisations which provided enormous assistance to the Committee in conducting these visits.

The Committee also adopted a further innovation for its inquiry into Aboriginal homeland centres by appointing an Aboriginal secondee to work with the Committee Secretariat. This innovation proved to be enormously beneficial to the Committee and enabled it to tap Aboriginal opinion far more successfully than was possible in the past. Much of the success of this innovation was due to the personal qualities of Ms Andrea Collins who was appointed as the first Aboriginal secondee. The Committee would like to pay particular thanks to Ms Collins for her work on the Inquiry. The Committee intends to continue the practice of appointing Aboriginal secondees to its future inquiries. The Committee would also like to thank Mr Ron Morony of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for the assistance he provided during a three month attachment with the Secretariat.

The co-operation and assistance given to the Committee during the course of its Inquiry should be mentioned. Thanks are extended to all witnesses who gave evidence and to organisations and individuals who made submissions to the Inquiry. The Committee is most grateful to members of Aboriginal communities and organisations who provided valuable evidence during informal discussions. The Committee wishes to thank the State and Northern Territory governments which provided co-operation with the Inquiry and made officers available to give evidence and accompany the Committee on visits. The Committee was also assisted greatly during its visits by officers of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs who, in many cases, accompanied the Committee on its visits to homeland areas. The Committee thanks these officers for their assistance.

1948

...

...

...

I thought and thought about my country, and about asking for it  
. . . We want to live in our own place, Aborigines only . . .  
and look after all our places. We will stay here and fight for  
our country, and never let it go again . . . This is our place.  
Our fathers and grandfathers hunted here . . .

Statement by a Pitjantjatjara  
person about the desire to return  
to country.

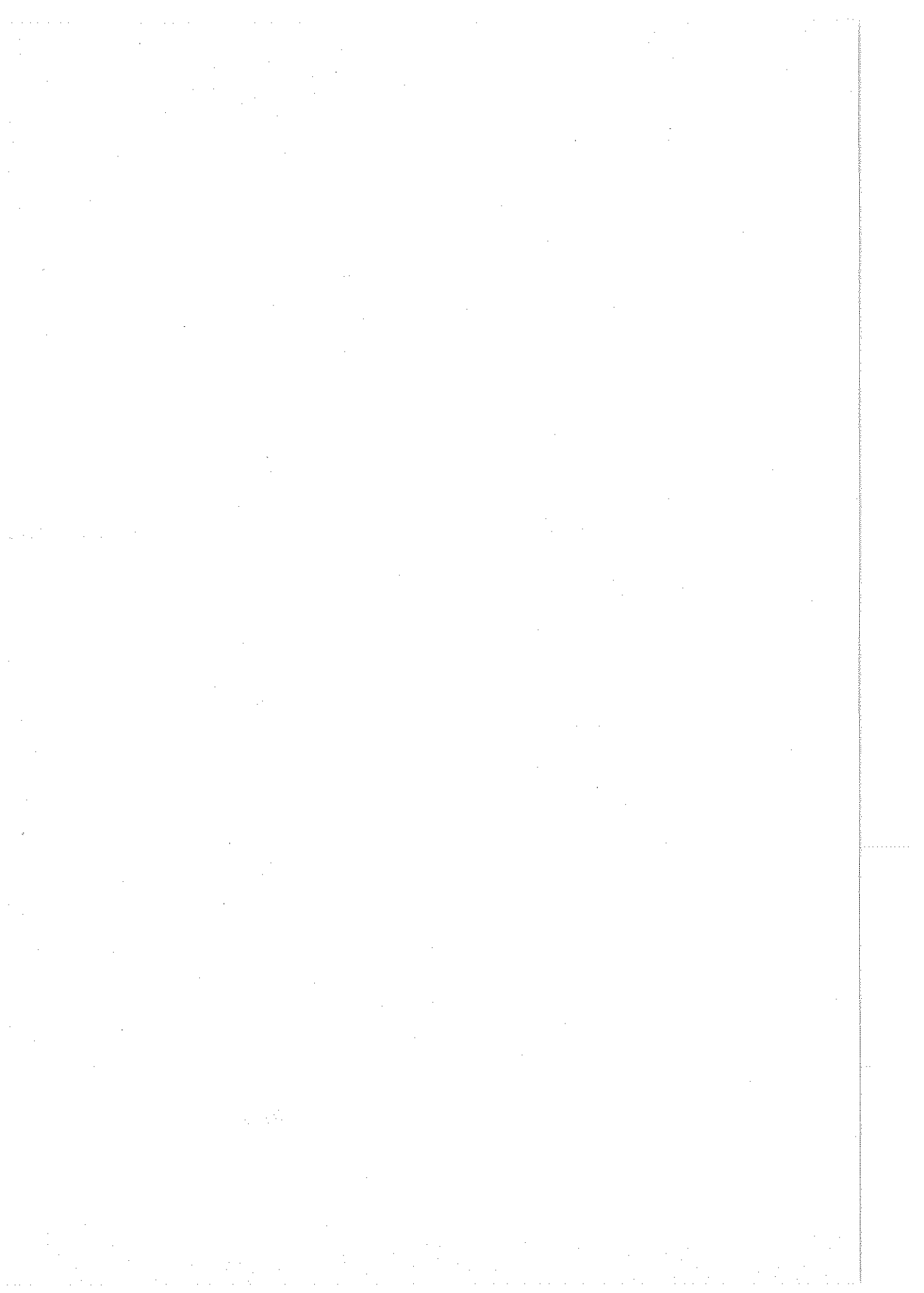
Look at the sun  
Sinking like a ship  
and the sunset takes my mind  
Back to my homeland far away.

Its a story planted in my mind  
Its so clear I remember  
Oh my oh my  
Sunset Dreaming.

Words of song "Sunset Dreaming" by  
Bakamana Yunupingu

This is our important country. That why we're livin, we don't  
want to get out anymore. We don't want to go back anyway. Very  
important thing this one - we live here. Our old people live la  
this land. And all the second people, what they born in this  
place now, they belong to this place. We can't get out - no way!  
We wanta try an live in this country now till we die.

Frank Rex from Ringers Soak near  
Halls Creek



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

1.1 The movement of Aboriginal people to homeland centres or outstations in the last 15 years is one of the most significant developments in Aboriginal affairs. As it is very much an Aboriginal initiated movement, it demonstrates the desire of Aboriginal people to assert control over their lives by establishing communities that are better attuned to Aboriginal needs. There is clear evidence that the movement is growing. Governments, both Commonwealth, State and Territory, will need to respond to the growing needs of homeland centres.

1.2 In this chapter the Committee discusses the background to the Aboriginal homelands movement. The Committee initially addresses the questions of terminology and how homeland centres should be defined. It then looks at the historical background to the homelands movement including the reasons for Aboriginal people moving to homeland centres and the extent to which government policies have influenced the movement.

#### Terminology

1.3 A number of submissions addressed themselves to the differing terminology used in referring to the Aboriginal homeland centres or outstation communities which are the subject of this Inquiry.

1.4 The Department of Aboriginal Affairs indicated that there were a number of terms including 'outstation', 'homeland centre', 'country camp' and 'settle down country' used to refer to the communities. The Department preferred the term 'outstation' because it was widely used and understood. It claimed that the term 'homeland centre' was inaccurate in some cases because the communities were not in fact located on the traditional country of their occupants.<sup>1</sup>

1.5 Dr Elspeth Young, a geographer who has done research on Aboriginal homeland centres, stated that the terms 'homeland centre' or 'country camp' were more appropriate than 'outstation' in referring to the communities because Aboriginal people have moved to the communities to be as close as possible to the land for which they hold spiritual responsibility. By contrast, the term 'outstation' suggested 'a population group physically and socially on the periphery'.<sup>2</sup> Dr Young's view was supported by anthropologists with the Pitjantjatjara Council who stated that they used the term 'homelands' rather than 'outstations':

. . . as the former is preferred by most Pitjantjatjara people. 'Outstation' carries a connotation of a suburb, of an ancillary place of residence of only indirect importance as compared to a larger community which, in all likelihood, acts as a service centre of some sort. The Pitjantjatjara emphasis on 'homelands' rather than on 'outstations' expresses the importance of the criteria of land and social relationships over and above the criteria of the distribution of goods and services, or of the chronology of habitation.<sup>3</sup>

1.6 Concern about the use of the term 'outstation' was not shared by all. Reference has already been made to the view of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs which preferred 'outstations' because the widespread currency of the term made it readily understood. A report by Drs Cane and Stanley on Land Use and

Resources in Desert Homelands submitted to the Committee noted the concern about the use of the term 'outstation' and the desire of some to replace it with 'homeland centre'. However, Drs Cane and Stanley stated that they used 'outstation' and 'camp' in their report 'because these are terms which Aborigines themselves use'.<sup>4</sup> Wendy Baarda, a teacher at Nyrripi in the Northern Territory, stated in her submission that homeland centres in the Yuendumu area were called outstations and this is how she referred to the communities in her submission.<sup>5</sup>

1.7 The Committee appreciates the concern raised about the use of the term 'outstation' to refer to the communities that are the subject of this Inquiry. To that extent the Committee prefers the use of the term 'homeland centre' because it indicates that the communities are located on land to which people have traditional ties. However, the Committee did not find that the use of the term 'outstation' was a matter of concern in the communities it visited. There was in fact evidence of one term, whether homeland centre, outstation etc., being preferred above others in particular areas and of terms being used interchangeably. The Committee uses the terms in the report in this way, preferring the usage of particular communities where reference is made to these communities, but otherwise using the terms interchangeably. In referring to homeland centres and the homelands movement in Australia, the Committee was conscious of the use of 'homelands' in connection with the South African policy of apartheid. The homelands movement in Australia, as discussed in this report, has no similarities with the 'homelands' policy as practiced in South Africa.

#### Defining homeland centres and outstations

1.8 The question of how Aboriginal homeland centres or outstations should be defined was addressed in a number of submissions. The most substantial statement on a definition was provided by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. It proposed as its definition that:

Outstations are small, relatively permanent, decentralised communities consisting of closely related individuals which have been established by Aboriginal people with a strong traditional orientation.<sup>6</sup>

1.9 The definition had been developed around the central elements describing the outstation movement. Thus the Department stated that outstations were small communities with core populations generally between 20-50 people. They were defined as relatively permanent to distinguish them from decidedly 'transient' camps. However, it was pointed out that the permanency was related to the Aboriginal notions of belonging and commitment rather than to the European view of permanency as the continual occupancy and development of a community. So outstations could be unoccupied for extensive periods without being seen as impermanent. Outstations were decentralised communities in that they had been formed by people moving out of the larger settlements and reserves to establish autonomous communities and yet retaining important economic and social links with these settlements. Kinship was a determining factor in outstation membership ensuring that the groups were comprised of closely related individuals, often a single nuclear or extended family. Outstations were established by Aboriginal people indicating the extent of Aboriginal initiative in the movement. They also had a strong traditional orientation showing more visible manifestations of traditional culture through ceremonial and religious activities and utilisation of 'bush tucker'.<sup>7</sup>

1.10 Other submissions provided specific definitions of homeland centres. The Aboriginal Housing Board of South Australia defined a homeland centre as 'A centre established by a group of families or one family who have moved away from an established community.'<sup>8</sup> This definition was both simple and broad, incorporating in a brief way many of the elements which the Department of Aboriginal Affairs saw as central to a definition.



1.11 The Commonwealth Department of Education agreed with the definition developed by Dr H.C. Coombs:

An attempt by Aborigines to moderate the rate of cultural change caused by contact with European ways and commodities: to re-establish a physical, social and spiritual environment in which traditional components will be once more dominant and the influence of the alien culture more marginal.<sup>9</sup>

This definition incorporates some of the motives of Aboriginal people in moving to homeland centres. It portrays the homelands movement as a long term Aboriginal adaptation to the effects of contact with the wider society.

1.12 The National Aboriginal Education Committee considered that the Aboriginal relationship to land was central to the homelands movement and should be incorporated into any definition of homelands. It proposed Professor Stanner's description of the links between Aboriginal people and their homelands as its definition:

No English words are good enough to give a sense of the links between an Aboriginal group and its homeland. Our word 'home', warm and suggestive though it be, does not match the Aboriginal word that may mean 'camp', 'hearth', 'country', 'everlasting home', 'totem place', 'life source', 'spirit centre', and much else all in one. Our word 'land' is too spare and meagre. We can now scarcely use it except with economic overtones unless we happen to be poets. The Aboriginal would speak of 'earth' and use the word in a richly symbolic way to mean his 'shoulder' or his 'side'. I have seen an Aboriginal embrace the earth he walked on. To put our words 'home' and 'land' together in 'homeland' is a little better but not much. A different tradition leaves us tongueless and earless towards this other world of meaning and significance . . .<sup>10</sup>

1.13 The Northern Land Council argued that outstations and communities seeking excisions from pastoral properties represent the same social phenomenon. It considered that they both reflected the desire of a large group of Aboriginal people to obtain a degree of autonomy and to live at locations where they could discharge their traditional responsibilities to look after sites. However, the Land Council asserted that government departments, particularly the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, have made a bureaucratic distinction between excision and homeland centre groups thereby excluding excision groups from discussions of homeland centres.<sup>11</sup> Department of Aboriginal Affairs representatives denied such an exclusion was made by the Department and stated that its definition of homeland centres could also embrace excision groups which had a strong traditional orientation and were returning to traditional country.<sup>12</sup> Some excision communities in the southern region of the Northern Territory and in Western Australia were identified as outstation communities by the Department in an appendix to its submission to the Inquiry.

1.14 The Committee considers that the desire of many Aboriginal groups to live on excisions on pastoral properties reflects similar motives and aspirations to those giving rise to the homelands movement and that therefore many excision communities could be regarded as homeland centres. The Committee's definition of homeland centres would include many excision groups and the Committee considers that their needs should be addressed as part of the assessment of the needs of other homeland centres. The Committee considers that these needs are similar to those of other homeland centres. The Committee's discussion of needs in the essential services, health and education areas, apply to all small Aboriginal communities, including many excision communities, which meet the definition of homeland centres outlined below. However, obtaining secure tenure to land, which many homeland communities already possess, is a first priority for most excision communities. The Committee addresses this issue later in this report.

1.15 In defining homeland centres or outstations, the Committee prefers a definition which is simple but which at the same time adequately distinguishes these communities from other Aboriginal communities. The Committee considers the definition should be descriptive but also indicate the significance of Aboriginal initiative in stimulating the movement. The Committee defines homeland centres or outstations as:

small decentralised communities of close kin established by the movement of Aboriginal people to land of social, cultural and economic significance to them.

1.16 By small the Committee means usually about 20-50 people although a number of homeland centres have larger populations. As 'decentralised' communities, homeland centres are distinguished from the former settlement, mission and reserve communities (now Aboriginal towns). By being described as 'communities' rather than groups or some other term, the relative permanency of homeland centres at a particular location is indicated. Emphasis is given in the definition to the establishment of the communities as an Aboriginal initiative. Finally, the definition shows the importance to Aboriginal homeland centre dwellers of the social, cultural and economic ties to land. The access to this land which the movement has provided has enabled homeland people to conduct religious ceremonies, look after important sacred sites, undertake hunting and gathering activities and produce artefacts requiring materials available in the bush. It has also enabled homeland people to assert a significant degree of autonomy from the non-Aboriginal control over their activities which had characterised their lives in the Aboriginal towns.

#### History of the homelands movement

1.17 The history of the homelands movement is one of a concerted attempt by Aboriginal people in the 'remote' areas of Australia to leave government settlements, reserves, missions and

non-Aboriginal townships and to re-occupy their traditional country. While this history is different in different areas, there is a common core of reasons for Aboriginal people moving to homeland centres and a number of similar factors which have influenced the movement.

#### Aboriginal relationship to land

1.18 The central element in understanding why the homelands movement has become so significant lies in the comprehension of Aboriginal relationships to land and the responsibilities these place on Aboriginal people. Anthropologists of the Pitjantjatjara Council referred to the nature of these relationships for Pitjantjatjara people:

For the Pitjantjatjara the natural features of the land were formed in the tjukurpa, the great process of creation that non-Aboriginal people have come to refer to as "The Dreaming". The tjukurpa is expressed through (and maintained in) a vast body of knowledge which, through its recounting of the travels and deeds of ancestral beings, provides the basis for the traditional Pitjantjatjara "world view". In other words the tjukurpa is the source of rules and reasons for peoples' relationships to one another and for individual's and group's relationship to the land. Being derived from the tjukurpa, such rules and reasons are, therefore, based upon religious principles.<sup>13</sup>

These relationships create 'behavioural imperatives' for Aboriginal people. The Pitjantjatjara Council noted that:

Aboriginal people often assert, "I have to take care of my country", or "I have to look after my father's (or mother's, or grandfather's or grandmother's or uncle's) country". Such assertions are not made whimsically, they are expressions of religious and social imperatives, and it is almost universally the case that such an expression will be the first response when someone is asked why he/she wishes to live in, or to have assistance in establishing, a particular homeland.<sup>14</sup>

1.19 The Kimberley Land Council also referred to the desire of Aboriginal people to live on land with which they had traditional links and to protect significant sites. The Council quoted Jack Dale of Imintji:

. . . this is my, this is our country, this is my country. This is all my, my grandmother's, and all those, and me mother, they belong to ere. And that's why we stay . . . And we like to stay ere, for good. We're not going to move anywhere, we got nowhere to go.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, Marra Worra Worra stated that Aboriginal people wanted to develop their outstations to be near their country and their hunting and fishing places.<sup>16</sup>

1.20 Responsibility to look after country has always been an imperative for Aboriginal people and some have never left the country for which they are responsible except for short periods. However, a number of factors including the policies and actions of governments severely disrupted the ability of many Aboriginal people to live on their country and undertake their responsibilities. A history of the homelands movement must include a history of this disruption but also of changes which have now assisted many Aboriginal people to fulfil a desire to return to their homelands.

#### The disruption of Aboriginal relationships to land

1.21 The Aboriginal Development Commission noted in its submission that from the 1920s Aboriginal people in remote Australia 'were encouraged to live in large settlements usually run along authoritarian lines by missions and governments'.<sup>17</sup> Initially the settlements were set up to 'protect' Aboriginal people from the effects of the operation of pastoral properties on their lifestyle, the effects of mining, tourism and other activities on their land and the effects of widespread droughts

particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. The Western Desert Land Council referred to some of these factors in its submission:

The establishment of mission stations and government ration stations around the periphery of the desert areas resulted in large numbers of Western Desert people vacating the area over a period of time. At times, they were forcibly removed into missions or government stations, walked in voluntarily through a misconception of an easier lifestyle supported by European goods and services, or were forced to come in due to hardship from drought or sickness.<sup>18</sup>

1.22 Another significant factor affecting people in the Western Desert was the atomic tests in the 1950s at Maralinga in South Australia and the subsequent rocket testing from the Woomera rocket range. The effects of the removal of people from this area were referred to by the Aboriginal Development Commission:

Although the people had some previous contact with Europeans, mainly the Daisy Bates mission at Ooldea, the people lived a traditional lifestyle at the time of their removal. The majority of the people were removed to a new community at Yalata, some 300 km south of their traditional lands. Both the land and the social conditions at Yalata were foreign and the people have never been comfortable in that environment leading to serious incidences of violence and alcohol abuse.<sup>19</sup>

1.23 The movement of some people from the Central and Western Desert area into settlements and reserves took place as late as the 1960s. Nathan and Japanangka note that even in 1964 and 1965 'attempts were still being made "to encourage these people [Pitjantjatjara] to return to either Areyonga or Ernabella where employment, health services, and education are available to them"'.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the last of the Pintupi people occupying

the Western Desert were not settled in Papunya until about 1966 following efforts by Patrol Officers to encourage or to move them out of the desert.<sup>21</sup>

1.24 In Arnhem Land missions were established at Oenpelli, Goulburn Island, Milingimbi and Yirrkala. The Northern Land Council noted that many Aboriginal families and groups did not come to live with any degree of permanence in these sedentary communities until the 1960s and some were only ever visitors.<sup>22</sup> Maningrida was established in 1957 to provide trading and medical services in the area. Aboriginal people were quickly attracted to the community so that by September 1958 there were about 330 Aboriginal people in permanent residence. By May 1960 there were about 480 Aboriginals living there and this increased dramatically by 1969 to 1,050. While a few 'recalcitrant' Aboriginal people continued to live on their own estates, most had established themselves permanently in Maningrida with some perhaps visiting their estates for 'holidays'.<sup>23</sup>

1.25 In the Kimberley, many parts of the Northern Territory, northern Queensland and northern South Australia the extension of pastoralism on to Aboriginal land had a dramatic effect on the lives of Aboriginal people. The Kimberley Land Council, quoting the Marra Worra Worra submission to the Seaman Inquiry in Western Australia, noted the impact of pastoral settlement in the Kimberley:

For various reasons the people gradually congregated around the station homesteads on their traditional country. Some came willingly, but most were forced in; by destruction or depletion of their usual food sources, by being 'rounded up' and/or physically forced in, by decimation of their people through diseases and massacre, etc.<sup>24</sup>

1.26 Aboriginal people came to play an important role in the pastoral industry in remote areas by providing cheap labour which

was otherwise in short supply. They were normally not covered by the award or were paid in kind for work performed. The Kimberley Land Council, quoting Marra Worra Worra, noted that it was not unreasonable to assume that without the exploitation of Aboriginal labour 'the pastoral industry in the Kimberley would not have survived its great handicaps of remoteness, distance from abattoirs (sic) and markets, and often poor grazing country'.<sup>25</sup>

1.27 However, the decision in the late 1960s to make mandatory the payment of award wages to Aboriginal pastoral workers had a significant impact. The Kimberley Land Council describes the impact in the Kimberley as causing mass relocation and the disruption of people's lives. Many Aboriginal people left or were forced off pastoral properties and found themselves living in nearby towns and settlements.<sup>26</sup>

1.28 The Northern Land Council has claimed that, in the early 1960s some years before the award wages decision, the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory was changing in ways which would make Aboriginal labour redundant. These changes included the construction of beef roads (thus ending the employment of Aboriginal drovers), tighter regimes of stock control more dependent on fences, strategic placing of water points and the use of trucks and helicopters instead of the labour-intensive techniques involving Aboriginal labour.<sup>27</sup> The award wages decision only added impetus to a trend which was already present, and led to many Aboriginal people leaving, or being forced off, pastoral properties to which they had a traditional or historical attachment.

1.29 By the late 1960s most Aboriginal people in northern and central Australia were living in communities such as government settlements, reserves, missions, non-Aboriginal townships and some cattle stations, reflecting governments' desire at the time for the centralisation of Aboriginal



communities. The location of Aboriginal people in these communities also suited the assimilationist policy of the time as it allowed Aboriginal people to be 'trained' and 'developed' to 'a reasonable standard' so that assimilation into the non-Aboriginal community would be easier.<sup>28</sup> The Northern Land Council noted that in many instances Aboriginal people in such communities were treated 'very much as second class citizens or as inmates of an institution'.<sup>29</sup> Official attitudes in the 1960s thus were unsympathetic towards decentralisation by Aboriginal people and little if any support was provided to people attempting to move to homeland centres.

### The return to homelands

1.30 The desire of Aboriginal people to move out of the settlements, reserves and missions and back to traditional country was significant. According to Drs Cane and Stanley, no sooner had the Pintupi people been settled at Papunya than 'they began to move away again'<sup>30</sup>, to return to their traditional country. The Punmu community in the Western Desert also claimed in its submission that:

The older people in the community have been planning their return to the desert ever since they left it as a result of the land clearance work done by the missionaries, Bidell and Tonkinson in the late 50's and early 60's.<sup>31</sup>

In some cases, as was noted earlier in this chapter, Aboriginal people have never left their traditional country except for short periods.

1.31 The Yirrkala community in Arnhem Land was one of the earliest to articulate to government its desire to decentralise to homeland centres. Dr Coombs has described the proposal to decentralise submitted by the Yirrkala Community Council to the Council for Aboriginal Affairs in the early 1970s:

They plan a return of many of the clan members to their traditional lands to resume a way of life more closely geared to the pattern of the past. At the same time they see the traditional economic practices of hunting and gathering being supplemented by European-style production both for their own use and for sale. . .

They envisage a number of "decentralised" villages surrounding and linked with the Mission centre at Yirrkala which would serve the villages as an administrative, educational, commercial and, to a modest degree, industrial centre for the whole complex.<sup>32</sup>

Other communities had a similar desire.

1.32 Apart from the strong desire of Aboriginal people to return to traditional land to meet their responsibilities in relation to their land, the movement has also been a reaction to the stresses of living in settlements, reserves and missions and to the practice of bringing diverse groups of Aboriginals together to live in these artificial communities. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the institutionalised nature of settlements and missions and a recognition that they had enormous social problems. They characteristically contained many people living as 'guests' on land which traditionally did not belong to them, alongside the traditional owners. For Aboriginal people the perceptions of these communities were as 'no good', 'too much trouble', 'people fightin', 'too much worry', 'sad place' and 'too much sick there'.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, outstation life offered a return to 'a healthy social and physical environment',<sup>34</sup> away from the tensions and trouble associated with large communities and mixed groups.

1.33 These Aboriginal motives are closely interconnected with the desire of Aboriginal people to get away from the settlements, reserves and missions and to get back to traditional country, and the common aim of Aboriginal people achieving greater autonomy and control over their lives and reasserting

traditional relationships. The Kimberley Land Council claimed that the aim of the homeland movement was the achievement of 'cultural and economic independence'.<sup>35</sup> The Ngaanyatjarra Council noted that Aboriginal people involved in the homelands movements are:

. . . consciously making a supreme effort to retain their links with the land and their traditions, and to overcome the social and moral ills that befall those who do not. For the preservation of an entire culture the homelands movement must succeed.<sup>36</sup>

1.34 The motivation of Aboriginal people to move to their homelands has also been explained in terms of internal political struggles in Aboriginal communities and the quest for greater access to resources. Rolf Gerritsen has argued that the homelands movement is an attempt by certain groups in a larger community to obtain access to social, economic and political power by commanding their own resources. In other words, it is an attempt by the less powerful groups within Aboriginal communities to circumvent the power over resources held by the more dominant group, or individuals, within a particular settlement. By establishing a homeland centre or outstation, the leader is able to seek the provision of services, vehicles, and other items for his group which, because of his position in the central community, he would not otherwise be able to obtain. To support his argument, Gerritsen notes that the men who tend to lead homelands movements are those from the 'second rung' of power in the central community and, therefore, less likely to have control over the allocation of resources in the settlement.<sup>37</sup>

1.35 These motives need not necessarily be seen as negative and a denial of the genuineness of the Aboriginal desire to return to homelands. First, the internal Aboriginal political conflicts in the former settlements and reserves are amongst some of the problems caused by the establishment of these communities.

The homelands movement provides sections of these communities the ability to move as smaller more homogeneous groups to their traditional land on which they have pre-eminence and may overcome many of these problems. Dr Altman, an anthropologist who has worked in Arnhem Land, referred to the Aboriginal political system as marginalising people from outlying areas because of the prerogative given to landowners. For example, the Gunwinggu people, among whom he had worked, had clan estates halfway between Oenpelli and Maningrida. In both these centres in which the Gunwinggu people had lived they had been politically marginalised because they were not traditional owners in these areas. Dr Altman stated it was not surprising that the Gunwinggu were the first to leave Maningrida as part of the homelands movement. The return to traditional lands provided them with 'more autonomy and more freedom from those structures' which had marginalised them in the settlements.<sup>38</sup> Second, the access to resources which Aboriginals seek by their movement to homelands is not simply access to European-provided resources, but also includes greater access to bush tucker as a resource. In this sense the seeking of greater access to resources is very much a positive concern and the availability of bush tucker makes a significant economic contribution to homeland centres.

### Government policy

1.36 The motives for Aboriginal people to return to their traditional lands dovetailed with significant changes in government policy which facilitated the movement. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs referred to the two major policy shifts which contributed to the acceleration of the outstation movement. The first was a change from a policy of assimilation to one of self-determination in the early 1970s. As a result of this policy change the superintending role which had been a feature of settlement life shifted to a community advising role, with less government direction of Aboriginal people's lives. Aboriginal people felt able to make decisions to move out of the

settlements. The second major policy shift, at about the same time, was towards land rights. As a result of the consultative process as part of the Woodward Inquiry, Aboriginal people became aware that they may be able to obtain title to their traditional lands. Consequently they wished to move from the settlements to their lands to demonstrate their ownership of, and continuing interest in, their lands.

1.37 The significance of these changes in government policy is evident from the early history of the homelands movement. The Yirrkala community, which in 1969 sought to protect its traditional land by taking out a writ in the Northern Territory Supreme Court seeking to restrain the Federal Government and the mining company, Nabalco, from mining bauxite on its clan territories, was also, as has been seen, among the first to propose to government decentralisation to homeland centres. Other communities had a similar desire to protect their homelands and important sites from what they saw as potential threats from mining and other industries.<sup>39</sup>

1.38 In 1970 the Council for Aboriginal Affairs embarked on the task of persuading the government to offer assistance to groups wishing to establish their own homeland centres. The Council was able to offer moral support to groups wishing to decentralise, but not funding support. However, in 1973 the Commonwealth Government decided to support the homelands movement both in principle and with funding support, providing the movement with an economic base. A system of establishment grants of up to \$10,000 was provided by the Commonwealth Government for groups with a commitment to moving to homeland centres. These grants enabled basic facilities to be established.<sup>40</sup>

1.39 Dr Altman pointed to other important governmental policy changes which have provided an economic basis for the homelands movement. He referred to the granting of land rights in the Northern Territory and northern South Australia as enabling

Aboriginal people to reconstitute their subsistence economies based on land-extensive hunting, fishing and gathering activities. According to Dr Altman, these subsistence activities have become 'the mainstay of outstation economies'.<sup>41</sup> He also referred to changes in the payment of social security benefits to Aboriginal people in the late 1960s and early 1970s making these benefits available in cash instead of in kind. From the late 1970s unemployment benefits as well as pensions and child endowments have been made available to outstation residents. The overall effect of these developments has been to make outstation life for some Aboriginal people far more attractive than life in centralised communities. According to Dr Altman, it is possible to see the outstation movement as:

. . . a calculated decision, based on available economic options, and made by people who were, and continue to be, intent on moulding their economic and social environments, with modern trappings, to suit themselves.<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

1.40 As a result of these changes the movement has grown strongly throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs estimated that, at 30 June 1981, there were about 165 homeland centre communities with a total population of about 4,200.<sup>43</sup> By the time the Department made its submission to the Committee in September 1985, the number of homeland centres was estimated to have grown to between 400 and 500 with a total population in the order of 10,000.<sup>44</sup> As the Department pointed out, the movement is dynamic and continuing to grow and change in its nature. The Committee discusses the future of the movement in Chapter 4.

1.41 The history of the homelands movement is one of Aboriginal people returning to land from which they were encouraged to move by governments intent on centralising them in

a number of communities to 'protect' and assimilate them and to make bureaucratic supervision easier. It has also been a demonstration of Aboriginal people exercising greater control over their lives by choosing to live in communities which they find more satisfying. The movement to homeland centres has been facilitated by significant changes in government policy in relation to social security payments for Aboriginals, the granting of land rights and the implementation of a policy of self-determination. While these changes have given substantial impetus to the movement, as has been seen, the desire of some Aboriginal people to return to their homelands pre-existed these changes. It has been the determination of Aboriginal people to make the move which has sustained the homelands movement throughout its history.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Transcript of Evidence, p. S286.
- 2 Transcript of Evidence, p. S270.
- 3 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1289.
- 4 Scott Cane and Owen Stanley, Land Use and Resources in Desert Homelands, Australian National University North Australia Research Unit Monograph, Darwin, 1985, p. 4.
- 5 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1198.
- 6 Transcript of Evidence, p. S287.
- 7 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S288-90.
- 8 Transcript of Evidence, p. S111.
- 9 Transcript of Evidence, p. S558.
- 10 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1585.
- 11 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1543.
- 12 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 921-22.

- 13 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1290.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Transcript of Evidence, p. S76.
- 16 Transcript of Evidence, p. S3.
- 17 Transcript of Evidence, p. S583.
- 18 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S204-05.
- 19 Transcript of Evidence, p. S584.
- 20 P Nathan and D. Leichleitner Japanangka, Settle Down Country, Central Aboriginal Conference, Kibble Books, Malmsburg, 1983, p. 44.
- 21 See Cane and Stanley, op.cit., pp. 32 and 34 and Nathan and Japanangka, op.cit., pp. 66-96.
- 22 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1551.
- 23 B. Meehan and R. Jones, 'The outstation movement and hints of a White backlash', in R. Jones (ed.), Northern Australia : Options and Implications, Australian National University, Canberra, 1980, pp. 131-133.
- 24 Transcript of Evidence, p. S70.
- 25 Transcript of Evidence, p. S71.
- 26 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S71-72.
- 27 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1548.
- 28 Nathan and Japanangka, op.cit., pp. 39-40.
- 29 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1551.
- 30 Cane and Stanley, op.cit., p. 34.
- 31 Transcript of Evidence, p. S5.
- 32 H.C. Coombs, 'The Future of the Australian Aboriginal', The George Judah Cohen Memorial Lecture, University of Sydney, 1972, p. 14.
- 33 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S79-80 and Nathan and Japanangka, op.cit., pp. 91-92.
- 34 Transcript of Evidence, p. S79.
- 35 Transcript of Evidence, p. S97.



- 36 Transcript of Evidence, p. S19.
- 37 R. Gerritsen, 'Outstations, Differing Interpretations and Policy Implications', in P. Loveday (ed), Service Delivery to Outstations, NARU, Darwin, 1982, pp. 57-69.
- 38 Transcript of Evidence, p. 976.
- 39 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1550
- 40 H.C. Coombs, B.G. Dexter and L.R. Hiatt, 'The outstation movement in Aboriginal Australia', in E. Leacock and R. Lee (eds.), Politics and history in band societies, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 427-440.
- 41 Transcript of Evidence, p. S479.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Annual Report 1980-1981, AGPS, Canberra, 1981, p. 12.
- 44 Transcript of Evidence, p. S298.

## CHAPTER 2

### LOCATION AND NUMBERS

#### Introduction

2.1 This chapter deals with the location of homeland centres, the number of communities and people involved, demographic structure of homeland centres and a description of homeland settlements.

2.2 Given the reasons for their establishment and their traditional orientation, it is not surprising that Aboriginal homeland centres are concentrated in northern and central Australia. There are no homeland centres in New South Wales, Victoria or Tasmania. Most of the homeland centres are located in the Northern Territory. They have been established in the monsoonal areas of the Top End as well as in the desert areas of the Centre and adjacent parts of South and Western Australia. In Western Australia homeland centres have been established in the Kimberley, the Pilbara and in the Gibson, Great Sandy and Great Victorian deserts. In Queensland homeland centres have been established from Aurukun, Doomadgee, Weipa and Mornington Island. The Committee was not advised that there were any homeland centres in the Torres Strait Islands and this report does not include consideration of communities in that area.

2.3 New homeland centres continue to be established whilst others are being vacated permanently or for extended periods for environmental, social and cultural reasons. Environmental factors include the wet season in northern Australia which may force homelands people to go to central communities or drought in

central Australia where water may become unavailable or undrinkable necessitating a move. Social and cultural factors include a death of a member of a homeland community leading to the centre being vacated for extended periods of mourning, in some cases up to five years. Homeland centres can also be abandoned during the development phase of the homelands movement as will be described in Chapter 4.

2.4 In some areas the homelands movement has reached a considerable degree of stability and in others the movement is still in a developing phase. Demographic data points to the different degrees of stability of the movement in different areas. Generally, long established centres are better equipped with such things as water supplies, shelters, radios, and transport and have secured the support of an outstation resource organisation. The longer established communities have had the advantage of a longer period to apply for and obtain government funds.

2.5 The central features of the physical, social and cultural environment of homeland centres are the way in which the people of homeland communities combine some aspects of non-traditional culture and technology with a strong traditional cultural, social and economic structure.

#### Location

2.6 Homeland centres are located away from the Aboriginal settlements and reserves from which Aboriginal people have sought to move. In a 1981 survey of over 150 homeland centres in the Northern Territory, Dr Elspeth Young found that most (56 percent) were located relatively close (less than 50 kilometres) to the reserves and settlements which act as resource centres for them. Fifteen percent of the homeland centres were located more than 100 kms from resource centres.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that Dr Young's survey was done in 1981 and the continued development

of the homelands movement since then has meant that new homeland centres are probably located further from resource centres. The Committee visited many homeland centres throughout Australia, a number of which were located between 100 km and 300 km away from resource centres. While many homeland centres can be located relatively close to resource centres, access is often difficult, particularly in northern homeland centres during the Wet. In the desert areas severe storms may cut roads between homeland centres and resource centres. Even in good weather access roads to homeland centres in most parts of Australia are of very poor quality. As a result of these problems of accessibility and distance, the provision of facilities and services to homeland centres is expensive and difficult.

2.7 An important factor in homeland centre location is the site in relation to the traditional land of the people. Wherever possible, people tend to locate their homeland centres on land to which they have traditional affinities so that contact with sites of religious significance can be maintained. Because of factors such as the lack of availability of water at a particular site, people have been prepared to relocate to a more suitable site for the provision of facilities, though still on traditional land. Some groups have been unable to establish a homeland centre on their traditional land because this land is now occupied by pastoralists or, because of distance, it has proved difficult to return to their traditional land. In order to avoid the socio-cultural disruptions of the large settlements or towns some groups, not being able to return to their own land, have established homeland centres on country owned by other people. Generally, the land on which these groups have settled is on, or as close as possible to, their traditional land and they have sought permission to camp there from those with traditional affinity to the area.

## Population

2.8 One of the great difficulties which the Committee experienced during the Inquiry in establishing the magnitude of the homelands movement was that there were no exact numbers available of Aboriginal homeland centres or of the population of homeland centres. One of the main reasons for this was that the mobility of homelands people and consequently the fluctuating populations of homeland centres made it difficult for agencies to collect accurate data. Dr Loveday of the North Australia Research Unit of the A.N.U. advised the Committee<sup>2</sup> that because of diversity, changes in occupational status, mobility of population and doubt if some places were in fact homeland centres or not, it was very difficult for Commonwealth and State government departments to maintain up-to-date statistics on homeland centres and populations.

2.9 People vacate their homeland centres for extended periods for many reasons as was indicated in the introduction to this chapter. These include subsistence activities, ceremonial commitments, seasonal conditions which cut off access, drought, death of a community member, social visits, shopping, lack of transport and lack of facilities and services such as housing, education, health and social security services.

2.10 Research conducted by the Bureau of the Northern Land Council showed that of 113 outstations in the Land Council's area of responsibility, 71 (63%) were regarded as permanently occupied, 20 (18%) were occupied during the dry season only and 22 (19%) only occasionally. The Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation at Maningrida provided the Land Council with an estimate of population stability at outstations in its area. Out of a regional population of about 1700 there were 530 persons permanently residing at outstations, 220 spent dry seasons in outstations, 320 were occasional outstation residents, while the

remainder lived permanently at Maningrida. In all areas surveyed a strong preference for year-round residence at outstations was expressed. The statistics indicate a significant degree of stability in the outstation movement in the Top End. Factors which caused residents to return to central communities for extended periods, according to the Land Council, were lack of housing, health care, supply and quality of water, ceremonial commitments and lack of transport.<sup>3</sup>

2.11 Comparisons with other areas with harsher environmental conditions than exist in the Top End (including water shortage) are somewhat misleading. However, occupancy rates of homeland centres collected by Cane and Stanley during their 1984 field work in the Western Desert show a different picture to that in the Top End. Cane and Stanley visited 53 homeland centres of which 24 (45%) were occupied, 11 (21%) unoccupied and 18 (34%) abandoned, although some of the centres considered as abandoned have again been occupied. Factors which caused residents to be away from the homeland centre were ceremonial activities, social obligations and economic necessity, e.g. hunting, gathering and employment away from the homeland.<sup>4</sup>

#### Estimates of population and numbers of homeland centres

2.12 Estimates of population and numbers of homeland centres differed significantly as statistics from the following government departments and agencies indicate.

##### Department of Aboriginal Affairs

2.13 The Department of Aboriginal Affairs informed the Committee that, on the basis of available data, it estimated that there were about 10 000 Aboriginal people living on 400 to 500 homeland centres, outstations or pastoral excisions. Of this number, 360 were located in the Northern Territory, 87 in Western Australia, 40 in South Australia, and 10 in Queensland.<sup>5</sup>

2.14 Problems with the accuracy of the Department's statistics are highlighted by a recent project commissioned by the Department<sup>6</sup> which reported that the population recorded in a survey of Central and Western Desert homeland centres represented only 55 per cent of official Department of Aboriginal Affairs records.<sup>7</sup> The main reason given for this large discrepancy was population mobility.

2.15 The Community Profile collection on which the Department's estimate is based is compiled from information collected by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs area officers and contains a fairly comprehensive set of data about the homelands movement. However, the Department stated that the data should be used as a guide only as the information was not always up to date.

2.16 Mr C. Perkins, Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, in explaining the difficulties of obtaining accurate statistics of people permanently living on homeland centres stated that:

I think anybody trying to get a firm figure on outstation populations would really be wasting his time; I really do. You can calculate the figure between 5,000 and 15,000. It depends on a number of factors: The time of year; whether there are any ceremonies on; whether there is a drought or it is the wet season; or whether there is something happening in some of the settlements. All of those things influence it.<sup>8</sup>

#### Aboriginal Development Commission

2.17 The Aboriginal Development Commission provided the Committee with a list of homeland centres, location and population.<sup>9</sup> A summary of this list is shown in the following table.

TABLE 1

Summary of Homeland Centres/Outstations Identified by the  
Aboriginal Development Commission

State	Homeland Centres/ Outstations No.	Population No.
QLD	13	70
WA	101	691
SA	53	350
NT	328	5447
	495	6558

2.18 Some of the homeland centres/outstations included in the statistics in the above table have zero population. The table is therefore indicative only of the approximate number and population of outstations because of the fluctuations in population which occur and just reflect the situation at the time of the survey.

Northern Territory Government

2.19 The Northern Territory Department of Community Development provided the Committee with a list of Northern Territory Aboriginal communities as at 31 July 1986 which includes names of communities, location, number of dwellings, essential services, type of land holdings, type of community and associated resource community. Data extracted from this list indicates 416 homeland centres with a total population of 6715. It also lists 111 excision communities with a total population of 3921.



2.20 The Northern Territory Government submission states it has recorded 650 Aboriginal communities of minor community status. The statistics for minor communities include homeland centres, excision communities, communities on Aboriginal pastoral properties and town camps. The estimated population of the minor communities was 14 000. No separate figures were provided for numbers of homeland centres nor their total population.<sup>10</sup> Of these minor communities 120 were unoccupied, 400 had a population (permanent or seasonal) of 1 to 50, 64 had a population (permanent or seasonal) of 50 to 100, and 16 had a population (permanent or seasonal) of 100 to 150. Fifty were classified as major communities.

### Conclusion

2.21 Available estimates of numbers of homeland centres and total population, because of definition problems and differing ways of enumeration, lack accuracy and cannot be usefully compared for purposes such as estimating population growth or providing health and education services. The Committee itself had difficulty drawing conclusions about the extent of needs of homelands people because of the paucity of available data. For example, the Committee found it impossible to obtain an accurate figure on the number of children living in homeland centres in the Northern Territory who were not receiving an education service. Estimates provided to the Committee differed widely so that the extent of the problem was almost impossible to assess. Presumably agencies developing programs for homeland communities have similar problems.

2.22 The Committee recognises that, because of the mobility of homelands people, it is very difficult for departments, State and Commonwealth, to maintain up-to-date statistics on homeland centres. Nevertheless in order to better forward plan and improve the provision of services to homeland communities, the Committee believes that more reliable statistics on homeland centres are

essential. The Committee therefore recommends that:

all agencies involved in developing policies and programs for homeland centres improve their collection of statistics on homeland centres to better determine their need for the provision of facilities and services.

2.23 The Committee obtained data from a range of sources about homeland centre communities, their populations and land tenure arrangements. This information is provided at Appendix 5. The Committee has identified 588 homeland centre communities throughout Australia with a total population of about 9500. As well 111 excision communities in the Northern Territory with a population of about 3900 are listed at Appendix 5 and the Committee considers that a number of these would fit its definition of 'homeland centre' and thus should be added to figures for the total number and population of homeland centres. It should be noted that 135 of the homeland centres listed at Appendix 5 had zero population at the time that the surveys, on which the Committee statistics are based, were undertaken. This reflects the degree of fluctuation in populations of homeland centres.

#### Demographic structure

2.24 The homelands movement has been seen by some as an 'old people's movement'. However, Dr Young stated in her submission that homeland centre populations, compared to earlier periods, are becoming more balanced in age-sex structure. When communities are first established they are often dominated by older people who carry the main spiritual responsibility for the land. The older people are often the main driving force in establishing homeland centres. In the early establishment stages there are few children on homeland centres.<sup>11</sup>

2.25 However, having been established for a number of years, the communities acquire facilities such as shelter, communications, improved water supplies and education and health services. Consequently, younger families, which may have visited their homelands only for short periods, settle more permanently in their homeland centres, particularly if schooling can be provided.

2.26 Accurate data about age and sex distribution in homeland centre populations is not available. However, that which is available to the Committee suggests that homeland centres achieve a more representative demographic structure after they have been established for some time. In the early stages of the movement, however, a preponderance of older people can be found in the homeland centres.

2.27 Table 2 compares the age structure of the Yuendumu settlement with that of Yuendumu outstations surveyed by Cane and Stanley. It would be fair to say that the outstation movement from Yuendumu is still developing and Cane and Stanley's data indicate the high proportion of older people in these outstations. In commenting on Cane and Stanley's data, Altman noted that a survey undertaken by Elspeth Young in 1981 found that, throughout the Northern Territory, 40 per cent of the outstation population was aged 0-14 years indicating that the outstation movement was in fact 'a young people's movement'. Her data for the areas surveyed by Cane and Stanley indicated that between 35 and 40 per cent of the outstation population was aged between 0 and 14.<sup>12</sup> The degree of uncertainty about data on outstation communities is revealed by these quite starkly contrasting statistics about the same area. The Committee would suggest it points to a certain instability in the homelands movement in the area.

2.28 Demographic data from Milingimbi and Maningrida in Arnhem Land, where the homelands movement has achieved significant stability after a long period of development, shows a different picture. Data compiled by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs from its 1983 Community Profile for 8 outstations in the Milingimbi area of NE Arnhem Land, indicates a quite different age structure from that at Yuendumu outstations as shown in Cane and Stanley's data, with only 11.3% of the population in the 60 and over age group. Nearly 52 per cent of the population of the outstations was in the 0-14 years age range with about 37 per cent in the 15-59 years age range. In this case the demographic structure of these outstations is similar to that of other Aboriginal communities.

2.29 Table 3, adapted from a table prepared by Dr Jon Altman of the age structure of the Maningrida regional population in Arnhem Land, shows that the demographic structure of Maningrida township and the Maningrida outstations is remarkably similar. However, Altman noted that there appeared to be a tendency for a larger proportion of people aged 18-25 to reside in the township while a greater proportion of people over 25 years residing in outstations. He considered that the data could be interpreted in a number of ways:

While the township may be more appealing to people aged 18-25, this appeal may abate when people marry and settle down as part of the normal domestic life cycle. Furthermore, the higher proportion of older people living at outstations may merely reflect the better health status (and greater longevity) of outstation residents.<sup>13</sup>

2.30 A more balanced population structure is important to the long term stability of homeland centres, in particular for the maintenance of essential services which involve skills which old people do not necessarily have, such as operating radios, driving motor vehicles and operating small generators.

TABLE 2

Age structure of people recorded living at Yuendumu outstations compared with age structure at Yuendumu

Age group Years	Yuendumu %	Camps (outstations) recorded %
0-14	37	28
15-59	56	40
60 and over	7	32

Source: S. Cane and O. Stanley, Land Use and Resources in Desert Homelands, Australian National University, North Australia Research Unit Monograph, 1985, p. 163.

TABLE 3

Age Structure of the Maningrida Regional Population During July-August 1980

Age	Homeland Centres (percentage of total population)	Maningrida Township (percentage of total population)
less than 5	15	11
5-17	40	41
18-25	11	19
26-35	12	13
35-50	13	11
51-60	6	4
61+	3	1

Source: Adapted from Jon Altman, 'The Structure and future of Artefact Production for Market Exchange in North-central Arnhem Land', in P. Loveday and P. Cooke (eds), Aboriginal Arts and Crafts in the Market, The Australian National University, North Australia Research Unit Monograph, Darwin 1983, p. 17.

Fluctuation of population can affect the provision of services. An increase in population can put a strain on water supplies, shelters and other facilities. On the other hand, a decline in population can lead to the withdrawal of services such as health and education.

## Description of homeland centres

### Physical environment

2.31 There are considerable differences in living conditions between homeland communities. Some have insufficient established housing and shelter, lack adequate safe water supply and drainage and sewerage services, while others appear to have sufficient accommodation with some provision of essential services.

2.32 Housing and shelter in homeland centres are often fairly basic and range from wurlies, humpies and lean-tos to structures made of a combination of European and traditional materials to conventional multi-room houses. On a regional level there is some diversity in the type and number of houses allocated to different homeland centres. Some have chosen first stage houses which are often no more than a tin shed with a small verandah. Others have sought more conventional houses and, in some areas, open hexagonal shaped shelters have been provided. The majority of dwellings in homeland centres do not have reticulated water, sewerage or electricity. The layout of housing and shelter in the homeland centres generally reflects social organisation and kinship relationships and often visitor accommodation is provided.

2.33 Some of the communities have established vegetable gardens and many of the homeland centres have various fruit and shade trees around the communities. Some lawns have been established and grapes were are in a number of homeland centres. Drip irrigation was used in a number of areas. The Committee also

noted a number of homeland centres where garden enterprises appeared not to have succeeded. There are many reasons why this is so and some of these are discussed in Chapter 8.

### Social and cultural environment

2.34 The population in each homeland centre normally ranges from 30-50 people, reflecting the fact that these groups often comprise an extended family. Dr Young's survey of Aboriginal homeland centres in the Northern Territory, referred to earlier in the chapter, indicated that the average population of homeland centres was 26 people with the range in population being from five to 100 people. Homeland centres then are small and made up of closely related individuals. Much of the social and cultural environment of homeland centres flows from the small scale and social relatedness of the communities.

2.35 Social control and discipline in homeland centres is maintained because of traditional rules of behaviour and the power of personal loyalties. An important conclusion of Dr Boorsboom in his submission to the Committee is that the psychological effects of social life in homeland centres are positive because Aboriginals are much more in control of their physical, social and spiritual environment.<sup>14</sup>

2.36 There is often little social tension in homeland centres and they have a significant degree of social coherence. This coherence in homeland centres is re-enforced by the joint participation in activities such as hunting and gathering, sharing of facilities and resources, and the ability to participate in making decisions affecting behaviour within the community, e.g. on the use of alcohol. Because the people are closely related, they can reach a consensus relatively easily and decision-making is less complicated.<sup>15</sup>

2.37 Homeland centres offer an escape from hostility and mutual suspicions which can exist when differing language groups are mixed in a single community and from other social problems created by small family groups being located in a large community. Homeland centres mostly have little European influence and escape from this influence is one of the things that homelands people have sought in moving to a homeland centre. Alcohol abuse and petrol sniffing are generally not features of homeland centre life.

2.38 Homeland centres provide little formal employment but people are employed informally on hunting, fishing, gathering, and other subsistence activities, ceremonial activities and the manufacturing of arts and crafts. These activities provide homelands people with much to occupy their time.

2.39 Living on homeland centres appears to have a beneficial effect on health as compared with living in larger settlements. The collection of 'bush tucker', hunting, fishing and a small amount of food cultivation supplements the diet of the homeland centre people and has improved their health. On the other hand, there are some serious problems for health services in providing adequate health care to homeland communities.

2.40 Although the homelands lifestyle has a strong traditional orientation, the people have adapted and adopted elements of non-Aboriginal culture and technology, such as water supplies, transport, shelter, communication equipment and tools.

2.41 Homeland centre groups vary in their demand for Western style services including European style education. Education in homelands, if provided, is usually a combination of Western and traditional education. The requests for European style education to Education departments are usually for the children to be taught English literacy and numeracy. Living on homelands gives the older members of the community the opportunity to teach



children in situ all those things which have the land as their source, whether they be religious, social or environmental.<sup>16</sup>

2.42 The movement of Aboriginal people to homeland centres has stimulated a revival and an increase in ceremonial life as the people resume living near and caring for places sacred to them. The establishment of homeland centres has made it easier for people to visit their special places. It is claimed that the resultant increase in ceremonial life has reinforced traditional values and lifestyle.<sup>17</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 E.A. Young, 'Outstations 1981: The Wider Setting', in P. Loveday (ed), Service Delivery to Outstations, Australian National University, North Australia Research Unit Monograph 1982, p. 80.
- 2 Letter, dated 3 March 1986, from Dr Loveday of the North Australia Research Unit of the A.N.U. to the Committee.
- 3 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S1555-56.
- 4 Cane and Stanley, op.cit., pp. 158-59.
- 5 Transcript of Evidence, p. S298.
- 6 Cane and Stanley, op.cit., p. 170.
- 7 See Table 8.1 in Cane and Stanley, op.cit., p. 157.
- 8 Transcript of Evidence, p. 17.
- 9 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S597-610.
- 10 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S762 and S782-816.
- 11 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S273-74.
- 12 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1821.
- 13 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1822.
- 14 Transcript of Evidence, p. S264.

- 15 Transcript of Evidence, p. S277.
- 16 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1293.
- 17 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1340.

## CHAPTER 3

### EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICIES

#### Introduction

3.1 The homelands movement is dependent upon a number of Commonwealth, State and Territory departments/agencies for the delivery of services and infrastructure. As such it is subject to the policies of each, particularly in the development stages.

3.2 The policies of each of these agencies provide the parameters in which Aboriginal people, who move to homelands, can gain access to the support services available from funding agencies. This diversity of support agencies has resulted in some confusion due largely to the lack of clarity of responsibilities and the extent of support they will direct to the homelands movement over and above other functional responsibilities.

3.3 This chapter discusses the broad policies of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in relation to homeland centres. Details of funding programs which have developed as a consequence of these policies are not discussed in this chapter despite the close links between policy guidelines and funding criteria.

#### The role of the Commonwealth Government

3.4 The Commonwealth Government has been generally supportive of the homelands movement. Various departments have

developed policies and allocated funds to assist Aboriginal people involved in the homelands movement. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs is charged with the overall responsibility for co-ordinating the Commonwealth Government's approach to Aboriginal affairs and its policies are used by other departments to determine the level of support they will provide. The other Commonwealth departments and agencies which are involved in the delivery of services to Aboriginals and the implementation of policies of the Commonwealth Government are addressed in the following summary of the roles and policy approach of these agencies. This also highlights the nature of support which has been given to the homelands movement.

#### Department of Aboriginal Affairs

3.5 The Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs plays an important role in the development and ongoing support of homelands. Its functions include allocating funds for the establishment, either before or after the initial move, of the homeland group and, through its co-ordination role, informing other departments and agencies of these homelands and seeking their assistance in the provision of ongoing services and infrastructure. In its program guidelines on assistance to homelands (Appendix 6) the Department states that its policy objective is:

To enable Aboriginals, who wish to do so, to establish and maintain small communities on their own land, or on land to which they have a right of occupation, where they are free to follow a lifestyle of their choice.

The Department is also involved with the Northern Territory Government in negotiating excision areas from pastoral properties in the Northern Territory, thereby enabling eligible groups of Aboriginals to obtain title to areas of land currently used by pastoralists. The size of these areas vary from one square kilometre up to 100 square kilometres.

3.6 For those who indicate a desire to move to a homeland, the Department makes it clear that it is not committed to providing support to them. This is despite the central objective of homelands policy of enabling Aboriginal people to establish and maintain themselves in their homelands. Further, the Department seeks to determine that the relevant group intends to remain permanently at the site before significant capital investments are made.<sup>1</sup> It is not clear how this assessment is made but there are some instances where the application of such a policy is not appropriate. For example, the Pitjantjatjara Council and Central and Northern Land Councils all indicated that water, transport and communications are critical ingredients for survival in the more remote and arid parts of Northern and Central Australia. Considering that many of the homeland centres are some distance from the nearest community, it is unreasonable to suggest that the future stability of a group can be gauged by asking it to 'tough it out' for a year or more without a reliable water supply and some means of transport or communication for emergency situations. The Department itself, when discussing the location of potable water in remote areas and the problems that support agencies face in this area, recognises that no community can survive for any length of time without an adequate water supply.<sup>2</sup> The Department indicated that assistance could be made available to groups for the provision of temporary facilities where their long term intentions were not clear.<sup>3</sup>

3.7 The Department also encourages homeland communities to make a contribution towards the cost of providing facilities and services. Again, the application of such a policy warrants serious reconsideration especially when economic circumstances of the people involved and the great costs involved in servicing homeland communities are taken into account.<sup>4</sup> The Department stated that homeland communities were not denied Departmental assistance if they were unable to make a contribution.<sup>5</sup>

3.8 An important aspect of the Department's policies on homeland centres is that it does not want to replicate the centralised communities in terms of facilities and services. It made clear that the same level of support in terms of facilities and services, as provided to the larger communities, may not be available to homeland centres. In fact, in its submission, the Department refers to the traditional nature of the homelands movement and in addressing the issue of housing and shelter needs of homelands, it suggests that some have a preference for traditional and semi-traditional housing and shelter.<sup>6</sup> This point is highlighted to some extent in the Department's guidelines which emphasise the provision of basic necessities or facilities to homelands rather than the range of facilities and services that are normally available to the larger communities.<sup>7</sup> This differs, to some extent, from the Department's approach to the provision of essential services to homeland communities where it argues that State and Territory governments have a responsibility to provide homeland centres 'with a level of facilities and services equal to that provided to other sections of the community in a manner which is appropriate to their needs'.<sup>8</sup>

3.9 It also differs from the aspirations of Aboriginal people on homeland centres as generally articulated to the Committee during its visits. There is a demand for a better choice of facilities than is currently available under the Department's guidelines and funding arrangements. This point is dealt with in more detail later in this report. In terms of broad policies it highlights the need to reassess the standards which are currently applied to homelands. To be fair, the Department does indicate that there is room for improvement in respect to the range of facilities and services currently provided to homelands.<sup>9</sup>

3.10 The Department has also made the point that the responsibility for providing essential services to Aboriginal

homelands should be that of the respective State and Territory governments. It has indicated that its role should be one of accelerating or supplementing programs of those governments should circumstances require it to do so.<sup>10</sup> To an extent this is happening in the Northern Territory, but it would appear that State and Territory governments have not accepted full responsibility for the provision of essential services on homelands.

3.11 Clear definitions are an important aspect in the discussion of agency responsibilities. For example, essential services can be broadly defined as a water supply, electrical reticulation and the provision and maintenance of access roads and airstrips. But there appears to be some confusion when it comes to other items such as ablution facilities. The Committee during its visits to a number of homeland communities saw very little evidence that ablution facilities were regarded as important by funding agencies and certainly the Department's guidelines would seem to preclude such facilities under its shelter program. So, who is responsible? The Department could argue that it is the State or Territory government, who could equally argue that such facilities are appropriately provided as part of the housing program and not as a shared community facility. It is therefore essential that arrangements regarding agency responsibilities clearly define the range of services and facilities each is responsible for. These matters will be discussed in later chapters.

3.12 The provision of funds for the establishment of outstation resource organisations is another aspect of the support this Department provides for homelands. The guidelines state that:

Where a number of homeland centres relate to an established community or township, consideration should be given to the provision of resource, supply and support services, including transport

through a resource organisation or agency . . .  
Resource organisations thus have an important  
role in respect of:

- agency arrangements which remove the need for each individual outstation/homeland centre to be separately incorporated;
- radio communications; and,
- representing outstations/homelands at the interface with governments and service agencies - that is a general advocacy role.<sup>11</sup>

3.13 Outstation resource organisations have been highlighted in a number of submissions as a key element to the future of the homelands movement and this is discussed later in the report.

3.14 The Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs, through its direct grants system and co-ordination role, has a number of more specific policies and programs which relate to homelands. These policies and their effect on the homelands movement are discussed in other chapters of this report.

#### Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC)

3.15 The Aboriginal Development Commission was established in 1980. Its functions are outlined in legislation. In broad terms the function of the Commission is ' . . .to further the economic and social development of Aboriginals . . .'.<sup>12</sup> The policies of the Commission must conform with its functions as outlined in the Act.

3.16 In its submission and subsequent discussions with the Committee, the ADC indicated that it does not have any special function in relation to homelands, however its policies are directed towards improving the living conditions of Aboriginal people wherever they choose to live.<sup>13</sup> While the statement



suggests support for the homelands movement, the reality is that the ADC is not currently directing funds to homelands although there was some expenditure on homeland centres in the 1982/83 and 1983/84 financial years. The reasons given for the reduction in support after the 1983/84 financial year include funding restrictions and the view that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs has the responsibility for outstations.<sup>14</sup>

3.17 On the question of support for small enterprise projects on homelands, the Commission indicated that it is concentrating its enterprise program on projects which are deemed to be economically viable.<sup>15</sup> During the course of the Inquiry the Committee has received evidence suggesting that there is a potential to improve the economic circumstances of the homelands people, particularly in the arts and crafts industry. However, such projects may take some years before they become viable and even then the returns may not be great.

#### Department of Social Security

3.18 In addition to the initial assistance provided by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to help facilitate the move to traditional lands, the range of services available through the Department of Social Security is important to the continued stability and survival of the homelands movement (excluding Community Development Employment Program communities).

3.19 The Department has recently implemented a National Aboriginal Strategic Plan aimed at improving services, information dissemination, field services and to systematically reform legislative, clerical and procedural aspects of social security programs. This plan has important implications for the homelands movement given their remoteness and the communication problems experienced by many.

3.20 The objectives of this Plan and the support it offers in terms of its policies for homelands constitute an acceptance of the future of the homelands movement and the aspirations of its Aboriginal participants. There is, however, an area which requires further consideration and this is in regard to the distribution of benefits and the completion of forms which are required in order to receive benefits. At the present moment outstation resource staff or staff funded by other departments or agencies, fill that role with very little if any support from the Department of Social Security. This often places strains on what can only be termed scant administrative support services. The Committee addresses this problem in more detail in Chapter 8 of this report.

#### Department of Employment and Industrial Relations

3.21 In its submission to the Committee, the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations indicated that it is concerned with the employment and economic needs of Aboriginals including those who choose to live on homelands.

3.22 In August 1986 the Commonwealth Government launched the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) which is aimed at changing the current thrust of government policy from one of Aboriginal dependence upon government welfare oriented assistance to one of improving the economic independence of Aboriginal people. The AEDP includes three programs which are relevant to the homelands movement including an Enterprise Employment Assistance Program administered by the Department. It is interesting to note that the overall policy reflects support of the homelands movement but perhaps more importantly enables Aboriginals who chose to live on homelands to have the right of access to programs which could lead to less dependence on government welfare programs. The Committee discusses this approach and its associated programs in Chapter 8.

## Education portfolio

3.23 In its submission to the Committee the Commonwealth Department of Education indicated that it is involved with the development of policies and programs, in consultation with the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC), to help meet the future needs of homelands.<sup>16</sup> It also states that the concept of joint Commonwealth and State/Territory responsibility for funding homelands education has been proposed and the Department is, in principle, in favour of such arrangements but high costs are an important factor. The Department points out that the homelands movement raises a number of issues including the logistical problems of servicing small communities dispersed in a large geographical area.

3.24 The Department concludes that the fact that homeland schools are predominantly primary based will to some extent minimise demands for its services. There will, however, be some demand through its Aboriginal Secondary Assistance Scheme (ABSEC).

3.25 In terms of responsibility for the provision of educational services in homelands, the Commonwealth Schools Commission in its submission stresses that all children are the educational responsibility of the particular State or Territory in which they live. The responsibility for homeland area schools is also discussed by the Commonwealth Schools Commission and funds were provided under the Aboriginal element of the Commonwealth Capital Grants Program to provide classroom and associated facilities in homelands in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. The Commonwealth does, however, have a special responsibility for Aboriginals as a result of the constitutional amendment of 1967 and the Commission has recognised this responsibility through general resources and specific purpose programs to supplement those services provided by the States and Territory. This responsibility was recently

transferred to the Commonwealth Department of Education. The application of educational programs in homelands is addressed in more detail in Chapter 10 of this report.

3.26 The National Aboriginal Education Committee also presented a submission to the Committee which indicated that it was responsible for providing advice on the educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the appropriate methods of meeting those needs. It stated that the delivery of education to homeland centres in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and parts of Queensland was totally inadequate due to political decisions which were couched in economic argument. The need to demonstrate commitment by homeland groups was cited as an example of economic pressures which influenced the delivery of services. The NAEC summarised this point with the following statement:

There would be no other group in Australia asked to demonstrate and commit their scarce resources in order to obtain the delivery of a State education service.

The economic argument is also advanced by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, who claim that because of the high costs involved, Aboriginal children in homeland centres would not receive a complete school program. It is believed that this department pursued that line of argument to justify minimum expenditure to slow down the homeland movement.<sup>17</sup>

### The role of State and Territory governments

3.27 In discussing the role of the State and Northern Territory governments the Committee notes the paucity of information which it has on the role of State governments in servicing homeland centres when compared with information on the Northern Territory. There are a number of reasons for this. State governments have provided few facilities and services to homeland

centres and expended little funding on homeland centre development. Their policies in relation to the homelands movement have been either limited or non-existent. By contrast, the Northern Territory Government has provided facilities and services to homeland centres, has spent its own funds in homeland centres and has given attention to policy development for the homelands movement. It is also important to note that most homelands people and communities are located in the Northern Territory and homelands people comprise a significant proportion of the total Northern Territory population. The populations of homeland centres are much less significant in the States and homelands people comprise a very small proportion of total State population. As a result of these factors the Committee received more extensive submissions from the Northern Territory Government than from any of the State governments, and many of the other submissions received concentrated on the situation in the Territory.

#### Queensland

3.28 During its visit to Queensland members of the Committee were told during informal discussions with the Queensland Minister for Community Services, Mr Katter, that the Queensland Government does not have a stated policy towards homeland centres. This was largely due to the lack of demand for the development of a specific homelands policy. However, Mr Katter informed the Committee that:

Aboriginal families (including extended family members) have been encouraged to set up and run their own cattle stations. Three groups are already doing this. This would seem to be a form of homelands policy. There is also a definite policy of promoting private ownership of cattle stations in Deed of Grant areas. The forms of ownership in these areas are almost identical to those offered to other sheep and cattle men in Queensland.<sup>18</sup>

3.29 Mr Katter also informed members of the Committee that the Queensland Government had made clear to groups, such as the Mapoon people, who wished to move out from established communities, that no form of assistance would be provided to them.<sup>19</sup>

### South Australia

3.30 No general statement of the South Australian Government's position was provided to the Committee. However, the South Australian Department of Community Welfare stated that it considered:

. . . that the development of Homeland Centres should be further supported both through the provision of establishment funds, funds for programmes and enterprises, and through the provision of essential services. Homeland Centres represent a significant vehicle for the strengthening (and in some cases, regeneration) of traditional Aboriginal society.<sup>20</sup>

The Department emphasised that its major difficulty lay in determining support and funding priorities which would ensure that assistance to particular homeland centres allowed them to achieve identifiable social and economic goals. It pointed to the need for homeland centres that were to receive assistance to be logistically viable at a reasonable cost, particularly with regard to availability of an adequate water supply, a traditional right to live at their chosen site and a demonstrated commitment to establish a permanent community.<sup>21</sup> It also emphasised the importance of not replicating the facilities and services of the larger communities in homeland centres, even though pressure for the provision of these would come.<sup>22</sup>

3.31 Despite the measure of support for the homelands movement evident in the Department of Community Welfare's

statement, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs indicated that all funding for essential services in Aboriginal communities, including homeland communities, in the north-west of South Australia was provided by the Commonwealth Government.<sup>23</sup>

### Western Australia

3.32 The broad policy objective of the Western Australian Government in respect of the homelands movement is developing. The Commissioner of the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority, Mrs Lundberg, stated that homeland groups were returning by choice to their land with the intention of long term settlement. She stated that both Commonwealth and State governments had an obligation to assist homeland communities and the State governments' policy in relation to newly tenured and emerging remote communities was to complement what the Commonwealth was doing with emphasis being given to the provision of essential services.<sup>24</sup>

3.33 Evidence presented to the Committee indicates a strong interest in developing homelands in certain parts of Western Australia, and some people have moved to traditional lands despite the hardships they are likely to face. As the Western Australian Government and the Commonwealth have recently agreed to a joint funding program over a five year period there is strong argument to suggest that the needs and aspirations of the homeland groups should be taken into account in the distribution of the \$100m funds which are to be provided to Aboriginals in Western Australia. The Committee was informed that this financial year the task force working on the five year program has included funding for essential services in outstations with part contributions from Commonwealth and State governments.<sup>25</sup>

3.34 Reference was also made to the role of local government in Western Australia in providing essential services to homeland centres. A number of homeland communities fall within the

boundaries of local government shires in Western Australia and the shires receive per capita grants from the Grants Commission for their total shire population including the residents of Aboriginal communities. However, the shires do not direct any funding to Aboriginal communities for the provision of essential services.<sup>26</sup>

### Northern Territory

3.35 The submission by the Northern Territory Government focusses on two key policy issues. The first of these is the division of responsibilities for homelands between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Government. This issue has been subject to considerable debate following self government in the Northern Territory and the matter was clarified to a large extent by the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Clyde Holding, when he wrote to the Northern Territory Government suggesting the following division of responsibilities:

Given that all State type functions formerly administered by the Commonwealth have already been transferred to your Government, the provision of services by the Territory should be viewed as a continuum which could begin with the provision of basic water supplies to outstation groups and would extend to the provision of a full range of essential/municipal services in established townships.<sup>27</sup>

The Northern Territory Government indicates that it accepts that it has a responsibility, within its financial capacity, to provide essential services to all its citizens.<sup>28</sup>

3.36 The second key aspect of the submission is with respect to the provision of essential services to homelands and the establishment of standards of services to the homelands. The standards proposed include a stable clean water supply, basic toilet and ablution facilities with septic operation in



communities of more than 100 people, a rudimentary solar facility for communal lighting in communities with fewer than 50 people, a basic generator for communal facilities in communities of 50-100 people, garbage disposal with basic collection service in communities of over 100 people, and access roads and airstrips.<sup>29</sup> The Northern Territory Government is critical of the Commonwealth on this issue in that it states:

It has not proved possible to get the Commonwealth to express an opinion on the suitability or otherwise of these standards . . . It is recognised that in the context of the longer term development of the homeland centres, policy objectives and appropriate standards need to be established in other areas of government services apart from essential services.<sup>30</sup>

3.37 The Northern Territory Government refers to three other aspects of servicing homelands which cause difficulties in providing support. The first of these is in relation to the level of commitment to homelands and the mobility of homeland residents. There are examples given of abandoned homeland centres, due often to deaths in the community, which lead to a deterioration of assets.<sup>31</sup>

3.38 In view of this mobility the Northern Territory Government categorises homeland centres into two distinct groups. Firstly there are the permanent communities and, secondly, the seasonal camps or visiting places. In discussing this point, the Northern Territory Government also refers to the movement of Aboriginal people across State borders.<sup>32</sup> It argues that in some circumstances the Territory provides services for Aboriginals from other States. While this point is probably correct, figures are not provided to indicate how many people would be involved. Similarly, there is the question of how many Northern Territory Aboriginals move to other States for periods of time. Such a movement has certainly occurred in the movement of the Pintupi from Papunya to Kintore and now further west on to

homelands in Western Australia. This sort of movement is going to require co-operation between Commonwealth and State and Territory authorities.

3.39 The second aspect concerns the duplication of services which has resulted from the homelands movement as some people, for whom services had been provided at major communities, have relocated to homelands and sought further assistance to develop their homelands.<sup>33</sup> While there is no doubt that this situation has occurred, duplication of services can be accepted as a valid argument only if the major communities are left with an over abundance of abandoned facilities and there was little evidence to support this argument during visits to communities.

3.40 The role of outstation resource organisations is the third aspect of difficulties posed by the Northern Territory Government in servicing homelands. According to the Northern Territory Government, the fact that these organisations are funded by the Commonwealth causes complications in the co-ordinated planning and provision of services in homelands due to the involvement of both Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government agencies. The submission, in focussing on this point, suggests that an alternative solution would be for the Northern Territory Government to administer the funding arrangements for homeland resource centres.<sup>34</sup> It appears that the future role of outstation resource agencies will be subject to further debate as the Northern Territory Government provided the Committee with a report by Professor David Turner entitled "Transformation and Tradition", which supports a Community Government Scheme for Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory encompassing Community Government associations to which operational funds will be directed. The scheme also proposes to include homeland centres. The relevance of the proposal and its effect on homelands are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

3.41 This broad examination of the Northern Territory Government's policies in respect of homelands shows that it has given support to the movement. The degree of support varies and there remains the underlying principle which was espoused during the course of this Inquiry when officials stated that while the Northern Territory Government was prepared to provide some assistance to homelands, its priority in terms of funding was to provide facilities and services to established Aboriginal communities.<sup>35</sup> More specific details on programs of support for homelands are addressed in other chapters of this report.

### Conclusion

3.42 This review of the existing policies of agencies and departments involved in the homelands movement indicates that while the Commonwealth, through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and other Federal departments and agencies, has supported the homelands movement by developing broadly supportive policies and guidelines, the States and Northern Territory have been reluctant to divert significant resources to homeland centres even though they often express support for the movement. In the case of the Northern Territory there is an acceptance of responsibilities, particularly in respect to the provision of essential services. However, given the significant proportion of the territory's Aboriginal and total population which live on homeland centres a high level of support would be expected.

3.43 Remoteness, the lack of potable water, transport needs, communication requirements, facilities for basic health and hygiene, and assistance with educational services are some of the major issues that agencies involved in the homelands movement need to consider in terms of future policy options, and funding is a critical consideration that could inhibit the growth of the movement or allow it to develop. Problems have also been caused by the lack of an adequate division of responsibilities between Commonwealth and State and Territory governments in this important area of Aboriginal affairs.

3.44 The difficulties and confusion which have developed in the implementation of current policies indicate a need to review existing policies in order to streamline the delivery of support to these communities. Existing policies, while generally supportive of the homelands movement, do not appear to take account of the dynamics of the movement and the rapid changes which have taken place. There has been a tendency to emphasise the traditional nature of the movement (which the Committee documented in Chapter 1 of this report) and use this to justify the provision of inadequate services to homeland communities. As the Committee points out in Chapter 5, there is not necessarily an incompatibility between the traditional nature of the homelands movement and the demand of homelands people for the provision of a reasonable range of facilities and services. It is equally unacceptable for departments and agencies to use existing policies which emphasise the provision of basic facilities to justify a level of support that is below acceptable standards.

3.45 The policies and operational methodology of support agencies, both Commonwealth and State and Territory, discussed in this chapter also point to a need for refining or clarification of agency responsibilities. These matters are discussed at some length in Chapter 6. However, before proceeding to these points it is necessary to consider the future of the movement and its likely influence upon the Aboriginal Affairs Portfolio. This point is discussed in the next chapter.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Transcript of Evidence, p. S388.
- 2 Transcript of Evidence, p. S305.
- 3 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1637.
- 4 Transcript of Evidence, p. S389.
- 5 Transcript of Evidence, pp 1637-38.

- 6 Transcript of Evidence, p. S642.
- 7 Transcript of Evidence, p. S352.
- 8 Transcript of Evidence, p. S372.
- 9 Transcript of Evidence, p. S316.
- 10 Transcript of Evidence, p. S354.
- 11 Transcript of Evidence, p. S390.
- 12 Transcript of Evidence, p. S575.
- 13 Transcript of Evidence, p. S581.
- 14 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 439-41.
- 15 Transcript of Evidence, p. 444.
- 16 Transcript of Evidence, p. S557.
- 17 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1587.
- 18 Letter from the Hon. R.C. Katter, M.L.A., Queensland Minister for Northern Development and Community Services, to Chairman, dated 24 March 1987.
- 19 Hansard Precis, Brisbane, 11 September 1986. pp. 1-2.
- 20 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1715.
- 21 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S1715-16.
- 22 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1712.
- 23 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 1096 and 1102.
- 24 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 1134 and 1153.
- 25 Transcript of Evidence, p. 1134.
- 26 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 1135, 1151-52 and 1211.
- 27 Transcript of Evidence, p. S759.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Transcript of Evidence, p. S769.
- 30 Transcript of Evidence, p. S760.
- 31 Transcript of Evidence, p. S765.

- 32 Transcript of Evidence, p. S763.
- 33 Transcript of Evidence, p. S764.
- 34 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S762-65.
- 35 Transcript of Evidence, p. 602.

## CHAPTER 4

### FUTURE OF THE HOMELANDS MOVEMENT

#### Introduction

4.1 The movement of Aboriginal people to homeland centres has now been proceeding for about 15 years and shows no sign of decline. In fact there is evidence that the movement has been expanding rapidly in the last five years. The Committee cited figures in Chapter 1 indicating that at 30 June 1981 there were 165 homeland centre communities with a total population of 4,200 and that by late 1985 this had grown to an estimate of between 400 or 500 homeland centres with a total population of about 10,000.

4.2 It is likely that the movement will continue to grow significantly in the near future as in some areas the move to homeland centres is still in the process of development. A report on the homelands movement in the Western Desert in 1984 indicated that, of a catchment population of 2,000 Western Desert people, only about 500 had relocated back to homeland centres. It was anticipated that the population of the existing homeland centres in the Western Desert would grow, and that further homeland centres would develop as smaller groups splintered off from the larger groups.<sup>1</sup> A number of additional homeland centres have already been proposed in the Western Desert.<sup>2</sup> A representative of the Western Australian Office of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs told the Committee that there were signs of Jigalong and

La Grange communities breaking up and groups forming stronger and closer living arrangements with their own skin groups.<sup>3</sup> There is evidence that the homelands movement in other areas is still in the developmental stage and that further homeland centres will be established.

4.3 While the homelands movement is growing in some areas, it is also being consolidated in those areas where communities have been established for some time. People in these communities are demanding the provision of more sophisticated facilities and services indicating their desire to stay in, and develop, their communities. The consolidation and continued growth of the homelands movement indicates that it will be an important feature of Aboriginal affairs at least in the short to medium term.

4.4 But what of the long term future of the homelands movement? While it is impossible to state with any certainty what the long term future of the movement will be, there are a number of factors which point to a significant degree of permanency for the movement.

#### Aboriginal motivation

4.5 The Aboriginal motivation for establishing homeland centres has been an important driving force behind the movement. The desire of Aboriginal people to return and look after traditional country will continue. As was noted in Chapter 1, Aboriginal relationships to land create 'behavioural imperatives' drawing people back to their country. In its early stages of development the homelands movement is often dominated by older people who have a strong desire to return to traditional land from which, in many cases, they have been encouraged to move. In some areas, as is described in Chapter 2, there is still a predominance of older people in homeland centres. However, in many other areas the demographic structure of homeland centres now more closely corresponds to that of the population in



Aboriginal townships, indicating that younger people with families are moving to homeland centres. It should not then be expected that the movement will recede as the older people die although, as the Department of Aboriginal Affairs pointed out, the effect will probably be that some instability will occur as homeland centres are vacated for extended periods of mourning.<sup>4</sup>

4.6 A significant question will be whether young people will wish to live in homeland centres. There are strong attractions for young people in Aboriginal townships and non-Aboriginal towns and cities which will tend to draw them away from homeland centres. As Dr Altman noted, outstation life is both socially isolated and quiet for younger age cohorts.<sup>5</sup> However, there are a number of factors which will make homeland centres attractive to young people. If they grow up with their parents and grandparents on homeland centres and are brought up there in an environment where Aboriginal cultural values and practices are important and traditional associations with land are stressed, it can be expected that they will wish to continue to live there. If facilities and services are provided at homeland centres, the need and desire to live elsewhere to enjoy these will be reduced. These factors provide a basis for anticipating that young people may wish to continue to live in homeland centres despite the attractions drawing them away.

4.7 The then Northern Territory Minister for Community Development, Mr Barry Coulter, MLA, pointed to a twofold movement in the Territory, on the one hand from the major communities to homeland centres but on the other hand an urban drift from the major communities.<sup>6</sup> It could be suggested that this dual movement has, as a similar source, a dissatisfaction with life in the major communities. It points to the possibility that in future Aboriginal people may wish to live either in homeland centres or in urban areas according to their aspirations and that the major communities may become much less important. This movement

has significant implications for future funding of Aboriginal communities and this issue is addressed in later chapters.

4.8 Certainly there is significant evidence that Aboriginal people have been able to establish a more satisfactory lifestyle in homeland centres in economic, social and cultural senses than was possible in the centralised communities. People in homeland centres, because of their ability to supplement their cash income with 'bush tucker', also may be better off economically than people in the centralised communities.<sup>7</sup> However, additional cash income generating projects in homeland centres and measures to improve the return from subsistence production are required to maintain the economic viability of homeland centres. As long as the quality of life in the Aboriginal towns remains poor, it can be expected that Aboriginal people will wish to move to homeland centres.

4.9 While it would appear that the Aboriginal motives which have given rise to the homelands movement will continue to form a basis for the perpetuation of homeland communities, government policies will have an important effect on the long term future of the movement.

#### Government policy

4.10 The policy of government will be critical to the future of the movement. The Committee described earlier in the report how the policies and decisions of government have provided support and impetus to the motives of Aboriginal people to move back to their traditional lands. The enacting of land rights legislation in the Northern Territory, the change to a policy of self-determination and the increased access of homeland dwellers to social security payments (including unemployment benefits) have given an economic and land base for the homelands movement as well as support for Aboriginal people to decide what sort of

lifestyle they wish to lead. The provision of basic facilities to homeland centres has also assisted Aboriginal people wishing to make the move. The continued support of government is essential to the consolidation and growth of the movement. What government policy should be in relation to the movement is discussed in the next chapter.

4.11 Homeland communities are going to need to be provided with adequate levels of facilities and services if they are to have a secure long term future. A strong demand is already coming from the communities for the provision of facilities and services and this demand can be expected to grow as young people, who have spent most of their lives in Aboriginal settlements and townships and hence expect more in the way of facilities and services than many of the older people, move to homeland centres.

4.12 This desire for an adequate level of facilities should not be seen as incompatible with the traditional nature of the homelands movement. Dr Elspeth Young noted that the homelands movement is not a total return to traditional nomadic ways of life but is a settlement system which needs facilities and services.<sup>8</sup> Dr Borsboom, an anthropologist who has worked in Arnhem Land, also stated that Aboriginals in homeland centres do not wish to cut off relations with European society but seek to restructure their relations with the wider society in terms of their own cultural systems. Thus there is great demand in homeland centres for Western goods and services which facilitate the desire of Aboriginal people in these communities for flexibility and mobility.<sup>9</sup> Many European goods and services have then become important, if not essential, parts of the Aboriginal lifestyle in homeland centres and there will be a desire and an expectation that they be provided. The continuation of the movement will be dependent to a significant extent on the provision of these goods and services to homeland centre people.

## Nature of homelands movement in the future

4.13 Having established that the motivation for Aboriginal people to move to homeland centres will probably remain and that the movement will have a long term future if it is given appropriate support by government, it can then be asked what form the movement will take. The future direction of the homelands movement will govern the sort of demands it will make on government and the sort of policies and programs governments should pursue in relation to the movement. It is impossible to gaze into a crystal ball and state with any certainty what form the homelands movement will take as it is a dynamic movement and one whose future direction is very much in the hands of Aboriginal people. However, there are some pointers to the ways in which homeland centres will develop.

4.14 It was suggested in a submission from Mr Arthur, formerly an anthropologist with the Kimberley Land Council, that one way of looking at homeland centres was to think of them as being the early stages of the more fully developed Aboriginal communities which have a complete range of facilities and services.<sup>10</sup> Thus homeland centres and developed Aboriginal communities could be seen as part of a continuum with development moving from the relatively simple homeland centre to the more sophisticated community. According to this view homeland centres will eventually become developed Aboriginal communities after a period of transition.

4.15 There are a number of problems with this representation of homeland centre development, some of which Mr Arthur refers to. It is inappropriate to see homeland centres as 'simple' versions of communities. In establishing homeland centres Aboriginal people are trying to create something which is quite different from the established communities, rather than just a 'simple' version of these communities. As Dr Young stated, people in homeland centres are not seeking to replicate the situation in

the former government and mission settlements where the complexity of infrastructure and technology necessitates the employment of a number of skilled non-Aboriginal staff.<sup>11</sup> There may well in fact be no continuum between homeland centres and communities as they are quite different forms of residential grouping and Aboriginal people in homeland centres and communities have different aspirations. There is an implication in seeing a continuum from homeland centre to community, that the community is the final and ultimate form of Aboriginal dwelling in remote areas. In fact the major communities were often artificial creations designed to meet bureaucratic non-Aboriginal necessities and it may be that homeland centres provide a more durable and appropriate form of Aboriginal lifestyle.

4.16 A better representation of the development of the homelands movement is one that indicates the dynamic nature of homeland centre development and does not suggest that homeland centres will inevitably become like communities. The movement of people to homeland centres has been a process of the splintering of the larger established settlements and missions and the formation of smaller communities on or close to country for which Aboriginal people have responsibility. These newly formed communities can themselves then splinter or disappear as people move further to establish communities on their traditional country or establish communities which more closely reflect traditional residential patterns. Eventually, as Mr Arthur points out:

It is likely that some degree of equilibrium will be reached when people were in smaller decentralised communities. This suggests that there could be an optimum size, or even formation, for a decentralised community.<sup>12</sup>

4.17 There is a good deal of evidence that this is the way homeland centres have developed, and will develop, particularly in desert areas where the communities into which Aboriginal

people have been grouped are a long way from people's traditional country. The Committee visited the communities of Blackstone, Jamieson and Wingellina which were originally homeland centres decentralised from Warburton. These communities are now becoming the bases and resource centres for further decentralisation as people establish homeland centres from them closer to country to which they have traditional attachment.<sup>13</sup>

4.18 The development of homeland centres from Papunya was similar. The Pintupi people who were brought in from the Western Desert to Papunya in the 1950s and 1960s began their return to their traditional country, hundreds of kilometres west of Papunya, by initially moving to Mt Liebig in 1978, only 80 kilometres west of Papunya. In 1981 they moved to Kintore, near the Northern Territory/Western Australian border and 275 kilometres west of Papunya, much closer to their traditional country. They are now using Kintore as a base and resource centre to decentralise into their traditional country and are establishing homeland centres at Muyingga, Tjitururrnga, Winparrku, Kiwirrkurra and other places.<sup>14</sup>

4.19 Similar developments are occurring in other areas of the Western Desert. The Punmu community, near Lake Dora, was established as a decentralised desert camp from Strelley in 1981. It grew rapidly in 1984 to a population of nearly 300 and now the community is supporting the development of further homeland centres.<sup>15</sup> The development of homeland centres from Jigalong and Wiluna are also seen as 'staging points' and initial base camps for further decentralisation.<sup>16</sup>

4.20 There is less evidence of similar staging of the decentralisation movement in tropical and sub-tropical areas of Arnhem Land and North Queensland. This is largely because there is less distance to traditional country and so there is not the same need to establish staging points to facilitate access to, and provision of goods and services to, homeland centres. The

equilibrium of smaller decentralised communities tends to be reached much sooner without having to go through a number of establishment and then splintering phases. However, the Committee visited Jimarda, a Burada outstation of Maningrida, from which people have decentralised to smaller communities in the vicinity. The Burada people told the Committee they wished to see Jimarda established as a resource centre for a number of Burada homeland centres. The Burada people indicated that they had a much closer affiliation with Jimarda than they had with Maningrida and considered Jimarda was a more appropriate location for a resource centre.<sup>17</sup> The process of progressive splintering of large communities in the development of the homelands movement is thus not confined to the desert areas. The Jimarda experience also indicates that in future Aboriginal people may wish other communities than the former settlements and reserves to be set up as resource centres for the decentralisation movement.

4.21 The above representation of community/homeland centre development also is valuable in looking at the way Aboriginal people have used and will use the two community types. The different community types will be used by Aboriginal people during different stages of their life cycle and to meet their differing needs for access to European goods and services as well as access to their traditional land and activities. Dr Young has pointed to how Aboriginal people's changing life circumstances will form the basis for their choice of residential situation:

Reasons for moving to homeland centres are complex and interdependent, and families generally have to consider many issues before deciding whether to go or whether to stay in the main settlements. Through time their circumstances change; children reach school age, old people require constant health care, widows remarry and some who were unemployed enter the wage force. Factors such as these may well cause those who have moved out to return. Similarly, while the desire to leave the central community may be strong and well established, the realisation of that desire may only become possible through changing life circumstances.<sup>18</sup>

4.22 Dr Altman also refers to the way in which Aboriginal people will utilise homeland centres at different phases during their lives so that 'while young people may leave outstations for a time (to live at townships or to attend school at larger urban centres) they return to marry and settle down at outstations.'<sup>19</sup> He noted that the appeal of outstation living for young married couples should not be under-emphasised.<sup>20</sup>

4.23 The populations of homeland centres should then be maintained, even though people will move into and out of them according to the circumstances of their lives. However, old people will tend to have a desire to live on their traditional country and thus will gravitate towards their homeland centres. They will form the core of the population of homeland centres. For young people there will be an element of choice involved between the access that they wish to have to a full range of European goods and services and the drawing power of their traditional country and traditional activities. For many the attraction of and responsibility towards traditional country will be difficult to resist, although they will probably also make demands of government for the provision of a reasonable level of facilities and services in the homeland centres.

4.24 Apart from permanent residence, people will use homeland centres for many other purposes. People will live in them temporarily to escape the tensions of life in the Aboriginal towns and settlements which will be their permanent base. They will use them as weekend and holiday camps and as bases for conducting ceremonies and other traditional activities. Homeland camps with water and basic facilities will also facilitate the travel of Aboriginal people through their traditional country on their way to other communities to attend ceremonies, meetings and other activities.

4.25 The nature of the homelands movement in future points to the importance of flexibility and sensitivity in the provision



of facilities and services. In the developmental stages of the movement in particular areas it will take some time before centres reach a certain stability and some preliminary and staging camps will be abandoned in this development process. Flexibility and mobility of service and facility provision should characterise this phase of homelands development. Eventually the homeland communities will stabilise and become demographically similar to the larger communities. At this point a significant degree of permanency can be expected in the communities and more permanent and substantive facilities and services should be able to be provided.

4.26 People will also use their homelands for a range of temporary purposes which will require the establishment only of impermanent camps. Once the priorities of the permanent homeland centres are met consideration should be given to a minimum of infrastructure being provided for this purpose with emphasis being placed on the provision of water. This sort of usage of homelands should not be ignored because of its impermanent nature. It will tie in closely with the utilisation of permanent homeland centres and with the development of a better quality of life for those in the established communities who wish to visit and look after their homelands.

4.27 While people in homeland centres will tend to have different aspirations for their communities from those of people living in the former government settlements and missions, clearly there will be continual movement of people between the two community types. Altman noted that it was important that outstations were not seen as individual communities but as part of an extended social network that included at least one Aboriginal township, with a continual flow of people between outstations and the larger communities.<sup>21</sup>

4.28 People will thus seek from both homeland centres and the established communities the means to improve life for

themselves and their children. As the Pitjantjatjara Council noted 'homelands can only properly constitute one important part of the overall strategy for the development of a higher quality of life'.<sup>22</sup> The established communities must also play an important part in improving life for Aboriginal people in remote Australia and this will largely be as resource centres for people living on, and seeking access to, their homelands. In some cases these communities may themselves become little more than the homeland centres of those for whom the area on which the community is located is their traditional country. Developments such as these would diminish the radical distinction which is often made between 'community' and 'homeland centre'. The Committee discusses the role of the central communities as resource communities for homeland centres in a later chapter.

#### Conclusion

4.29 The Committee's conclusion is that the homelands movement will be a long term feature of Aboriginal affairs. There is strong evidence that the motivation of Aboriginal people to move to homeland centres will remain. However, Aboriginal people will use homeland centres in a variety of ways which will affect the provision of facilities and services to them. The most important of these ways is as permanent communities in which Aboriginal people seek to build better lives for themselves. Even though it will be the desire of Aboriginal people to continue to live in homeland centres, the future of the movement will nevertheless be dependent to a significant extent on the continued support of government and the pursuit of appropriate policies and programs by government. It is to this that the Committee now turns.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Transcript of Evidence, p. S212.
- 2 Transcript of Evidence, p. S250.
- 3 Transcript of Evidence, p. 1208.
- 4 Transcript of Evidence, p. S301.
- 5 Transcript of Evidence, p. S485.
- 6 Transcript of Evidence, p. 228.
- 7 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S484-85.
- 8 Transcript of Evidence, p. S282.
- 9 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S265-66.
- 10 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S147-52.
- 11 Transcript of Evidence, p. S280.
- 12 Transcript of Evidence, p. S149.
- 13 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1823.
- 14 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1822.
- 15 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S214-15.
- 16 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S217 and S220.
- 17 Hansard Precis of Visit to Maningrida, 6 August 1986, p. 16.
- 18 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S272-73.
- 19 Transcript of Evidence, p. S485.
- 20 Altman, Addit. Info., February 1987, p. 6.
- 21 Altman, Addit. Info., February 1987, p. 5.
- 22 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1295.

## CHAPTER 5

### POLICIES TO CATER FOR HOMELAND CENTRES

#### Introduction

5.1 In Chapter 4 of this report the Committee concluded that the homelands movement has a significant future in the short term and is likely to be a long term feature in Aboriginal affairs. In this chapter the Committee comments on existing policies for the homelands movement and looks at issues which are relevant to policies for the future. It is also expected that agencies involved in the homelands movement will be able to examine the determinants of future policy and develop policies that not only reflect the aspirations of Aboriginal people involved in the movement, but also reflect a desire by government to accept a movement that can potentially provide long term social and financial benefits.

5.2 To support the needs and aspirations of those involved in the homelands movement there is a need for funding and service agencies at the Commonwealth, State and Territory levels to adopt appropriate policies which will enable Aboriginals who choose to move to these areas to do so, and to ensure that they are able to gain access to the range of facilities and services necessary for good health and well-being. If the homelands movement is to be supported at appropriate levels, then the points made in this chapter and those made in Chapter 3 concerning current policies must be examined by governments to ensure that policies take a

longer term view. This will include the development of suitable aims and objectives in consultation with Aboriginal people involved in the movement.

#### The range of future policies

5.3 Given the Committee's conclusion in Chapter 4 regarding the future of the homelands movement and the consequent need to implement appropriate and long term policies, it is important to consider the range of policy choices available to funding and service agencies which will assist them in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people who choose to participate in the movement. An observation of existing guidelines suggests that there is a strong tendency to determine policy options within the confines of available funds, however in this case the Committee feels that current funding levels should not be used as the principal measure or determinant of the choice of policies adopted for the future of the homelands movement.

5.4 Rather, the Committee suggests that the essential factor in determining an appropriate policy to cater for the developing homelands must be the benefits that Aboriginal people will gain socially, economically and physically from the movement and the benefits that this can in turn produce, in the longer term, in the reduced costs of administering other programs aimed at improving the social, economic and physical well-being of Aboriginal people.

5.5 Much of the difficulty in determining appropriate policies towards the homelands movement revolves around a fundamental dilemma in servicing homeland centres. This dilemma is created by the difficulties brought about by a policy of self-determination which encourages Aboriginal people to exercise a freedom of choice in their location, and the pressure this places on funding and resource agencies when Aboriginal people exercise self-determination by choosing to live in remote

communities. As Dr Young stated, in her submission, the central problem in terms of the approach to the homelands movement was 'how you determine that interface between the provision of services and people's choices of the area in which they wish to live'.<sup>1</sup>

5.6 The answer lies somewhere between the two extreme positions and it is a matter of determining the extent to which government is responsible for providing facilities and services to Aboriginal people who have chosen to move from larger communities, in which many of the facilities and services already exist, to small remote homeland communities. This point is a major theme of the submissions presented by State and Territory governments and in most cases they conclude that the Commonwealth must bear the bulk of costs of establishing and servicing these communities.<sup>2</sup> The descriptions of existing policies in Chapter 3 indicate that policies and guidelines have been adopted which tend to favour support but progress is restricted in the implementation of guidelines.

5.7 Consistent with the broad policy of self-determination, the future policies for the homelands movement will need to weigh up the social and physical benefits of the movement against the difficulties posed by the delivery of basic needs to homelands people. At one end of the spectrum lies the choice of providing no assistance at all and at the other end, full support in terms of facilities and services, to all groups regardless of where they locate themselves.

5.8 Growth of the movement and the diversity of needs, combined with the Committee's conclusions that the homelands movement will be a long term feature in Aboriginal affairs, calls for a discussion of the need to adopt policies for the homelands movement which will achieve a reasonable balance between the concerns of funding and service agencies and the particular needs of homelands people.

## Determinants of homelands policies

5.9 There are a number of specific factors which will influence where policies should be between the two extremes discussed in the previous section. In considering these factors it should be noted that they have been highlighted by many of the submissions presented to the Committee and represent some of the issues that are faced in the delivery of services and facilities to homelands, as well as the difficulties faced by Aboriginal people involved in the homelands movement in overcoming many of the problems they face.

### An Aboriginal initiative

5.10 In Chapter 1 the Committee discussed the history of the homelands movement and the fact that it is clearly an Aboriginal initiative which indicates that Aboriginals see the movement to homelands as important. This aspect is considered significant in the success of the movement as it reflects the importance Aboriginal people place on traditional lands and the fact that they have often been prepared to face hardship in order to fulfil traditional obligations and responsibilities to land. In considering this factor there is also the matter of broader policies including Aboriginal self-determination which places certain obligations on governments to support the movement as a choice of a significant proportion of Aboriginal people.

5.11 The Department of Aboriginal Affairs referred to the effects of earlier policies of centralisation and assimilation on Aboriginal people and culture. Many of the social problems evident in the larger communities have been attributed to inappropriate policies such as these and poor implementation.<sup>3</sup> There is little evidence to show that earlier policies improved the economic, educational, social and health standards of those toward whom the centralised policies were directed. Further, an analysis of the economic and social costs of these policies

against any benefits which they have generated would show that the costs have been significant compared to achievements. An examination of the way in which previous policies were imposed on Aboriginals in the past provides policy developers with some important elements which would add to the success of future policies for the homelands movement. Of prime importance is the need for consultation with the people toward whom the policies are directed.

#### Aboriginal aspirations

5.12 The extent of assistance required by homeland groups varies considerably and is affected by climate and the availability of natural resources. The requests can be for a range of facilities and services that are of lesser standard than those which many small remote country towns and other communities throughout Australia take for granted. The Northern Land Council conducted research into the conditions at 10 areas where there are outstations serviced by resource organisations. The results indicate that not only are the expectations of homelands people diverse but the application of services and infrastructure is varied. The Northern Land Council concluded that:

Governments should make services available to outstation communities on a basis of equity with the broader population.<sup>4</sup>

It has also been suggested that by choosing to live in homeland centres Aboriginal people are altering the cost/benefit factor in that for relatively low cost, significant social and other benefits are emerging through the homelands movement as Aboriginal people, who establish on traditional lands, are better placed to develop and adapt to a lifestyle which gives them a greater say in the interface between Aboriginal culture and the non-Aboriginal society.<sup>5</sup>



## Effects on larger communities

5.13 It has been suggested that the homelands movement is of benefit not only to those who move out to their homelands, but also to those who remain in the larger communities. Dr Young, in referring to the reasons for the movement to homeland centres, stated:

. . . it is noticeable that the establishment of homeland centres during the last 8 years has not only reduced the population of the central settlement but it has also made life in that settlement more peaceful.<sup>6</sup>

5.14 Where the homelands movement is strong there is evidence to support the comments made by Dr Young which indicate that conditions of the larger Aboriginal communities do improve as social tensions are reduced. The incidence of overcrowding of limited resources is also lowered. Factors such as these are difficult to measure in terms of cost effectiveness, but there is a considerable voice of opinion which suggests that cost savings could eventuate in areas of health service costs, law enforcement, and the cost of replacing or repairing items which are vandalised as a consequence of tensions which do seem to exist on the larger communities.

5.15 Other policy considerations raised by the substantial movement of population from major communities are enormous, and agencies involved in supporting Aboriginals and the homelands movement will need to address these effects. An examination of population movement from communities to homelands suggests that there have been substantial changes to the populations of communities such as Hermannsburg (Ntaria). Papunya, Maningrida and Yirrkala. For example, figures quoted in Chapter 2 for the Maningrida region showed that, of a regional population of 1700, over 1000 spent at least some time in outstations and over 500

were living permanently in outstations. In this example we gain an insight into the numbers of people who are currently involved in the homelands movement and this substantial movement to homelands is evident in many of the other areas that the Committee visited. The question which remains unanswered is. how many Aborigines, if given the choice, will remain in the larger communities?

5.16 The funding aspects of this issue are discussed in Chapter 6 of this report. However, the Committee believes that agencies at all levels need to examine this point in some detail in order to ensure that funding programs and policy directions for the larger communities take account of the shift in population. There is a need to ensure that current State and Territory policies, which tend to favour the larger communities. are not maintained just because of established practices which may provide the most benefit, in terms of administration, to the funding or service agency.

#### Funding implications

5.17 The issue of funding is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6 of this report, however funding is a consideration in determining future policy direction. The Northern Territory Government summarised the difficulties the homelands movement poses for funding agencies in the following statement:

The homeland movement continues to expand but with some diversity dependent upon the aspirations of different groups, and expectations from funding authorities . . . The number of groups seeking a greater level of service has increased. The amount required to establish, develop and service homeland centres, has risen dramatically over the past ten years. A major constraint to the further provision of adequate services to homeland centres is the lack of funds.<sup>7</sup>

5.18 It is clear that the cost of increasing support will be higher than existing funding permits. These costs will result from an increased number of outstations, particularly if the excisions currently being negotiated in the Northern Territory are concluded in the near future. There also appears to be a greater demand for facilities and services which are currently not available to outstations. The survey conducted by the Northern Land Council highlights the limited range of services and facilities which are currently available in many of the homeland centres, and the Pitjantjatjara Council also referred to the need for increased support.<sup>8</sup>

5.19 To an extent the Commonwealth Government has attempted to overcome some of these inadequacies by, for example, accelerating the Northern Territory water program by an extra \$1m.<sup>9</sup> However, given that there are an estimated 10 000 Aboriginal people living on 400 to 500 homeland centres, outstations or pastoral excisions, funding at present levels is not considered sufficient to enable any future growth of the movement nor is it likely to enable State or Territory Governments to provide a satisfactory standard of facilities and services for existing homelands. In examining the future policy options for this movement there is little point in adopting policies which encourage Aboriginal people to move to homelands if appropriate levels of support are not available.

#### **Social impact of fully developing homelands**

5.20 In considering the future support of the homelands movement the possibility of developing mini communities with the potential of recreating the social problems and the lack of independence which exists on many of the larger communities needs to be addressed. The South Australian Department of Community Welfare argued that there will always be some pressure for homeland centres to replicate the facilities and services of the

larger communities but this may 'undermine the aspirations to a more stable and autonomous community life which prompted the move to Homeland Centres in the first place.'<sup>10</sup>

5.21 The considerations for policy developers in terms of providing resources and services to homeland centres are the aspects of Aboriginal lifestyle that are unique and sometimes difficult for support agencies to fully understand. It is not the facilities and services themselves which homelands people are attempting to avoid by moving to homeland centres, but all that has been seen as necessary to attend the provision of facilities and services and the often insensitive way in which such facilities and services have been provided. It is therefore important that agencies involved in the development of homelands do so in a manner which is compatible with the wishes of the people concerned rather than an imposed development plan. This can be done by reducing the complexity of infrastructure and technology and by closely consulting homelands people about their needs and then endeavouring to meet those needs.

#### Permanency

5.22 Most funding agencies, who deal with the homelands movement, categorise homelands in two ways. There are those that are regarded as stable and fully committed and there are those where residence is limited to the point that the centre is regarded as a holiday camp. By contrast, Aboriginal people have a different perception of commitment which is connected with their relationships to land which create obligations for them to look after the land. Fulfilment of these obligations may, or may not, require permanent residence.

5.23 The Department of Aboriginal Affairs uses the following guideline in the implementation of support for homelands:

Projects to be supported at homeland centres should not include capital works of a permanent nature until it is clear that the relevant group intends to remain permanently at the site. Where a basic water supply is an essential pre-requisite for settlement this should be provided if there is a clear intention, on the part of the group, to settle more or less permanently at the site.<sup>11</sup>

5.24 The Western Australian Government stated that the allocation of services will vary according to a number of factors including the wishes of the group and its commitment to the relocation; an assessment must be made about the likely permanence of the homeland settlement.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the Northern Territory Government seeks to determine the commitment of a group to re-settle in their own country and their clearly demonstrated desire to remain. It suggests that the matter of permanent relocation has proved to be somewhat ambitious for many groups as they have been unable to sustain their commitment and return often for long periods to the main centre.<sup>13</sup>

5.25 The Northern Land Council examined this point and in Chapter 2 the result of a survey they conducted showed that there are many reasons why outstation communities return to central communities. Dr Altman also addressed this point in his submission when he stated:

Over the past decade, outstation groups have shown a commitment to stay at outstation locations year-round. This does not mean that populations have been static; there has, and continues to be, a high mobility both between outstations and between outstations and Aboriginal townships. Today this high mobility is recognised as an integral part of Aboriginal social behaviour.<sup>14</sup>

5.26 This aspect of Aboriginal social behaviour will obviously need to be considered in the context of policy options for the future of the homelands movement. However the factors

that are revealed in the Northern Land Council survey also indicate that commitment or an assessment of the likely permanence of a group is difficult to determine unless appropriate facilities are available. It is evident that in some cases facilities and services are so poor that travel is necessary in order to gain access to health services, education and food supplies. As noted in Chapter 3, the effect of current assessments of the permanency of a group before facilities and services can be provided appears harsh and unrealistic. The South Australian Aboriginal Housing Board claimed that current Department of Aboriginal Affairs policy appeared inflexible on this point. The approach seemed to be to say to homeland communities:

'Go and sit on your homeland for two years, and if you can really prove to us that you want to stay there, we might come along from behind and help you with something'. That is very hard indeed at times.<sup>15</sup>

There is a need for some balance and humanity in assessing the commitment and permanency of homeland groups.

#### Problems of locations of homeland centres

5.27 In Chapter 2 the Committee discussed locations of homelands and the distances that many are from the larger communities or townships. The distance and remoteness poses some problems in servicing homelands and they are perhaps best summarised by the following statement by the Western Australian Government:

Western Australia has particular problems in providing services to remote communities, even those which are permanently established, as the State has an enormous land area over which groups are widely dispersed and in most areas there is no existing service infrastructure . . . The government expects that any groups considering relocating will take into account the need to

choose a site which has a water supply located nearby. It does not consider it reasonable that water should be delivered over long distances to small groups.<sup>16</sup>

5.28 In Chapter 1 the Committee discussed the cultural aspects of the homelands movement and the fact that most homeland people move to areas of traditional significance or to land for which they, through Aboriginal custom, are responsible. The problems that this poses for service agencies are reflected not only by the Western Australian Government but also by other service departments and agencies. The Northern Territory and Western Australian Governments point to the high costs involved, particularly in remote arid areas where locating a potable water supply is extremely difficult and costly. In some cases where these costs are high, homelands people may have to compromise on the locations of homeland centres.

5.29 Dr Altman addressed this point during discussions with the Committee when he stated:

There is a principle that somehow the Government has to decide and that is; do all Australians have equal rights to services irrespective of where they live? If they do not, what sort of limits are going to be placed on people who decide to live in the middle of the desert? I do not see any problems with stating these limits to Aboriginal people, especially in the desert area where people have variable rights to land. They really do not, I believe, need to be at one specific location . . . If it is stated, for instance, that there is no water there, that is obviously a locational disadvantage and people have to be told that water will not be provided in that place.<sup>17</sup>

Dr Altman points to policy makers presenting people with realistic options and this would appear to be the most appropriate approach.

5.30 The Committee is aware from its discussions with homeland groups that they are prepared to compromise their location of homeland centre sites if excessive costs or difficulties in servicing their preferred sites make it an unrealistic option. All of the problems posed by the remoteness of homeland centres cannot be overcome but early planning and research into matters such as the availability of suitable water would prove to be both cost effective and justified from an administrative point of view.

#### Summary of policy considerations

5.31 The considerations for future policies discussed in this chapter provide some insight into the diverse nature of the homelands movement. We have discussed the two extreme options and the need to find a balance between the extremes. In examining the determinants of policies and the future of the movement the Committee endorses the central policy objective of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs as outlined in its guidelines statement. Their policy objective encapsulates the broader policy of self-determination in that it enables 'Aboriginals, who wish to do so, to establish and maintain small communities on their own land. or on land to which they have a right of occupation, where they are free to follow a lifestyle of their choice.' The Committee, however, feels that, as a result of a consideration of the policy determinants discussion in this chapter, there is room for improvement in the implementation of this central policy objective.

5.32 The Inquiry and the visits it has made to a number of different areas has given the Committee the chance to examine the results of current policies towards homelands. The Committee has noted quite diverse interpretations of those policies. There are obviously a number of aspects of Aboriginal culture that funding and service agencies need to come to terms with and this points



to a need for some 'give and take' at both levels. Government departments and agencies have indicated a recognition of Aboriginal traditions.

5.33 The broad policies of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs are widely used to reflect Commonwealth support for the homelands movement, but even this Department needs to examine its policy guidelines to determine that the aspirations of Aboriginal people for the longer term are reflected. It, along with other departments and agencies, also needs to ensure that homeland people are not discriminated against or that policies while broadly supportive make provision for a level of support that is consistent with those of other Australians in remote locations. The difficulties, dilemmas and problems that have been encountered are well documented in this and previous chapters of this report, but there are obviously some very positive benefits that can be achieved.

5.34 Mr Charles Perkins, Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, pointed to some of these benefits when he stated:

The outstation movement is very, very beneficial in getting out of that back to their own country in order to be able to be more independent, and more creative, to be able to accept their responsibilities and exercise authority in the appropriate way so that the younger people can learn as a consequence of that . . . People are going back to places they are familiar with. It is their country; it is their dreaming place; that is where they belong; and so from there they can start a number of other things. They can look at what options are available to them; what opportunities are available; what the good and bad things are in white society. It is a breathing space.<sup>18</sup>

5.35 In order to overcome the difficulties associated with servicing the outstation movement the development and

implementation of appropriate policies are suggested. They could well lead to a further growth in the movement, but perhaps more importantly they will enable existing homelands to stabilise.

5.36 Improved support for the movement must, however, be tempered by the factors outlined in this chapter. Clearly, unlimited additional funding is not going to be available to support the movement given the current economic climate. But on the other hand, confused, restrictive and, in some cases, ad hoc support is not appropriate either. The Committee suggests that governments consider improving the level of support in two ways. Firstly, existing policies and levels of support should be assessed to determine their usefulness and the effect they are having on the homelands movement. Secondly, improved support in terms of appropriate policies and additional funds appear necessary.

5.37 The homelands movement is here to stay and sufficient funds need to be made available to meet at least minimal objectives. The implementation of this approach will require close co-operation and co-ordination between the respective governments, homelands groups and resource agencies. The Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs will need to play a major role in these two key areas as the Committee proposes in the next chapter. There will also need to be clear arrangements whereby each agency is aware of its responsibility towards homeland centres and this is also discussed in the next chapter.

#### Implementation of policies

5.38 Implementation of suitable policies will require some alteration to the program guidelines for homelands to reflect more flexibility and an increase in support. In particular, the requirement for a commitment needs to be defined in more detail as the current wording leaves interpretation open to each of the

funding agencies. Policies should also reflect the division of responsibility between the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments which is proposed in the next chapter.

5.39 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs redraft its Program Guidelines to establish appropriate policies that take account of the aspirations of homeland groups, including those on pastoral properties, and the parameters within which it is prepared to accept the aspirations of the homeland groups; and
- . other Commonwealth Government departments and agencies involved in providing programs to homeland communities develop policy guidelines for the provision of services to homeland centres that reflect the positive nature of the movement.

5.40 The development of appropriate policies has already been raised in this chapter. The Northern Territory Government has developed some policies towards the homelands movement however, as with most of the States, it prefers to support the larger communities rather than the diverse and costly homelands movement. A need therefore exists to develop State and Territory policies which reflect support for the movement in accordance with the wishes of Aboriginal people and the policies of self-determination.

5.41 The Committee recommends that:

- . The Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs consult with State and Territory Governments about the development of appropriate policies and standards towards homeland centres which reflect the positive nature of the movement and the desire of governments to support the movement.

5.42 The question of funding is critical to the approach which the Committee considers should be adopted towards the homelands movement. It is to this matter that the Committee now turns.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Transcript of Evidence, p. 411.
- 2 Transcript of Evidence, p. S554.
- 3 Transcript of Evidence, p. S293.
- 4 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1570.
- 5 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 263-4.
- 6 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S271-72.
- 7 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S759-60 and S770.
- 8 Transcript of Evidence. p. S1308.
- 9 Transcript of Evidence, p. 203.
- 10 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1712.
- 11 Transcript of Evidence, p. S194.
- 12 Transcript of Evidence, p. S55.

- 13 Transcript of Evidence, p. S763.
- 14 Transcript of Evidence. p. S483.
- 15 Transcript of Evidence, p. 1019.
- 16 Transcript of Evidence. pp. S549 and S551.
- 17 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 978-79.
- 18 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 27 and 30.

## CHAPTER 6

### FUNDING OF HOMELAND CENTRES

#### Introduction

6.1 In this chapter the Committee focusses on existing funding arrangements for homeland centres and the cost implications of increasing support for the homelands movement. In the previous chapter the Committee recommended that Commonwealth agencies involved in supporting homeland centres develop appropriate policies and programs to reflect stronger support for the movement. It was also recommended that the States and Northern Territory develop policies and standards which reflect the positive nature of the homelands movement and the desire of these governments to support the movement. The effect of additional policy support is likely to lead to the need for an increase in the level of funding support for homeland centres. This poses some problems for support agencies, particularly in the current economic climate where the allocation of additional funding in the welfare area is difficult to achieve.

6.2 Given the range of factors discussed in earlier chapters which suggest that there are long term social and economic benefits which could result from government support for the homelands movement, the Committee has undertaken an assessment of funding implications. The current emphasis by the Commonwealth Government on Aboriginal economic independence is a matter that the Committee pursued during the course of the

Inquiry, as it may be suggested that the homelands movement is a retrograde step which could result in Aboriginal people developing a greater dependence on the welfare system. This report will hopefully dispel such suggestions and the recommendations in this and other chapters are considered relevant and important aspects of the move away from welfare dependency to the enhancement of economic independence.

#### Current funding arrangements for homelands

6.3 The cost of developing and supporting the homelands movement to date has largely been left to the Commonwealth Government. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs indicated that the movement to outstations gained momentum in the early 1970s as both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal authorities concluded that the former administrative policies of gathering people together in artificial settlements did not always work. In 1972, when the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established, it was decided to 'take the lid off' the Aboriginal settlements and missions in the Northern Territory by making it clear to Aboriginal people that, under the then Labor Government's policy of self-determination, Aboriginal people would be free to determine their own affairs. Commonwealth Governments since then have provided similar support and the homelands movement has expanded as policies have developed to assist Aboriginal people who chose to become part of the movement.<sup>1</sup>

#### Commonwealth Government

6.4 The Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs maintains the primary support role for homelands and its broad policies and operational guidelines, which are outlined in Chapter 3, indicate its funding priorities. (See also its statement of Guidelines on Outstation Funding, Appendix 6) In its submission the Department indicates that it has provided the following support to homelands:

A wide range of items are funded under the Outstations program including capital items such as building materials, water tanks, pumps, vehicles and radios as well as recurrent costs including administration costs, wages, fuel, repairs and maintenance. Some funds provided to larger communities may also benefit their associated outstations.

As outstation communities' needs for essential services of a capital nature are being met, DAA funding emphasis is shifting to support for outstation resource centres and agencies.<sup>2</sup>

6.5 In the 1985/86 financial year the Department provided direct grants to homelands totalling just over \$5 m. This, when compared with the 1983/84 financial year allocation of \$1.74 m, indicates an increased level of support for the homelands movement.<sup>3</sup> The change in emphasis from capital assistance for homeland centres to recurrent assistance for outstation resource organisations is also evident. In the 1983/84 financial year nearly 74 per cent of the Department's outstation program was for capital expenses. In 1986/87 this had fallen to about 37 per cent of total outstation expenditure. The following tables, provided by the Department, give an indication of the funding levels provided in each of the four years 1983/84 to 1986/87.

TABLE 3

1983/84 : OUTSTATIONS PROGRAM

Region	Capital \$	Recurrent \$	Total \$
Queensland	87,500	12,500	100,000
Western Australia	402,230	148,852	551,082
Northern	472,663	159,611	632,274
Central	323,409	135,112	458,521
Total	1,285,802	456,075	1,741,877



1984/85 CM&S : OUTSTATIONS PROGRAM

Region	Capital \$	Recurrent \$	Total \$
Queensland	4,600	106,500	111,100
South Australia	38,384	-	38,384
Western Australia	306,401	38,300	344,701
Northern	1,039,824	1,233,775	2,273,599
Central	920,892	1,539,213	2,460,105
Total	2,310,101	2,917,788	5,227,889

1985/86 CM&S : OUTSTATIONS PROGRAM

Region	Capital \$	Recurrent \$	Total \$
Queensland	3,500	156,200	159,700
South Australia	1,100	22,700	23,800
Western Australia	5,500	44,500	50,000
Northern	1,127,200	1,544,200	2,671,400
Central	591,100	1,592,500	2,183,600
Total	1,728,400	3,360,100	5,088,500

Source: Transcript of Evidence, p. S355.

1986/87 C&MS OUTSTATIONS & RESOURCE CENTRES PROGRAM  
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE

	CAPITAL \$	RECURRENT \$	TOTAL \$
QUEENSLAND	23,000	160,700	183,700
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	130,160	531,828	661,988
WESTERN AUSTRALIA	60,200	229,200	289,400
NT (NORTHERN)	937,970	1,939,330	2,877,300
*NT (CENTRAL)	1,166,880	1,081,990	2,248,870
TOTALS	2,318,210	3,943,048	6,261,258

\*Note: NT (Central) no longer includes portions of WA and SA. These areas are now administered by the respective State Offices.

Source: Transcript of Evidence, p. S1775.

6.6 Wherever possible the Department of Aboriginal Affairs encourages and, if necessary, assists State and Territory authorities to provide State-type services and infrastructure to homeland communities. In Chapters 3 and 5 the Committee pointed out that State governments have not fully accepted this responsibility while the Northern Territory Government, accepting its responsibility in this regard, argues that the Commonwealth should provide additional funds so that it can meet a standard of services and facilities which it regards as acceptable for homelands.

6.7 In addition to Department of Aboriginal Affairs funding for basic shelters in homeland centres, the Commonwealth provides funds for Aboriginal housing under the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement. This program is administered at the Commonwealth level by the Department of Housing and Construction and in South Australia and the Northern Territory some of these funds are directed to outstations through their Housing Commissions. The Aboriginal Development Commission provided some assistance to homelands under its housing grants programs in 1982/83 and 1983/84. However since the 1983/84 financial year it has not done so as it regards homelands as the responsibility of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.<sup>4</sup>

6.8 The Commonwealth Schools Commission has since 1984, provided funding assistance for school buildings in homeland communities. The program is now administered by the Commonwealth Department of Education in consultation with the National Aboriginal Education Committee.

6.9 Aboriginal people in homeland centres are also entitled to the full range of Commonwealth-funded social security benefits, including unemployment benefits, and these make an important contribution to the economies of homeland centres as will be seen in Chapter 8.

6.10 Commonwealth funding is also available to homelands people to assist in making their communities more economically independent. Homeland communities which wish to do so can receive Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) funding in lieu of their unemployment benefit entitlement. CDEP can be used by homelands people to support a range of productive activities in which they engage which enhance their lifestyle, including subsistence production. Homeland communities can also be assisted under two additional programs developed as part of the Commonwealth Government's Aboriginal Employment Development Policy to assist Aboriginal communities to establish income generating enterprises. These programs are the Community Employment Enterprise Development Scheme and the Enterprise Employment Assistance Program and they are described in more detail in Chapter 8.

6.11 The broad Commonwealth view on funding for homeland centres is that there is a basic responsibility that lies with the States and Northern Territory to provide facilities and services of an equivalent standard to all their citizens, including Aboriginal people who live in homeland centres. It is for this purpose that State and Northern Territory governments are provided with general revenue assistance from the Commonwealth. However, there is a recognition that the Commonwealth's legislative power in relation to Aboriginal people, gained as a result of the amendment to the Constitution following the 1967 Referendum, gives the Commonwealth a responsibility to provide for the special needs of Aboriginal people over and above the general provision made for Aboriginals by the States and Northern Territory. Where the division lies between these respective responsibilities and what it means in terms of the funding of particular programs is a matter for negotiation between the Commonwealth and the State or Territory involved.

## State and Northern Territory governments

6.12 As indicated in Chapter 3 the South Australian Department of Community Welfare stated that the homelands movement should be supported through the provision of establishment funds, funds for programs and enterprises and the provision of essential services. However, it did not state who should be responsible for funding these programs and essential services. No funding for essential services is provided to homeland centres by the South Australian Government.

6.13 The Western Australian Government stated that:

. . . it strongly holds the view that funds for the development and maintenance of physical services for homeland communities are clearly the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. The Western Australian Government accepts that though the major funding responsibilities should be the province of the Commonwealth, the actual delivery of the services to homeland communities will frequently be the responsibility of State Government agencies.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of education and health services the Western Australian Government states that the level of services provided to each homeland community should be the subject of consultation between the community and the relevant State government departments.<sup>6</sup>

6.14 Under the Western Australian Aboriginal Land and Community Improvement Program (WAALCIP) the Commonwealth and State governments have negotiated joint funding arrangements for the provision of infrastructure, land and services to improve the health and living standards of Aboriginal people in Western Australia. Funding assistance under the program is being provided for essential services in homeland centres.

6.15 The Northern Territory Government has recently established a standard of services for homeland centres and since 1983/84 it has increased funding support for these through its Minor Communities Town Management and Public Utilities Program (TMPU). Pastoral communities are also included in this program and, as the excisions groups are a priority group in respect of obtaining secure land tenure. the Northern Territory Government indicates that additional funding will be needed to support this program. The Northern Territory Government estimates that there may be up to 80 excisions negotiated over the next few years.<sup>7</sup>

6.16 From 1983/84 to 1985/86 the following funds were directed to the homelands movement in the Northern Territory for essential services:

TMPU	\$ 10.1 m
Aboriginal Essential Services	
Capital Works Program	<u>\$ 5.8 M</u>
Total	<u>\$ 15.9 m</u>

A total of \$5.6 m was directed towards the provision of water supplies for homeland centres.<sup>8</sup>

6.17 In regard to educational services, the Northern Territory Government notes the logistical and financial difficulties of providing a service to such small and isolated communities. It also notes the lack of definition of funding responsibility between itself and the Commonwealth Government, and between Commonwealth Government agencies.<sup>9</sup> In regard to funding health services for homelands, the Northern Territory Government emphasises the need for communities to assist themselves to meet simple health needs. In the case of more sophisticated health services the homeland centres still need to maintain contact with the main centre.

6.18 In Chapter 3 the Committee discussed the Northern Territory Government's position in regard to accepting responsibility for providing essential services to homelands. The important point in terms of its acceptance of responsibility to provide essential services to all its citizens, including homeland dwellers, is that it is made with a substantial qualification. The Northern Territory Government states that it accepts its responsibility 'provided that it receives adequate financial capacity to carry out its responsibilities'.<sup>10</sup> The Northern Territory Government has argued before the Commonwealth Grants Commission for the allocation of additional general revenue to enable it to provide its defined standard of essential services to homeland centres. The Northern Territory Government also states that the Commonwealth has committed it to very substantial spending through the Commonwealth's role in the 'seeding' phase of homelands. Responsibility is then passed on to the Territory Government to develop essential services and provide recurrent funding.<sup>11</sup>

6.19 The Northern Territory Government also points to increasing expectations by Aboriginal people on homelands for fully serviced and funded homeland centres and the cost implications. It notes that this represents a development from the original model which stressed 'self help' and the provision of very basic facilities.<sup>12</sup>

6.20 The Queensland Minister for Community Services made it clear during informal discussions that Aboriginal groups who choose to move from established communities will not be provided with assistance by the Queensland Government.<sup>13</sup> The Queensland Regional Office of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs indicated that the Queensland Government provides no direct funding to outstation communities.<sup>14</sup>

## Royalty payments

6.21 The Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account (ABTA), which was established under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, provides financial grants to Aboriginals in the Northern Territory. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs provided the following statistics which give an indication of assistance levels which were directed to outstations by the ABTA in 1983/84:

In 1983/84, the ABTA made grants totalling \$2 m. During that period 61.5% of all grants approved by the ABTA went to outstations and resource centres. A large proportion of ABTA grants have been made for the purpose of purchasing vehicles. Of all grants made by the ABTA to December 1982, 70% were for vehicle purchases. Between 1983 and 1984, however, the significance of vehicle grants declined to 46% of total grant value because the ABTA has been placing increased emphasis on grants of a longer term nature for community facilities, enterprises and property purchase.<sup>15</sup>

6.22 A moratorium was placed on the ABTA in 1984 following an inquiry which recommended substantial changes to the operation of the account. The moratorium was lifted in late 1986. The three categories for which grants will be considered are:

- **Traditional and cultural activities**

Priority will be given to applicants seeking assistance to promote and strengthen Aboriginal culture and identity; e.g. through the attendance at cultural festivals, publication of literature, and support of traditional lifestyles.

- **Social and recreational activities**

Priority will be given to proposals that encourage self-help, improve quality of life and assist in overcoming disadvantage, e.g. provision of community recreational facilities.

## Entrepreneurial and economic activities

Priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate prospects of developing the income potential of an Aboriginal group or community. Applications will only be considered after all other venues of assistance have been explored.

A maximum of \$1 m out of the total \$5 m to be allocated in 1986/87 will be provided for assistance in the purchase of vehicles. Homelands people may be able to benefit from ABTA in any of the three categories.

## Proposals for future funding arrangements

6.23 It is clear that the Commonwealth's view about funding for homeland centres differs from those of State and Northern Territory governments. It is the Commonwealth's view that it is the responsibility of State and Northern Territory governments to provide to homeland dwellers the general community services which they provide to all other citizens. At this stage, the States and the Northern Territory are not, according to the Commonwealth, adequately meeting these responsibilities.

6.24 The differing views of the States and the Northern Territory are based on the premises that the homelands movement is costly and as the Commonwealth has largely been responsible for stimulating the growth of the movement through its funding programs and the granting of land rights in the Northern Territory, it is unreasonable to expect the States and the Northern Territory to accept responsibility for the provision of essential services and other State-type services without the injection of substantial additional funds. The Northern Territory Government has been prepared to provide some support to the homelands movement but even its level of assistance is restricted to basic services and facilities which, in many cases, are well below those which are available to the broader community.



6.25 In order to come to a satisfactory conclusion on this matter there are two aspects that need to be considered. The first of these concerns the question of who is responsible for the provision of services and facilities to homelands. Secondly, there is the key question of who should pay for the homelands movement. A partial resolution to these matters is perhaps available after examining the determinants of policy in the previous chapter. The factors which the Committee discussed in that chapter point to a growth in the homelands movement and a need for funding agencies to examine existing programs to determine how they can lead to an improvement in the social, physical and cultural growth of Aboriginal people.

6.26 With regard to the first matter of responsibility for the provision of services and facilities to homelands, there is an acceptance by most States and certainly the Northern Territory that they do have a responsibility to provide Aboriginal people with facilities and services but support for homelands seems, for all of the States, to pose particular problems.

6.27 The Northern Territory Government addressed the question of respective Commonwealth and Territory responsibility for funding of facilities and services to homeland centres at some length in its submission. It was claimed by the Northern Territory Government that much of the growth in the outstation movement in the Territory has taken place since the granting of self-government in 1978, but this acceleration in the movement, it was claimed, has been given impetus by decisions, particularly the implementation of land rights, taken by the Commonwealth Government before self-government.

6.28 According to the Northern Territory Government, the Commonwealth is still the engine for growth of the homelands movement because of its role in the establishment of new centres through the identification of homeland communities which have stability and a commitment to a particular site. There is an

implication in the arguments of the Northern Territory Government that because it is Commonwealth decisions made before and following self-government in the Territory which have given impetus to the homelands movement, there is a significant responsibility on the Commonwealth to provide additional funding assistance to meet this need.

6.29 The Northern Territory Government also claims that a great deal of confusion about respective responsibility for funding of homeland centres has been caused by the history of their development. The Commonwealth, while disclaiming responsibility for providing recurrent funding for essential services to homeland centres, has provided assistance of this sort through the funding provided to outstation resource centres. As a result of this confusion, the Northern Territory Government claimed that it had 'been reluctant to step into this area'.<sup>16</sup>

6.30 The Northern Territory has asked the Grants Commission to recommend that it be given the financial capacity to continue a phased implementation of its proposed standards in homeland centres through a mechanism which ensures that these needs are reflected in the Territory's tax sharing entitlements. To the extent that the Commonwealth funding to homeland centres through outstation resource organisations provides essential services which would otherwise be the responsibility of State and Territory governments, the Territory states that this should be seen as a 'special grant towards meeting needs' and not part of the normal provision of State-type services.<sup>17</sup> The Northern Territory Government indicated that the Grants Commission has not formally adopted a position on this matter. However, the Territory claimed that the Commission and the Commonwealth Treasury have recognised the unique needs of the Territory in this area and consider that appropriate standards of service should be defined, presumably as the basis for accepting this as a financial need of the Territory.<sup>18</sup>

6.31 The argument about the Commonwealth Government being the engine for growth of the homelands movement and hence responsible for continuing funding to the movement has only partial validity. It is true that Commonwealth policies such as land rights in the Northern Territory and self-determination have provided a climate in which the homelands movement can succeed. By providing funding for outstation resource centres and homeland advisers the Commonwealth is also assisting Aboriginals who wish to set up homeland centres to do so. To this extent the Commonwealth can be considered to be 'responsible' for the homelands movement. But what is significant is that the Commonwealth has provided such assistance in response to the wishes of Aboriginal people who have expressed a strong desire to move to homeland centres, and it has done so largely as a result of the failure of State and Northern Territory governments to respond to the desires of Aboriginals. State and Territory governments in general terms support self-determination for Aboriginals, and it is rather disingenuous of them to 'blame' the Commonwealth Government for committing them to significant expenditure in giving substance to a policy of self-determination by supporting the homelands movement.

6.32 Inevitably, the support of Aboriginal people moving to homeland centres is going to mean increased expenditure for both Commonwealth and State and Northern Territory governments. There needs to be a sorting out between the two levels of government as to which will be responsible for particular aspects of support to homeland centres. The Committee suggests the following broad division of responsibility for funding.

6.33 The Commonwealth Government's role in relation to homeland centres should be seen as a 'seeding' one and one which provides funding for 'special' programs rather than funding for basic essential services. The 'seeding' role of the Commonwealth Government, through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, should include initial establishment funding to allow new homeland

centres to be formed and to provide the minimal capital facilities needed for homeland groups to remain at a site to demonstrate their commitment to living at the site. Part of this assistance will include continued funding for homeland advisers and the other administrative costs associated with outstation resource organisations. Special programs which should be supported include those providing for the economic independence of homeland centres such as CDEP and enterprise development and some housing assistance. Special Commonwealth funding could be used to assist in particularly expensive areas of the provision of facilities and services to homeland centres such as the provision of school buildings or Aboriginal medical services. Recurrent costs for education and health should of course be met by State and Territory governments.

6.34 The 'seeding' responsibility of the Commonwealth Government for homeland centres should continue to be provided through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs as this role will also entail a co-ordination role which is most appropriately exercised by the Department as the Commonwealth's co-ordinator of Aboriginal affairs policies and programs. The Aboriginal Development Commission should be responsible for enterprise development and for some housing on homeland centres.

6.35 Once homeland centres have been established with assistance from the Commonwealth and the people have demonstrated their commitment to a site, the Committee considers that State and Northern Territory governments should be accepting their responsibility to provide essential services to these communities as they should in relation to all their residents. In line with the development of positive policies towards the homelands movement recommended in the previous chapter, State and Northern Territory governments should also be providing funding support. State and Territory funding to homeland centres should be for the 'essentials' such as water supply and reticulation, roads and airstrips, other infrastructure items such as housing and

shelter, and education and health. The responsibility of local government for the provision of essential services to homeland centres, where applicable, should also be recognised and accepted.

6.36 Negotiations should be held between Commonwealth and State and Territory governments to decide on the detailed arrangements for the sharing of funding responsibility for the homelands movement along the above lines proposed by the Committee. Some joint funding of the provision of facilities to homeland centres could be considered where developments proposed by Commonwealth and State and Territory agencies could be appropriately co-ordinated as has occurred between the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments under the WAALCIP arrangements. However, in general terms, State and Northern Territory authorities should be responsible for funding the provision of permanent and substantial infrastructure to homeland centres.

6.37 There also is a need for greater co-ordination in the funding of facilities and services to homeland centres. The Committee received significant evidence that co-ordination arrangements in relation to the provision of services to homeland centres was in many cases quite inadequate. This lack of co-ordination had resulted from the fragmentation of agencies responsible for providing services with no central organisation adequately performing a co-ordination role. This fragmentation was recognised by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.<sup>19</sup> The co-ordination should be the responsibility of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and should commence at the 'seeding' phase and be done in consultation with relevant State and Northern Territory government authorities. At the local level co-ordination should be achieved primarily through the outstation resource organisations although wider organisations like the Pitjantjatjara Council, the Kimberley Land Council and the Western Desert Land Council have an important regional role.

Regional meetings of outstation groups should also perform an important co-ordination function. Consideration should be given by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in performing its co-ordination role to reducing the fragmentation of service delivery to homeland centres.

6.38 As a result of a Cabinet decision in August 1986, the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs has been given a co-ordinating responsibility in relation to all Aboriginal affairs programs funded by the Commonwealth, including those programs actually administered by State and Territory government agencies. It is essential that the Department give particular attention to the implementation of the Cabinet decision.

6.39 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Commonwealth Government continue to provide 'seeding' funding for the establishment of new homeland centres through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' support for outstation resource organisations. The level of this funding should be increased in response to the growth of the homelands movement and the increasing needs of homeland dwellers;
- . the Commonwealth Government also provide 'special' funding to homeland centres for development programs such as CDEP, for training, and for housing and enterprise development through the Aboriginal Development Commission;

- . the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs co-ordinate the provision of services to homeland centre communities through the outstation resource organisations and endeavour to reduce the fragmentation in the delivery of services;
- . State and Territory governments provide funding to homeland centres for the 'essential' facilities and services which they are obliged to provide to all their citizens. These 'essential' facilities and services include water supply and reticulation, roads and airstrips, other infrastructure items such as housing and shelter and education and health services. The level of this funding should be increased in response to the growth of the homelands movement and the increasing needs of homeland dwellers; and
- . Commonwealth and State and Northern Territory governments consult about detailed arrangements for the sharing of funding responsibility for homeland centres.

#### Redirection of funding

6.40 One way of providing additional funding to the homelands movement would be by redirecting some funding currently being provided to the major communities to homeland centres. The Committee has pointed in earlier chapters to the dramatic shift

in population which has occurred from the major communities to homeland centres. In some areas the population of the major communities has been reduced by up to 50 per cent. As the homelands movement develops further and consolidates, depopulation of the major communities may increase. This movement of population raises questions in terms of the equity of the allocation of government resources. Should the same levels of funding continue to be directed to the major communities when their populations have been reduced by half? Does the allocation to the major communities of the bulk of government funding continue to reflect the needs and desires of Aboriginal people who have chosen to move to homeland centres?

6.41 The Committee has pointed to evidence from State and Northern Territory governments that they regard the major communities as having priority in the receipt of their funding. Little evidence was presented to the Committee that 'savings' have resulted from the movement of Aboriginal people from major communities to homelands. However, the South Australian regional office of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs indicated that some redirection of funding from the larger communities to homeland centres had occurred in the Pitjantjatjara areas and that this had been achieved with the agreement of the communities concerned. It was noted that the redirection of funding could only occur over a number of years.<sup>20</sup>

6.42 The Northern Territory Government pointed to some of the constraints on achieving savings from the major communities for transfer to homeland centre funding:

- (i) capital infrastructure cannot be economically dismantled and downgraded in the short term;
- (ii) much of the recurrent expenditure is associated with developing skills within the Major Community Council and its workers;



- (iii) the major community still functions as a service centre for Homeland residents (e.g. health, education, banking, postal, social security and shopping).<sup>21</sup>

The Northern Territory Government stated that the provision to the major communities of a defined minimum standard of services may see the spending curve flatten out. However, it would then face the need for the repair, maintenance and replacement of capital equipment which had been installed a number of years ago.<sup>22</sup>

6.43 Apart from the constraints on the redirection of funding, Dr Altman noted that proposals for a re-direction of funding were based on a premise that the major communities were over-serviced and over-resourced. He stated that these communities were not over-resourced when compared with white townships in Australia and the loss of funding to the communities, where not associated with significant reductions in population levels, would result in damaging structural changes to the economies of these communities. As outstations rely on the major communities as resource centres they would also be affected by any re-direction of funding. Dr Altman stated that it would be preferable to increase overall funding.<sup>23</sup>

6.44 The Committee appreciates the constraints on the redirection of funding from the major communities to homeland centres in the short term and considers that a re-direction of funding cannot take place without significant changes in population between major communities and homeland centres. The Committee has also argued for the need for additional funding as a means of providing for homeland centres. However, it is convinced that the issue of a re-direction of funding is going to have to be addressed in the longer term, particularly in view of the fact that additional overall funding in the Aboriginal affairs area will be difficult to achieve. There is a need to address the priorities in Aboriginal affairs and these priorities will be the articulated needs and desires of Aboriginal people and those programs which will be of long term benefit to them.

6.45 The Committee has argued in this report that the homelands movement is an Aboriginal initiative and that many Aboriginals are 'voting with their feet' in expressing their views about the major communities. The effect of the homelands movement on the major communities, the long term future of the major communities and the funding implications are issues which need to be explored with some urgency if governments are not going to make further mistakes in the Aboriginal affairs area by failing to address Aboriginal desires. The Northern Territory Government has suggested that one way of addressing the situation may be to provide funding to regional populations, comprising the major community and its outstations, and allow funding priorities to be established at a local level by Aboriginal people.<sup>24</sup> This approach may have benefits if appropriate Aboriginal structures exist at the local level to ensure that funds are distributed equitably between the major community and homeland centres and reflect the long term residential strategies of Aboriginal people. The Committee discusses structures for funding in the next chapter.

6.46 Clearly the whole issue of an equitable balance in funding between major communities and homeland centres to reflect Aboriginal needs and desires and the directions of government policy is one that requires further work. As it has implications for both Commonwealth and State and Northern Territory funding all levels of government need to address the issue. The Committee recommends that:

- the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs consult with State and Northern Territory governments prior to initiating an inquiry into the long term effects of the homelands movement on the major communities and the direction of government policy and funding in view of these effects.

## Conclusion

6.47 The financial implications of the homelands movement have been a key issue in this Inquiry and there are two differing points of view on this issue. Current funding and service agencies have pointed to a growth in the movement and a growth in the expectations of the participants of the movement. The tendency by State and Northern Territory governments has been to give priority to the larger established communities despite a number of indicators which suggest that the support for these communities in the longer term may not enhance the lives of Aboriginal people, particularly in areas of economic independence. On the other hand, there are others who believe that the homelands movement presents one of a number of opportunities for self pride, independence and adjustment to the pressures of non-Aboriginal life and as such should be supported. There is also a potential for savings from the larger communities which could be directed to the homelands movement.

6.48 There is, however, a need to increase the level of support to homelands so that Aboriginal people who move to homeland centres are able to gain access to the range of services and facilities that would normally be available to all remote communities throughout Australia. Again, the process of achieving this increase is a matter that must be addressed by all levels of government. The Commonwealth Government, as well as providing increased assistance to the homelands movement, needs to ensure that all levels of government are prepared to accept their responsibility to provide essential services to homeland communities. This will require a much greater commitment by these governments to the homelands movement.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S293-94.
- 2 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S356-57.
- 3 Transcript of Evidence, p. S354.
- 4 Transcript of Evidence, p. S346.
- 5 Transcript of Evidence, p. S549.
- 6 Transcript of Evidence, p. S553.
- 7 Transcript of Evidence, p. S760.
- 8 Transcript of Evidence, p. S761.
- 9 Transcript of Evidence, p. S766.
- 10 Transcript of Evidence, p. S759.
- 11 Transcript of Evidence, p. S770.
- 12 Transcript of Evidence, p. S771.
- 13 Hansard precis, Brisbane, 11 September 1986. pp. 1-2.
- 14 Transcript of Evidence, p. 645.
- 15 Transcript of Evidence, p. S357.
- 16 Northern Territory Government Submission to the Commonwealth Grants Commission in Relation to the Review of the State/Northern Territory Tax Sharing Entitlements 1984, Volume 1, Main Submission, p. 253.
- 17 Op.cit., p. 254.
- 18 Transcript of Evidence, p. S771.
- 19 Transcript of Evidence, p. 1097.
- 20 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 1104 and 1110-11.
- 21 Transcript of Evidence, p. S765.
- 22 Transcript of Evidence, p. 604.
- 23 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S1836-37.
- 24 Transcript of Evidence, p. 600.

## CHAPTER 7

### RESOURCES FOR PROVIDING SERVICES

#### Introduction

7.1 In Chapters 5 and 6 the Committee discussed policies which should be pursued in relation to the homelands movement and the division of funding responsibilities for the implementation of those policies. It was emphasised that in the provision of facilities and services to homeland centres sensitivity to the needs and desires of homelands people was required. Close consultation with homeland dwellers will be needed before facilities and services are provided to homeland communities.

7.2 Because of the traditional orientation of homeland dwellers, the language difficulties in talking to government officials and the desire of homelands people to limit their contact with government agencies and involvement in meetings, resource organisations which mediate between homeland dwellers and government agencies have been seen as necessary. While some of the better administered organisations have facilitated the process of consultation with homeland dwellers and have been important in the development of the homelands movement it is essential that they continue to cater for the needs of homelands people.

#### Outstation resource organisations

7.3 The organisations through which the Department of Aboriginal Affairs provides resources, supplies, and support

services to outstations are outstation resource organisations normally based in or near the major communities associated with the outstations which they serve. These resource organisations act as a point of contact between homeland centres and government and other organisations with which they must deal. This assists homeland centres to minimise their direct contact with non-Aboriginal authorities. Outstation resource organisations also provide advisory and financial services to homeland centres limiting the need for homeland centres to have an adviser or be separately incorporated to receive funding. The range of activities undertaken by resource centres has been identified by the Northern Land Council:

- . liaison with Commonwealth and NT funding agencies;
- . assistance with social security matters;
- . postal service, including bush mail delivery;
- . co-ordination of radio networks connecting service centres and outstations;
- . operation of mechanical workshops;
- . involvement in issuance of permits to visit outstation communities;
- . marketing of arts and crafts;
- . operation of mobile shopping facilities or 'mail order' shopping facility;
- . supervision of trust accounts;
- . provision of transport services to/from outstations;
- . co-ordination or implementation of training programs; and
- . assistance with construction work on outstations.<sup>1</sup>

7.4 The Department of Aboriginal Affairs noted that the advantages of outstation resource organisations were that they could achieve economies of scale in servicing a number of homeland communities, they improved co-ordination and consultation arrangements in relation to homeland communities and they provided better political organisation and advocacy for homeland centres.<sup>2</sup> The Western Australian Government stated that the outstation resource centres have an important role to play in providing services to outstation communities. However, it considered that the resource agencies lack basic resources such as staff housing, equipment and so on, and will not survive without some form of government support.<sup>3</sup>

7.5 In supporting the work of resource centres, the Northern Land Council referred to their independence from government control and their strong philosophy of client control and direction. As a result the Land Council stated that resource centres were:

. . . committed to representing and promoting the wishes of traditional owners rather than simplifying bureaucratic solutions to administrative problems.<sup>4</sup>

The Northern Land Council pointed to the importance of the outstation resource organisations as the first point of contact for consultation and policy development in relation to homeland centres. The Central Land Council also referred to the resource organisations' 'indisputably essential role in supporting outstation residents', but also to their being 'chronically under-funded and over-worked'.<sup>5</sup> According to the Northern Territory Government, many homeland communities owe their continued existence to the support provided by resource centres.<sup>6</sup>

7.6 Most outstation resource organisations are bodies which have incorporated under Commonwealth or State and Territory legislation and are separate organisations from the major community councils. By incorporating as separate organisations the resource centres have asserted a degree of separation which most outstations wish to have from the major community. This is despite the substantial co-operation which can exist between many of the resource centres and the community councils. In some areas, such as the Western Desert, homeland centres do not have a close association with the parent settlements because of distance and other factors and they are heavily dependant on the resource agencies for support.<sup>7</sup> There are also cases where homeland centres are in the development stages and they are serviced by the major Community Councils. This can cause a degree of friction over the allocation of resources which is made to the outstations.

7.7 The Committee supports the continued funding of outstation resource organisations to provide advice and support to homeland centres. The contribution which these organisations have made to the success of the homelands movement is clear from evidence referred to above.

7.8 Outstation resource organisations should continue to be funded by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs because of their role in the establishment of new outstations and the co-ordination of the provision of services to outstations. In this role they will work closely with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and other agencies in co-ordinating the provision of all facilities and services to new and established homeland centres. The resource organisations should be the first point of contact for agencies providing services to homeland centres. Outstation resource organisations, because of the significant role they play in supporting the homelands movement, should receive additional funding from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The Committee encountered many cases where



resource organisations were not able to undertake all their responsibilities because of insufficient funding. This was also clear from evidence presented to the Committee.

7.9 Regional conferences of outstation resource organisations are held in some areas to discuss the concerns and priorities of homelands people in a regional area. These regional conferences also assist in co-ordination. The Committee considers that these conferences are valuable and should be encouraged.

7.10 It is important that the resource organisations continue to be representative of their clients and sensitive to their needs. Brian Ede referred to the need for the organisations to be 'carefully structured so as to serve a discrete number of outstations with traditional bonding to allow them to work together'.<sup>8</sup> The Committee would not wish to specify a structure for the resource organisations other than to say it must be one which is representative of homelands people, enables the organisations to stay in close touch with the needs and desires of homeland dwellers and are organisations to which homeland dwellers can relate and which they can effectively administer.

7.11 The outstation resource organisations are currently not funded by State and Northern Territory governments and their attitude towards the funding of these organisations from their own resources is ambivalent. The Committee considers it is desirable that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs continues to fund the outstation resource organisations, although in the longer term other arrangements for the funding of the resource organisations may be made. The Committee discusses alternative arrangements such as the Northern Territory Government's Community Government proposals in the next section.

7.12 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Department of Aboriginal Affairs provide additional funding support to outstation resource organisations in recognition of their vital role in supporting the homelands movement;
- . the outstation resource organisations be primarily responsible for the establishment of new homeland centres, the co-ordination of the provision of facilities and services to existing centres and the advising of homelands people; and
- . the outstation resource organisations be representative of homelands people, enable the organisations to reflect the needs and desires of homelands people and remain organisations which homeland dwellers can effectively administer.

#### Alternative structures

7.13 The Northern Territory Government stated that all homeland centres rely on support provided by major communities, either through resource centres located in these communities or indirectly from major community councils, without which many resource centres could not function. Because of this relationship between major communities and associated homeland centres, the Northern Territory Government suggested that, for planning purposes, consideration should be given to regional populations (ie. major community plus homelands) when determining appropriate levels of facilities and services which might be maintained on major communities.<sup>9</sup> As people move from this base community to

homeland centres and back, the Northern Territory Government saw value in treating these catchment areas as a whole in terms of 'getting a balance of the provision of resources and essential services'.<sup>10</sup>

7.14 In the longer term, the Northern Territory Government has been encouraging regional populations, including major communities and associated outstations, to form into Community Government Councils to which Local Government Grants Commission funding would be directed and which would provide a range of services to a geographical region. An inquiry into how the scheme might work was undertaken by Professor David Turner at the instigation of the Northern Territory Government. His report, 'Transformation and Tradition : a report on Aboriginal Development in/on the Northern Territory of Australia' was provided to the Committee by the Northern Territory Government. In the report, Turner stated his view that:

. . . Community Government is a means of resolving much of the disruption Aboriginal people are experiencing in their traditional culture as a result of European contact, which in turn accounts for much of the crime and delinquency current in Aboriginal communities. Community Government is also a means to the economic advancement of Aboriginal people as well as the appropriate funnel through which to channel essential services.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Turner saw outstations as an important area which could come under the jurisdiction of Community Government Councils. He stated in his report that:

The outstations function is one that would readily devolve to Community Government Councils, particularly where the Community Government Council area encompasses the larger Land Trust in which outstations are located.<sup>12</sup>

7.15 However, Professor Turner pointed to places in which the division between the outstation movement and the major community represented and reinforced a major rift in the community, and the difficulties this posed in establishing a single Community Government Council for the region. He stated that this division had been bolstered by separate Commonwealth and Territory funding, a problem which he considered could be resolved by the transfer of all funding to the Northern Territory Government. To the extent that the division was within the Aboriginal community, Professor Turner believed it could be resolved by establishing fully representative Community Government Councils encompassing both settlement and outstations.

7.16 The Northern Territory Government saw the outstation resource centres as providing a bridge for the inclusion of homeland centres under Community Government proposals. It referred to a fear that outstations did not want to be swamped in terms of their role by a major community and it considered that the resource centres provided a break on that happening. As encouragement was given to regional areas, including the homeland centres, to form up under Community Government schemes, the Northern Territory Government saw the resource centres role as important in ensuring that the integrity of homeland centres was maintained.<sup>13</sup>

7.17 The Community Government Council structure for funding a regional area has some advantages over the existing separate structures of major community councils and outstation resource organisations although it also raises significant problems as is discussed below. A Community Government structure would allow the sharing and pooling of facilities, administrative support and services across a region thus decreasing administration costs overall. It would recognise the mobility of Aboriginal people between community and homeland centres and that populations should therefore be seen on a regional basis. It would also allow priorities of funding as between the community and outstations to be decided at the local level.

7.18 However, there are significant problems with the application of the Community Government proposals to homeland centres. Principal objections to the scheme, as expressed in submissions to the Committee, were that it imposes upon the homeland groups a very similar system to that which they have sought to escape by leaving the large communities, and that the rights of individuals to have a say in their destiny are lost. The Northern Land Council stated in its submission that:

People live on outstations because they want to be their own bosses. Incorporation into community councils would be felt to compromise this position in a significant number of cases. The system for determination of community government areas proposed by the NT Government is such that outstations could be included into community government areas against their wishes. Although the system requires a plebiscite, outstation views might be overridden in cases where there is a large population in the central community voting for inclusion of outstations.<sup>14</sup>

The Northern Land Council stated that there should be further investigation of alternative methods of funding outstation communities for local government type functions including development of the role of the outstation resource organisations.<sup>15</sup> It considered that outstation resource organisations were a preferable and natural alternative to community government councils as channels for local government funding for outstation residents.<sup>16</sup>

7.19 Altman expressed concern about the effect of the Community Government proposal on outstations stating that it would undermine the political autonomy outstation groups had sought by moving from the major communities, with outstations being dominated by Community Government Councils controlled by the traditional owners of the major communities.<sup>17</sup> The Department of Aboriginal Affairs, while supporting the general principle of local government status for Aboriginal communities, also expressed concern about certain aspects of the

implementation of the Community Government proposal in the Northern Territory. It was concerned about the effect on the autonomy of outstations of the proposal and the appearance of an element of compulsion in the Northern Territory Government's proposals. The Department considered that in some cases outstation resource organisations would be a more appropriate focus for the funding of outstations than the central community councils and there should be an accommodation of this within the Territory's proposals.<sup>18</sup>

7.20 The Committee considers that the implementation of proposals for Community Government should involve close consultation with homeland dwellers about their participation. The centralisation of power associated with such a scheme would be counter to some of the major strengths of the outstation movement including decentralisation and local independence and decision-making power. It could threaten the autonomy which outstations have sought from the major community councils. The Committee considers that greater evaluation of the Community Government proposals in terms of their effect on homeland communities is required. Clearly more consultation and discussion about the proposal is needed. The Committee recommends that:

- . Community Government proposals should involve close consultation with homeland dwellers about their participation in Community Government Councils; and
- . where Community Government Councils are established with the consent of, and to include, homeland centres, their relative autonomy within the Councils be retained.

## Staffing of outstation resource organisations

7.21 The Committee referred earlier in the chapter to the range of functions undertaken by outstation resource organisations. In performing these functions the resource organisations need staff with a variety of skills and knowledge. Unfortunately, because of inadequate funding, these functions have often been performed by a single person, the homelands adviser, of whom expectations have often been unreal. The role of advisers is discussed below.

7.22 The Committee would consider that the provision of additional funding to the resource agencies, recommended earlier in the chapter, should allow them to employ more skilled people to perform their essential functions. It should also enable the employment of more Aboriginal people in the resource agencies, even if these are initially only training positions. The Northern Land Council noted that the outstation resource organisations were community controlled organisations and there was a strong desire by outstation communities to employ Aboriginal staff. However, such Aboriginal staffing as there was of the organisations was mainly in areas that in European terms were unskilled or semi-skilled.<sup>19</sup> The Committee is aware of the difficulties that can exist in the employment of local Aboriginal people in advisory positions because of the pressure from kinship and traditional obligations that can be placed on them.<sup>20</sup> While these pressures will always exist some Aboriginal people can dissociate their employment from their traditional obligations. However, the Committee sees benefit in Aboriginal people assuming these positions in the longer term. One submission also pointed to the need for women to be employed as community resource workers and field officers. This would ensure that women in the communities were adequately consulted about issues affecting the community and involved in the decision-making process.<sup>21</sup>

7.23 The role of advisers in homeland centres and other Aboriginal communities was raised with the Committee in a number of submissions. Their role in homeland centres, in particular, is ambivalent. On the one hand, an important aspect of the homelands movement has been the desire to escape the control of non-Aboriginals, but if non-Aboriginal people are employed as advisers to homeland organisations this autonomy can be compromised. On the other hand, because homeland communities wish to remain at arms length from continual involvement with governmental officials and bureaucratic procedures, mediators such as homeland advisers are vital to achieving such an objective. They can also provide the practical and advisory assistance to homeland communities to assist them to be self-managing. As homeland advisers are generally resident in the major communities and not in a particular homeland centre, homeland centre communities have found it easier to keep the role of adviser as one over which they have significant control.

7.24 A former community adviser at Turkey Creek who had some involvement with the outstation movement in the area, Mr Allan Tegg, stated that the problem with community advisers was not entirely due to the poor quality of some advisers, although he acknowledged this was a problem. The larger problem was that community advisers were placed in an ambiguous position because of their role as mediators between the Aboriginal community and the wider society. The communities were supposed to be self-determining and the adviser was there to assist the communities with advice to enable them to be self-determining. But the communities had resources for which they were responsible as part of the self-management process, and the responsibility for maintaining them and generally making the community work often fell on the adviser because the communities were often not able to accept this responsibility. Consequently, Mr Tegg stated that the adviser is expected to:



. . . help others to take responsibility for the community but at the same time he is expected to work in accordance with the ideology of self-determination.<sup>22</sup>

An interventionist approach by the adviser in an attempt to ensure that a community is run effectively can be seen as trying to unduly influence the community and undermine self-determination, while a less interventionist approach can lead to a breakdown of community facilities with the community apparently powerless to correct the situation.

7.25 Apart from the difficult context in which they work, the quality of some advisers and their level of training has been poor. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs noted that the contributions of some outstation advisers, through lack of training and expertise or lack of commitment, have been less than satisfactory. However, in other instances, advisers have been of benefit to homeland centres.<sup>23</sup> The Department noted that there were currently nearly 100 community adviser positions nationally, most of which were funded by it. Of these advisers only a handful had any specific training and their average length of service was about two years.<sup>24</sup> The Department indicated that at present no specific training is available for community advisers and that there are no standards for advisers nor ways of ensuring any standard is met. Many of the problems of attracting suitable advisers are related to the lack of a career structure and the absence of appropriate training.

7.26 At its first public hearing with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in October 1985, the Committee was informed by the Secretary, Mr Perkins, that the Minister was very keen to do something about the selection and training of community advisers and was pressing the Department for a solution. As a result, Mr Perkins stated that:

We do have some proposals to put before the Minister. We have been wrestling with these proposals rather slowly and I am sorry to say, because they are difficult questions: What is the amount of finance that is involved and how do you train community advisers with the agreement of the communities? These proposals are to be put to the Minister and he will possibly want to make a decision on them in the next week or two to allow for the training of some of these community advisers.<sup>25</sup>

The Committee was informed that options had been put to the Minister for recruitment and training of community advisers but funds had not been available to establish suitable training programs which could cost in excess of half a million dollars annually. The Minister had, however, directed the Department to be more involved in the selection process for advisers and withhold funding for adviser positions in cases where an appointment considered unsuitable was made. The Department indicated that it will be more intrusive in the selection process in future.<sup>26</sup>

7.27 The Committee supports a more interventionist approach to the recruitment and funding of community adviser positions. While the Committee notes the need for a balance between interventionism and the need to allow communities to make their own decisions, it considers intervention is justified in some cases. The Committee also considers that the establishment of appropriate training programs for advisers prior to appointment is the most significant means of improving the quality of advice and assistance available to Aboriginal communities and should be given priority by both Commonwealth and State and Northern Territory governments. This would provide a pool of advisers from which Aboriginal communities can choose, with the skills and qualities required by the communities. It would also mean that courses were available for communities to request existing advisers to upgrade their skills. Among the skills and knowledge which a training program should provide are bookkeeping, basic

mechanics, basic health care, liaising with government departments and agencies, an understanding of Aboriginal social and cultural life and an understanding of the policy of self-determination and the role of advisers in implementing the policy.

7.28 The Committee recommends that:

- . Commonwealth and State and Northern Territory governments provide funding to establish training courses for community advisers prior to their appointment to provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to undertake their role;
- . Aboriginal communities be informed of the existence of these courses and be provided with assistance to enable their existing advisers to undertake the courses; and
- . once community advisers courses have been established, the completion of a course should be considered an essential qualification for obtaining a job as a community adviser.

7.29 While these recommendations will address problems associated with obtaining appropriately qualified community advisers, they will not address the difficulties of the context in which advisers operate. Unfortunately, little can be done to change this context as long as communities continue to employ a general community adviser who is resident in the community. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs noted that while any approaches to community advisers should not be made on a presumption that

advisers will be required in Aboriginal communities in perpetuity, it would be simplistic to create policies to remove community advisers without putting in place a system or personnel to undertake essential tasks in the communities with skill and professionalism.

7.30 A key difference with homelands advisers, and probably the reason why they have not attracted the same sort of criticism as advisers in major communities, is that they are non-resident in the homeland centres. Because the advisers are non-resident, homelands people do not become dependent on the adviser doing things for them and usurping authority structures within the community. The Committee is strongly of the view that homelands advisers should continue to be non-resident. It is also suggested that the major communities may wish to seek advice from outside from specialists on matters which are of concern to them, rather than having general advisers located in the community providing little specialist advice but instead assisting communities with a wide range of activities that they could do themselves. This sort of change would significantly alter the context in which Aboriginal communities received advice from one in which the adviser has control over the situation, to one in which the locus of control lies with the community. As well as giving the community more control, it would improve the quality of advice available to Aboriginal communities and ensure that advice was only sought and received on matters about which the community felt less than competent to make a decision without advice.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S1562-63.
- 2 Transcript of Evidence, p. S649.
- 3 Transcript of Evidence, p. S555.
- 4 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1563.

- 5 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1447.
- 6 Transcript of Evidence, p. S764.
- 7 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S248-49.
- 8 Transcript of Evidence, p. S62.
- 9 Transcript of Evidence, p. S765.
- 10 Transcript of Evidence, p. 600.
- 11 D. Turner, Transformation and Tradition : a report on Aboriginal Development in/on the Northern Territory of Australia, Report presented to Minister of Community Development, Northern Territory Government, May 26, 1986, pp. 11-12.
- 12 Ibid., p. 105.
- 13 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 599-600.
- 14 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1565.
- 15 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S1565-66.
- 16 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S1731.
- 17 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1835.
- 18 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S1662-63.
- 19 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1725.
- 20 Transcript of Evidence, p. 993.
- 21 Transcript of Evidence, p. S158.
- 22 Transcript of Evidence, p. 664.
- 23 Transcript of Evidence, p. S350.
- 24 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1650.
- 25 Transcript of Evidence, p. 36.
- 26 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1648.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE ECONOMIES OF HOMELAND CENTRES

#### Introduction

8.1 The Aboriginal homelands movement has been depicted in earlier chapters as a long-term Aboriginal response to contact with European society. It is an attempt to ameliorate some of the destructive effects of contact on Aboriginal society, but it is also a positive attempt to incorporate into the lifestyle of homeland dwellers goods and services of the wider society which are compatible with life on homeland centres. This depiction of the homelands movement is essential in understanding the nature of the economies of homeland centres. The economies of homeland centres comprise a mix of traditional hunting and gathering pursuits together with the use of elements of Western technology and the consumption of European goods.

8.2 It has been suggested that the ability of homeland dwellers to re-establish a hunting and gathering economy together with income support available through social security payments and the sale of artefacts, make homeland centres more attractive in economic terms (quite apart from social and cultural benefits) than the centralised settlements.<sup>1</sup> If the economic viability of homeland centres is an important reason for their establishment, then appropriate support for homeland economies will be significant to their long-term existence. Appropriate support

must strengthen the economic rationale for Aboriginal people continuing to live at homeland centres without threatening the relative independence of homeland economies.

8.3 This chapter discusses the economic situation in homeland centres in some detail and then makes suggestions and recommendations about how appropriate support can be given to homeland economies.

### The economic situation

#### Employment

8.4 Formal employment in homeland centres is very limited. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs, while acknowledging that it had no completely accurate statistics on the employment status of outstation communities, estimated from its 1983 Community Profiles that fewer than 10 per cent of homeland dwellers were formally employed.<sup>2</sup> Most formal employment in outstations is in health work and teaching.

8.5 While formal employment is very limited in homeland centres, it has been argued by Dr Altman that employment in productive activities in the informal economy is of great importance to homeland economies. Altman's study of the economy of Momega outstation in north-east Arnhem Land indicated that people at the outstation were as fully employed as people in the wider society, even though this employment was primarily informal employment and was undertaken by all adult community members rather than just a proportion of adults as with formal employment in the wider community.<sup>3</sup> The productive activities which Altman included were hunting, gathering, manufacturing of artefacts, house building, making producer durables, clearing bush airstrips and assisting in the delivery of market goods. The Miller Committee Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training programs argued that, in view of the heavy involvement of homelands people

in this wide range of productive activities, the provision of full-time regular labour market employment would be 'incompatible with the life-style they have chosen'.<sup>4</sup>

8.6 The contributions which these productive activities, in which people are informally employed, make to the economies of homeland centres can be seen by looking carefully at some of them. The Committee looks at subsistence activity (hunting and gathering) and the production of artefacts for market exchange.

#### Subsistence production

8.7 As was stated in the introduction to this chapter, the re-establishment of a hunting and gathering economy has been a most important element of the homelands movement. However, it is also clear that hunting and gathering has been of greater significance in homeland centres in some areas than others. An examination of some of the research undertaken into hunting and gathering in homeland centres in different areas indicates its importance to the economies of all homeland centres but also indicates that it seems to be much more productive in northern Australia than in the desert outstations.

8.8 Research undertaken by Altman at Momega outstation in Arnhem Land indicated that bush foods accounted for 46 per cent of kilocalories and 81 per cent of protein intake of people in the outstation over the period of the study. People's total intake averaged 2850 kilocalories and 133 grams of protein per person per day. As Altman points out this is well above minimum levels (2500 kilocalories and 66 grams of protein per person per day) required for physical well-being.<sup>5</sup> Altman's data indicate that hunting and gathering activities make a crucial contribution to this above average diet.

8.9 His data are remarkably similar to those collected by Betty Meehan at an Anbarra outstation, Kopanga, in the same region in 1972-73. Over a period of 334 days between July 1972



and July 1973, Meehan made systematic quantitative observations of the diet of people in the outstation. On the basis of four representative months over this period, bush foods contributed about 49 per cent of total kilocalorie intake and 82 per cent of protein intake.<sup>6</sup> The total diet, including the bush foods and bought food, was considered by Meehan to be a good one as 'it provided an excess of the recommended intake of energy including an abundant supply of protein in various forms'.<sup>7</sup>

8.10 Altman acknowledges that, because of the favourable environment, the economic situation at Momega is 'possibly the best at outstations in remote Australia' and that, more particularly, there is the possibility that outstations in arid Central Australia 'may be markedly different from the Momega case'.<sup>8</sup> A similar point was made by Dr Young who noted a large contrast between homeland centres in the north as opposed to the Centre because bush tucker was much more plentiful and less affected by seasonal factors in Arnhem Land than in Central Australia. She stated that while there were estimates of up to 70 per cent of food being derived from the land in Arnhem Land, in Central Australia bush tucker may not provide more than about 20 per cent of food depending on variations in the kind of country.<sup>9</sup>

8.11 Unfortunately, the sort of detailed studies of particular homeland centres which have been done in relation to Arnhem Land are not available in relation to desert communities. However, some indication of the contribution of subsistence production to the economics of desert homelands is available from a survey of desert homelands by Drs Scott Cane and Owen Stanley. Their survey was based on observations made at camps they visited and by asking people about the types and quantities of bush food eaten. While their estimates did not provide the detailed data of Altman's and Meehan's studies, Cane and Stanley considered them to be 'quite reasonable'. Of the 32 outstations which they recorded, only two were estimated to have a major contribution of

bush foods (more than 50 per cent of total food intake), while 14 had a moderate (20-30 per cent) use of bush food, and 16 a minor (10-15 per cent) contribution of bush food.<sup>10</sup>

8.12 The conclusions about the contribution of subsistence production to the economies of desert homelands which can be drawn from the existing limited survey of Cane and Stanley are that the contribution is very variable (more so than would be the case in Arnhem Land outstations where Momega was 'typical') and that in only a very few homeland centres would it approach the contribution of subsistence production in Arnhem Land outstations. In view of the importance of the subsistence base to the economies of homeland centres the Committee considers that more detailed research on the contribution it makes to the economies of desert outstations would be of great value for comparative purposes and to provide data for assessing areas of improvement which can be made to subsistence production in desert outstations.

8.13 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Department of Aboriginal Affairs fund detailed studies of the nature and extent of the contribution made by subsistence production to the economies of desert outstations.

8.14 The use of particular Western technologies for hunting and gathering such as vehicles, motor boats, fishing lines, guns, steel digging sticks etc., are mixed with traditional technologies and techniques in a way that is characteristic of other aspects of outstation life. These Western technologies have been important aids in improving the productivity of subsistence activities by increasing the range over which hunting and gathering can be undertaken and reducing time spent in sustaining a reasonable level of production.

8.15 The extension of the range over which homeland dwellers can hunt and gather has been of great importance in supporting their adopted hunter/gatherer lifestyle because of the depletion of resources which occurs around the relatively permanent camps. Such depletion would not have occurred traditionally as Aboriginal people would have moved camp frequently to exploit resources over a wide area. Depletion of trees for firewood can also become a problem around permanent camps and transport has been important in giving people access to other areas to obtain firewood.

#### Artefact production

8.16 The Committee noted in Chapter 2 that the development of the homelands movement has been accompanied by an increase in ceremonial activity. An important extension of this, according to the Aboriginal Arts Board, has been the revival and transmission of the many skills associated with ceremonies, including skills for the production of artefacts which have become increasingly marketable in the wider community.<sup>11</sup> Artefact production and sale is a significant part of homeland economies being the major source of non-welfare cash income to homeland dwellers, and a form of production which is compatible with the lifestyle of homeland dwellers. Dr Altman considered that the art and craft industry had the potential to substantially increase the disposable cash income available for outstation communities.<sup>12</sup> The Aboriginal Arts Board also noted that the arts and crafts industry provided the most likely long term avenue for growth in non-welfare cash income for homeland dwellers.<sup>13</sup>

8.17 According to the Aboriginal Arts Board, there has been a substantial growth in the Aboriginal art and craft industry in recent years that has been stimulated by greater marketing and the revitalisation of artistic skills as a result of the homelands movement. It noted that of the 5,000 Aboriginal people

involved in artistic production, a significant number live on homeland centres.<sup>14</sup> The growth in the art and craft industry has seen a significant increase in the return to artists, according to the Arts Board, with total income rising by about 50 per cent in real terms over the five years from 1978-79 to 1984-85. The Arts Board states that, as a consequence, arts and crafts as a component of outstation economies is increasing in real value and outstation artists are contributing to an industry which is apparently enjoying considerable growth.<sup>15</sup>

8.18 However, the Arts Board acknowledges that the increased total return to artists may not be reflected in similarly increased returns to individual artists as the number of people involved in producing arts and craft has increased in recent years. It also states that increased gross returns to the Craft Centres in Aboriginal communities which market artefacts have not necessarily increased their level of profits as cost increases for them have exceeded the inflation rate, and subsidies to them have declined in real terms. In fact the Aboriginal Arts Board points to significant problems of undercapitalisation in the Craft Centres which in the longer term may affect their ability to increase the retailing of art and craft at the local level and maximise the return to producers.

8.19 Similar problems are pointed to by Altman in his detailed study of the place of the art and craft industry at Momega outstation. Altman notes the importance of the income from the sale of art and craft to the outstation movement in its early stages of development in the 1970s when social security income for outstation dwellers was extremely limited. He states that in those days 'people's economic survival out bush was dependent on artefact production income'.<sup>16</sup> This income was crucial in enabling outstation people to obtain the limited range of market goods which were an essential part of their lifestyle. The extension of social security payments in the form of pensions and, more recently, unemployment benefits has seen the relative

importance of cash income from arts and crafts decline as a proportion of total cash income. Altman's data on Momega outstation show that in 1979-80 when Momega was the third most productive outstation in the Maningrida region in terms of return from artefact production, \$500 worth per month, income from artefact sales comprised 26 per cent of total cash income with social security income making up the remainder.<sup>17</sup> By 1983 art and craft income accounted for only about 10 per cent of total cash income with social security income making up the remainder.<sup>18</sup>

8.20 This change was largely the result of the increased availability of social security payments to outstation dwellers but also reflected a decline in the artefact sector. Altman states that the most significant factor in the decline of the artefact sector has been reduced returns to producers which has largely resulted from marketing policies which have located retail outlets remote from the places where the goods are produced. As a consequence, according to Dr Altman:

. . . a high proportion of the final cost of the artefact has been borne by transport costs, marketing costs, and basically in employing people in galleries in places like Sydney and Melbourne to sell these things.<sup>19</sup>

The further the good is sold from where it is produced and the greater the number of middle-men involved between producer and retailer, the less is the proportion of the return to the producer of the final price.<sup>20</sup>

8.21 Altman notes that the effect of the decline in the art and craft industry on the economy of Momega outstation has been twofold. First, some artists, formerly major producers of artefacts, have stopped painting because returns are so poor. Second, the overall significance of artefact production and sale

in the total economy has declined rapidly with the result that there is greater dependence on the welfare state for income support.<sup>21</sup> By reducing the disposable cash income available to outstation people for the purchase of non-essential items, it also reduces their standard of living and autonomy.

8.22 It was suggested that a better model for the marketing of Aboriginal art and craft than selling it in retail outlets in capital cities through Inada Holdings, would be by marketing it through cultural centres in places close to the Aboriginal communities producing art and craft, but also in areas which attract a lot of tourists. This sort of marketing has worked successfully at Uluru and could also be expected to succeed at other major tourist destinations in north Australia.<sup>22</sup> Emphasis was also given to the urgent need for capital for the Community Craft Centres.<sup>23</sup> To date much of the capital funding in art and craft marketing has been directed through Inada Holdings by the Aboriginal Development Commission.

8.23 Given the potential importance of the art and craft industry to the economic position of homeland dwellers, the Committee considers that the development and marketing of Aboriginal art and craft requires urgent attention. The Miller Committee Review of Aboriginal employment and training recommended that a review be undertaken of marketing arrangements of Aboriginal art and craft.<sup>24</sup> It is understood that an internal review of the operation of Inada Holdings is being undertaken by the Aboriginal Development Commission. Such a review would not incorporate the breadth of issues envisaged in the review recommended by the Miller Committee nor would it necessarily have the independence that this sort of review requires. The Committee believes that a comprehensive independent review of the development of the Aboriginal art and craft industry and its marketing needs to be undertaken. In recommendations made later in this chapter for the support of income generating projects

in homeland centres the Committee also recommends that art and craft projects receive particular attention in terms of capital and recurrent costs.

8.24 The Committee recommends that:

. A comprehensive review of the development of the Aboriginal art and craft industry and the marketing of Aboriginal art and craft be undertaken with emphasis being given to the maximisation of the return to artists, this being the means by which the art and craft industry can support the homelands movement.

#### Other productive activities

8.25 Aboriginal people on homeland centres engage in other productive activities including cultivating fruit and vegetables for local consumption and possible sale to larger centres, and keeping cattle (normally for killer herds) and other animals such as horses, poultry and goats. Other projects such as commercial fishing and camel marketing have been, or are to be, tried in homeland centres. These activities have had varying degrees of success in homeland centres but if given adequate support could make a contribution to homeland centre economies.

8.26 In most homeland centres the Committee visited some attempt had been made to establish a garden. These gardens ranged from large well-tended areas with a wide range of fruit and vegetables to small scattered areas in which a few fruit trees and some vegetables had been planted and were now suffering from lack of water or poor tending.

8.27 Some idea of the extent of gardening which takes place in homeland centres can be gained from the research of Cane and Stanley on the extent of European land use practices (gardens etc.) in desert outstations in central Australia. Of the outstations they surveyed over a third had no European land use practices while another third made only minor usage (a few fruit trees, vegetables or shade trees and/or a little animal husbandry). Only 7.5 per cent had developed these techniques in a major way (large gardens, extensive camp improvements and/or involvement in animal husbandry). The Committee's visits to desert outstations support these observations.

8.28 In northern Australia, and in particular in Arnhem Land, there were very extensive gardens and shade tree plantings in a number of the homeland communities which the Committee visited. However, in some communities gardens were not well developed. These differences can be accounted for if we look at some of the problems which communities have had in establishing and maintaining gardens.

8.29 The major problem which homeland communities faced was a lack of water, or at least of suitable water. This problem was obviously much more prevalent in the desert where often people only had sufficient water to keep themselves alive. Other problems were caused by using water with excessive levels of dissolved minerals on plants. The Committee visited a number of desert outstations where the use of poor quality water had killed plants. Even in some homeland centres in northern Australia where there was sufficient water, there were difficulties in ensuring that plants were adequately watered. This often involved extensive carting of water from rivers and waterholes to the gardens. Irrigation has been successfully used in some outstations, including desert outstations which have adequate quantities of water. Marauding animals can destroy well-tended gardens in a very short time and have been a problem to all



homeland dwellers. The Committee saw some gardens which had been destroyed by animals. The construction of stout fences around gardens has proved a successful means of coping with this problem.

8.30 Other factors besides environmental ones have affected the success of gardening. Cane and Stanley state that gardening as an economic activity is often not compatible with the lifestyle of homeland dwellers. The high mobility of outstation people makes it difficult to maintain gardens, particularly in dry areas where absences of more than a few days can see plants die. A lack of gardening experience and expertise among Aboriginal people, who traditionally were hunter/gatherers and not horticulturalists, are also factors limiting the prospects of successful horticultural development at outstations. Given these limitations, Cane and Stanley ask why gardens were started at all and conclude that it was largely motivated by Europeans. To the extent that Aboriginal people express an interest in establishing a garden, Cane and Stanley state that their requests are largely 'political'. According to Cane and Stanley:

It was our impression in most instances . . . that Aborigines were either doing as they had been told or were using the idea of a garden to impress Europeans and thus ensure effective funding, lure the provision of a windmill, demonstrate to Europeans that they are 'committed' to their camps. The evidence suggests to us that the Aborigines see no benefit in establishing gardens and thus have no real interest in gardening or any other agricultural enterprise.<sup>25</sup>

Cane and Stanley suggest that outstation horticulture should be small scale and basic in the initial stages with larger more sophisticated gardens developing from this once the small ones have proved successful. They also see a need for horticultural advisers to provide advice to Aboriginal communities wishing to establish gardens.

8.31 While the comments made by Cane and Stanley may apply to some homeland communities, the amount of effort which other communities have put into their gardens and fences around them suggests to the Committee that their purpose is more than 'political' or demonstrative. The Committee considers that many Aboriginal communities have a genuine interest in establishing gardens and that the produce from these gardens can improve the nutritional intake of outstation dwellers and reduce the reliance on market foods. The Committee recommends later in the chapter that support be given to such projects to improve the contribution they make to homeland centre economies.

8.32 Some outstation communities have small killer herds of cattle which can supplement the diet of outstation dwellers or provide additional income. Many Aboriginal people living in homeland centres have had extensive experience in the cattle industry and such projects, where sufficient suitable land is available, have the potential to make an important economic contribution. This may particularly be the case where excision communities are able to obtain tenure over reasonable tracts of land. The Kimberley Land Council noted that five outstation communities in the Kimberley were involved in pastoral work, one on an Aboriginal pastoral lease, one on Crown land, two on Aboriginal reserve land and another which carries out contract mustering work. A further three groups have expressed a desire to run their own cattle in future but do not have access to sufficient land.<sup>26</sup> The Committee considers that these ventures should be supported.

#### Community Development Employment Project (CDEP)

8.33 Community Development Employment Projects were introduced into Aboriginal communities in 1976/77 with the aim of providing remote Aboriginal communities with the opportunity to

undertake employment oriented projects designed to develop their communities. In lieu of unemployment benefits payable to individuals in the community, block funding of the total unemployment benefit entitlement of members of the community is provided for development programs and employment creation. An additional 20 per cent of the total entitlement is made to the participating communities to provide for costs of administration, materials and tools necessary to undertake projects.

8.34 The CDEP scheme was introduced initially on an experimental basis to a small number of communities and has since been extended to more communities including some with outstations. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs indicated that there were at least 110 outstations receiving CDEP payments. This was approximately one quarter of all outstations.<sup>27</sup> In those communities with outstations, CDEP funds are channelled from the major community councils to the outstations through the outstation resource agencies. In a few areas CDEP is paid directly to an incorporated resource centre servicing a number of outstations. Communities must indicate strong support for CDEP before it is introduced.

8.35 A review of CDEP in 1983, conducted by a committee of Commonwealth Government departments, concluded that CDEP 'had brought considerable social benefits, had found wide Aboriginal acceptance, and that it should be continued and expanded'.<sup>28</sup> The Department of Aboriginal Affairs noted the particular benefits of CDEP to outstation communities as providing them with an income base with much greater security than that provided by unemployment benefits as well as having a 20 per cent oncost component for tools and materials.<sup>29</sup>

8.36 The Miller Committee considered that CDEP provided the best mechanism to give ongoing cash support to, and recognition of, traditionally based productive activities undertaken at outstations. It noted the positive response to CDEP of those

outstation communities into which the scheme had been introduced and the way the scheme had allowed homeland communities to consolidate and undertake development according to their own requirements.<sup>30</sup>

8.37 The potential flexibility of CDEP makes it a particularly valuable proposition as an income support mechanism for homeland communities and as an alternative to unemployment benefit. It can allow the community to define what is 'work' for the purposes of remuneration in a way which accords with activities seen as 'productive' in homeland communities. However, to date it has mainly focussed on the payment of wages for community and municipal service work in Aboriginal townships and its potential flexibility needs to be exploited to allow it to be used as a means of guaranteed income support for homelands people.<sup>31</sup>

8.38 The capital component associated with the payment of CDEP is also vital to the undertaking of projects in communities such as homeland centres which have limited capital. Additional capital to support projects may also be needed in some cases as the Miller Committee pointed out.<sup>32</sup> CDEP, unlike unemployment benefits, is not subject to income testing and so allows Aboriginals to earn additional income from artefact sales and from other small undertakings without affecting the level of CDEP grants. As the ability to generate additional income is crucial to improving the standard of living and autonomy of homeland dwellers, consideration must be given to extending CDEP to other homeland communities which want it as a means of income support. Later in this chapter the Committee considers the extension of CDEP to homeland centres as part of a strategy to improve the economic circumstances of homeland dwellers.

8.39 There are also a number of difficulties, which affect CDEP as it applies to outstations, that would probably also need to be resolved as part of the extension of CDEP to a greater

number of outstation communities. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs referred to difficulties in keeping accurate records of work undertaken in homeland centres. As many outstation residents receive their CDEP funding through the major communities in which they no longer reside they can have difficulty in representing their own interests to ensure an equitable distribution of CDEP resources.<sup>33</sup> The involvement of outstation resource organisations has assisted in this area although, as Altman pointed out, this then placed a significant administrative burden on these organisations.<sup>34</sup> The increase in funding to these organisations recommended by the Committee in the previous chapter should assist them in undertaking the additional workload involved. Finally, Altman referred to the ineligibility of pensioners to take part in CDEP. In this sense the scheme is not a true income support program. The effect on pensioners is that they are unable to earn more than \$30 in the case of single pensioners and \$50 in the case of married pensioners, without affecting their pensions. They thus had a disincentive to generate additional income through activities like artefact production even though, as the older people in the communities, they were often the greatest producers of artefacts.<sup>35</sup>

#### Social security payments

8.40 The Committee noted in Chapter 1 the part which decisions to pay social security payments to Aboriginal people in cash had on the homelands movement. It provided them with the cash income that they needed to leave the major communities and purchase necessities for life in the bush. While this cash income was important, income from the sale of art and craft was also vital to the economic survival of many homeland centres.<sup>36</sup> However, revisions to, and reinterpretations of, Department of Social Security guidelines relating to the payment of unemployment benefits to Aboriginal people living on outstations, saw the social welfare income available to homeland dwellers significantly increase.<sup>37</sup>

8.41 As a result of the increased eligibility of homeland dwellers for unemployment benefits from the late 1970s, there has been a dramatic increase in the contribution of social welfare income to the economies of homeland centres. Figures cited earlier in this chapter indicate the increasingly heavy reliance of homeland dwellers on social security payments to provide them with cash income. In the Arnhem Land outstation studied by Altman, social welfare income rose from 75 per cent to 90 per cent of total cash income between 1979 and 1983. This increase was largely the result of the increased accessibility to outstation dwellers of social security benefits.<sup>38</sup> Given that the remainder of the cash income of the community came from the sale of artefacts and that it was one of the leading artefact producing communities in the region, it is likely that the reliance of many other outstations on social security income is even heavier.

8.42 Despite the improvement in the accessibility to homelands people of social security benefits, there is evidence that significant numbers of Aboriginal people in remote areas are not receiving social security benefits to which they are entitled. It was estimated that on outstations it could be between one third to one half of total benefit entitlement that is not received.<sup>39</sup> The Department of Social Security stated that it had no system for determining the proportion of people in homeland centres who are not receiving benefits to which they are entitled.

8.43 However, a review of Aboriginal access to Department of Social Security services and programs found 'serious problems and impediments in servicing remote Aboriginal communities'.<sup>40</sup> The reasons why access has been difficult are complex and include geographic remoteness and social isolation of the communities, sparseness of population, traditionally-oriented lifestyles and methods of communication between the Department and its

Aboriginal clients.<sup>41</sup> The review referred to earlier identified the need for the Department of Social Security to improve its communication with Aboriginal clients and its administrative procedures as they affected Aboriginal people and to consider possible legislative changes to accommodate the lifestyle and culture of Aboriginals.<sup>42</sup>

8.44 The Department has established a Remote Areas Task Force to examine and recommend improved methods of service delivery. The Task Force is considering improvements in a number of areas including the formal recognition and remuneration of third parties (Aboriginal representatives, community leaders etc.) to liaise between Aboriginal communities and the Department.<sup>43</sup> As these third parties or contact persons can also provide services for other Commonwealth and State or Territory government departments, the Department of Social Security has some difficulties in paying such persons for the provision of a wide range of services.<sup>44</sup> This is a matter which should be investigated further as the use of contact persons in the communities could significantly improve the access of Aboriginals to social security payments to which they are entitled.

8.45 The Committee, later in this report, expresses concern about the level of dependency of homeland dwellers and recommends measures to improve the opportunities for homeland dwellers to obtain their cash income from sources other than social welfare payments. In this regard the Committee is suggesting that many homeland communities may wish to move away from a dependency on social security income and should have the opportunity to do so. However, the Committee also considers that Aboriginal people in homeland centres have the same right to social security payments as all other Australian citizens, and the Department of Social Security needs to ensure that Aboriginal people in remote communities receive their proper entitlement. The Access Review has identified the problem areas and it is now up to the

Department to take action to remedy the difficulties. The Committee considers that, in conjunction with such action, the Department should be attempting to quantify the extent of non-receipt of benefits by Aboriginal people who have an entitlement. This sort of information is essential if the Department is to be able to assess the success of measures which it implements to improve Aboriginal access.

8.46 The Committee recommends that:

- the Department of Social Security implement as a matter of urgency measures identified in the Report on Aboriginal Access to Department of Social Security Programs to improve the access of Aboriginal people, particularly homeland dwellers, to social security benefits to which they are entitled;

- the Department of Social Security investigate other ways in which the access to social security benefits by Aboriginal people can be improved; and

- in conjunction with the implementation of measures to improve Aboriginal access to its programs, the Department of Social Security assess the extent of non-receipt of benefits by Aboriginal people who have an entitlement.

#### Income of homeland dwellers

8.47 As indicated earlier, cash incomes of Aboriginals at homeland centres are mainly derived from social welfare payments. Other smaller contributions are also made by the sale of art and



craft, the sale of fruit and vegetables from market gardens and in some areas the small royalty payments received by individual outstation residents. Estimates made by Dr Elspeth Young of the income of people in a range of outstations in the Northern Territory in mid-1981 showed that average per capita income for all outstations was \$63 per fortnight, although incomes in different areas ranged from \$41-\$74 per fortnight.<sup>45</sup> Dr Altman, for Momega outstation in Arnhem Land, estimated that per capita cash income in 1983 was about \$1,660 per annum, or approximately \$64 per fortnight.<sup>46</sup> These figures are comparable with those of Dr Young and give a reasonable idea of cash income levels at homeland communities.

8.48 However, it has been argued by Dr Altman that cash income alone gives an inadequate guide to the standard of living of homeland people because of the economic importance of subsistence production. Research he conducted in an Arnhem Land outstation suggested that if the cash imputed value of this production was added to cash income then total per capita income was approximately \$123 per fortnight (\$3,200 per year). The imputed value of subsistence production accounted for about 48 per cent of total income, social security payments for 46 per cent of income and art and craft sales for 6 per cent of income.<sup>47</sup> With a value for subsistence production being included in income figures the extent of dependence on social security income is brought into perspective. While still being high at 46 per cent of total income it is significantly less than in Aboriginal towns such as Yirrkala and Maningrida. Total income levels (including imputed income from subsistence production) at outstations also appear to be higher than at Aboriginal towns.<sup>48</sup> These figures indicate that outstations may be an attractive economic alternative to living in the larger settlements and offer a greater degree of economic independence.

8.49 However, some caution must be adopted towards these conclusions. They are based on detailed research in one outstation community in Arnhem Land with particularly rich

subsistence resources. The contribution made by subsistence production to the economies of desert outstations is often much less significant. As a result, imputed income for subsistence production would often be much less than that estimated for Arnhem Land outstations.

8.50 Based on their observations about the reliance on subsistence production in desert outstations of Central Australia, Cane and Stanley estimated that bush tucker made up 23.4 per cent of total diet. The imputed value of this contribution was calculated at \$616 per person per year.<sup>49</sup> While this amount was substantial and indicates the importance of subsistence production to desert outstations, it was much less than the approximately \$1600 per person per year estimated by Altman at Momega as imputed income for subsistence production. It was an average of subsistence production and, as Cane and Stanley pointed out, in many camps subsistence production was minor and the imputed cash value of it would be much less than \$615 per person per year.

8.51 It could be expected then that total incomes of people living in outstations in the desert and in other areas where subsistence return is more marginal than in Arnhem Land, would be significantly less than those at Momega and other Arnhem Land outstations. In many cases total income could be more than 25 per cent less in the desert compared with Arnhem Land. However, at the same time the subsistence production undertaken by residents of desert outstations enables them to improve their economic position over their counterparts in the major communities in desert areas around which subsistence resources are severely depleted.

8.52 It is also necessary to see the income levels of homeland dwellers in perspective against income levels in the wider community. Some comparison of the income levels at outstations in relation to the wider community can be gained by

comparing income levels with average weekly incomes in the general Australian community. Altman did a comparison between the income levels of adults at Momega outstation compared with income levels of adults in Australian households. He estimated that in 1980, in absolute terms, the income (including cash and an imputed component for subsistence production) of adults at Momega was only about half of the average weekly income of adults in Australian households. This comparison indicates the low level of incomes of people in outstations. However, Altman points out that outstation residents are spared a number of the major expenses like housing costs, costs associated with travelling to work etc. that other Australians have to bear. He also states that owing to their remote and highly mobile lifestyles outstation residents do not demonstrate a requirement for a number of household appliances that most Australians would regard as essentials.<sup>50</sup> Again, the Committee makes the point which it has made throughout this chapter that outstation communities in other areas could be significantly less well off than outstation dwellers in Arnhem land and a comparison of their incomes with those of the general Australian community would be less favourable.

#### Expenditure and consumption patterns

8.53 As noted earlier in the chapter, subsistence production provides a significant amount of the food consumed by outstation dwellers, although the size of the contribution varies according to the richness of local food resources. Subsistence production is important in the consumption patterns of homeland dwellers both because of the quantity of food obtained and its high quality compared with food purchased from stores. Subsistence production generally is high in protein and low in carbohydrate, whereas much store purchased food is low in protein and high in carbohydrate. Subsistence production and consumption thus makes an important contribution to the good health of outstation dwellers.

8.54 Subsistence production also has important implications for expenditure patterns. Studies by Dr Young have shown that the extent of income of remote Aboriginals spent on food is very high, up to 60-70 per cent. Thus, if people are able to substitute food obtained from subsistence production for food which has to be purchased then significant additional income becomes available to spend on non-food items.<sup>51</sup> Dr Altman noted that in the Top End of the Northern Territory the high level of subsistence production meant that in general terms people had more money left after buying the basics - flour, sugar and tea - than people in the Centre. People in the Top End were able to save rapidly for other items such as vehicles.<sup>52</sup>

8.55 Some outstations also grow food for consumption. Vegetable and fruit gardens make an important and nutritious contribution to the diet of some outstation people. Killer herds can also provide a valuable source of meat in outstation communities. A small number of outstations also keep other livestock including chickens and goats which can provide alternative sources of food.

8.56 Despite the contribution of bush tucker and cultivated food, all outstation people still spend a significant amount of their cash income on food. There are few stores in homeland centres and market food is purchased by outstation people from visiting supply trucks or aeroplanes operated by resource agencies (with considerable markups over prices charged in stores in the communities), or from stores in the central communities entailing significant travelling costs for outstation dwellers. Most Kimberley outstations buy their stores communally by contributing to a 'chuck-in' fund from which stores are purchased.<sup>53</sup>

8.57 Cash income not spent on food is used to purchase things like vehicles, clothing, footwear, equipment for the camp or for hunting and gathering, ammunition (for rifles) etc. Income

from art and craft sales is saved to purchase more expensive items. Indications from available data are that in general terms homelands people in the Top End of the Northern Territory have more disposable income to spend on non-food items to improve their communities than is available to other homeland dwellers. In all cases, however, homelands people have low incomes which provide them with little disposable income to spend on items which substantially improve their quality of life. It is this that requires consideration in strategies to improve the economic prospects of homeland dwellers.

### Conclusions and recommendations

8.58 While the overall economic situation of many homeland dwellers is reasonably favourable when compared with people in Aboriginal towns they are nevertheless very poor when compared with the wider community. The generally favourable position when compared with people in the Aboriginal towns is mainly due to the ability to supplement food resources with subsistence production. This has provided an important economic motivation for the move to homeland centres. However, while subsistence production makes a major contribution in some areas, in others it is minimal and people in these outstations are much less well off. In all cases homeland dwellers have little disposable income available after purchasing basic food requirements to significantly improve their quality of life. There are strategies which can be pursued to improve the economic situation in homeland centres, which should assist in strengthening the movement. These strategies must be in accord with the lifestyle of homeland dwellers.

8.59 As outstation people spend much of their cash income purchasing basic food needs, any replacement of basic food resources from other sources will give outstation people much greater disposable cash income to spend on items that will improve their standard of living. Already, as has been discussed in this chapter, subsistence production is playing a significant

part in providing outstation people with food resources. A first strategy then must be to maintain and in some areas, particularly desert areas where subsistence returns are often lower but still important, increase the returns from subsistence production. Cane notes that in desert outstations the potential for subsistence production 'is not being optimised'.<sup>54</sup> One of the major problems, as Cane notes, is that the resources around permanent outstations become progressively depleted, and ways of maintaining and improving subsistence return will involve extending the range over which Aboriginal people can hunt and gather effectively and improving the quality of the immediate outstation environment.<sup>55</sup>

8.60 The grading of very basic roads to resource rich areas together with the provision of a basic water supply could enable people to exploit wider areas of their country. In local areas around outstation communities the intensive cultivation of traditionally collected fruits and vegetables, the implementation of traditional land management practices and the careful husbandry of animal resources are measures which can be taken to improve the return from subsistence production. Location of homeland centres will also be important in terms of the use of resources.

8.61 The Miller Committee recognised the importance of this sort of strategy for outstation economies and recommended that the CSIRO be encouraged to research means of enhancing the subsistence bases of outstation communities, particularly in Central Australia.<sup>56</sup> According to the submission from the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is developing a program of Aboriginal Land Management which responds to the recommendations of the Miller Report concerning Aboriginal ranger training and natural resource development on Aboriginal lands, and that the NPWS may be a better organisation than CSIRO to pursue this

matter.<sup>57</sup> The Committee endorses the need for further research in consultation with Aboriginal communities with a view to the implementation of effective programs.

8.62 The Committee recommends that:

. resource organisations servicing homeland centres be provided with additional resources to improve the subsistence base of homeland centres. Areas that should receive attention include:

- the intensive cultivation of traditional fruits and vegetables;
- location of resource rich areas;
- improvement of people's access to resource rich country by the provision of basic roads and water sources.

8.63 A second major strategy should involve providing outstation people with appropriate support for their lifestyle and the ability to improve their income status if they wish. As was stated earlier in this chapter, homeland dwellers are heavily dependent on social welfare payments for their cash income. Given the highly productive activities in which homelands people are engaged, their dependency on unemployment benefits for income maintenance seems inappropriate as in many cases they are fully 'employed' in these activities. Dependency on welfare payments has also created a disincentive for outstation people to generate additional income beyond the low ceiling imposed by social security payments.<sup>58</sup> The effect of social welfare dependency on homeland communities was described by Dr Young:

Welfare dependency thus creates a situation of economic stagnation and vulnerability. It can be alleviated by developing cash earning projects in the homeland centres, or by devising methods of cash support which do not carry the stigma of unemployment benefit.<sup>59</sup>

8.64 The Committee considers that both these policies should be pursued as ways of improving the economic situation of homeland dwellers. The Federal Government has already begun to move in this direction with the development of an Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) in response to the Miller report which seeks to develop Aboriginal economic independence and reduce welfare dependency. The elements of the policy of specific relevance to homelands are CDEP, the Community Employment and Enterprise Development Scheme (CEEDS) and Enterprise Employment Assistance (EEA).

8.65 The Community Development Employment Program and its applicability to outstations as a means of income maintenance was described earlier in the chapter. As part of its Aboriginal Employment Development Policy the Government has decided to expand CDEP to an additional 20 Aboriginal communities in 1986/87. As a result at least 21 outstations will commence on CDEP in Western Australia in 1986/87.<sup>60</sup> The CEEDS program, administered by the Aboriginal Development Commission, is designed to provide grants to remote communities to operate enterprises that need not necessarily be commercially viable in the short term, but have the potential to generate additional income. The enterprises funded under CEEDS are also eligible to receive Enterprise Employment Assistance (EEA), an employment subsidy to the enterprise based on its employing capacity. This scheme is administered by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations.<sup>61</sup> These latter two schemes, because they support projects which are not necessarily commercially viable in the short term but which will allow the generation of additional income, have potential to support projects in outstations.



8.66 As CDEP offers homeland dwellers a form of income support that is not subject to the vagaries or restrictions of unemployment benefit, the Committee considers it should be made available to all homeland communities which wish to take part in it. The Committee emphasises close consultation with outstation communities prior to the introduction of CDEP as some community members may not wish to participate but retain their individual right to unemployment benefits.<sup>62</sup> Where homeland communities wish to take part in the scheme and their associated central communities do not, these requests should be acceded to. Also, where homeland communities wish to administer the CDEP program through their resource organisation and apart from the central communities, these requests should also be acceded to. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs noted that most outstations would rather the central community receive CDEP on their behalf because the central community was better equipped to deal with the administrative detail required by a CDEP scheme.<sup>63</sup>

8.67 The importance of flexibility and local decision-making in the administration of CDEP programs in homeland centres cannot be emphasised too highly. The purpose of CDEP in homeland centres should be to provide homeland dwellers with a guaranteed income support to allow them to undertake those productive activities which are important to them and to their lifestyle.

8.68 The enterprise assistance schemes could assist projects in homeland centres which have the potential to generate additional income. Dr Altman pointed out the prospective enterprises could be divided into two types. First, there were 'export enterprises' that involved the production of goods and services for sale in distant or local markets. The main industry that should be encouraged in this area was the manufacture of items of material culture. The provision of services to tourists also had potential although it was noted that some outstation communities would not wish to have the significant contact with, and influx of, non-Aboriginal people that would be associated with tourist activities.

8.69 The second form of enterprise was 'import substituting enterprises' that produce goods and services for local consumption as a replacement of goods otherwise obtained through the market. Enterprises of this nature include the establishment of 'killer' herds, gardens, the intense cultivation of traditional produce and the engagement in providing services like health, education, housing, mechanical workshops and shopping. The first form of enterprise would enable outstation dwellers directly to increase their cash incomes, while the second form of enterprise would allow savings to be made in cash income that would otherwise be expended in obtaining the goods and services. Both forms of enterprise will enable homeland dwellers to improve their economic position.<sup>64</sup>

8.70 As indicated earlier in the chapter, the major prospects in the short term are in the art and craft industry where homeland dwellers have already achieved some success in generating additional income. However, the proportional returns to producers in the industry have fallen largely as a result of the current system of marketing.<sup>65</sup> The Committee has recommended that a comprehensive independent inquiry be conducted into the marketing of Aboriginal art and craft and the development of the industry. It is suggested that in providing support to income generating projects benefitting homeland dwellers, priority should be given to art and craft related projects because of their enormous potential.

8.71 In all projects in which homelands people wish to engage it is likely that technical assistance and appropriate training will be essential to the long term viability of the projects. Agencies involved in providing capital and recurrent support to these projects must be aware of the importance of providing the necessary technical assistance and training to homeland dwellers to enable them to successfully undertake projects. They should liaise with technical and further education departments and other organisations which can provide appropriate

training programs to Aboriginal communities. Funding bodies like the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations will also need to be involved. In relation to technical assistance a variety of organisations are likely to be involved depending on the nature of the advice and assistance required.

8.72 The Committee recommends that:

- . Community Development Employment Programs be extended to all homeland centres which wish to participate in the programs;
- . the flexibility of Community Development Employment Programs and community decision-making about expenditure of funds be emphasised in the administration of the programs in homeland centres;
- . where homeland centres make requests for the administration of CDEP by their resource organisations, these requests be acceded to;
- . capital and employment subsidy assistance be provided to income generating projects which homelands people wish to establish with particular priority being given to projects in the art and craft industry; and
- . technical assistance advice and training be provided to homeland dwellers in relation to projects they wish to undertake.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S478-79.
- 2 Transcript of Evidence, p. S331.
- 3 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S480-81.
- 4 Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs, Report of the Committee of Review (Miller Report), AGPS, Canberra, 1985, p. 350.
- 5 Transcript of Evidence, p. S482.
- 6 B. Meehan, 'Man does not live by calories alone : the role of shellfish in a coastal cuisine', in J. Allen, J. Golson and R. Jones (eds.), Sunda and Sahul, Academic Press, London, 1976, pp. 493-530.
- 7 Ibid, p. 519.
- 8 Transcript of Evidence, p. S480.
- 9 Transcript of Evidence, p. 405.
- 10 Cane and Stanley, op. cit., p. 178.
- 11 Transcript of Evidence, p. S687.
- 12 Transcript of Evidence, p. 986.
- 13 Transcript of Evidence, p. S713.
- 14 Transcript of Evidence, p. S685.
- 15 Transcript of Evidence, p. S695.
- 16 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S509-10.
- 17 Transcript of Evidence, p. S514.
- 18 Transcript of Evidence, p. S486.
- 19 Transcript of Evidence, p. 986.
- 20 Transcript of Evidence, p. 987.
- 21 Transcript of Evidence, p. S523.
- 22 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 986-87.
- 23 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 720-21.

- 24 Miller Report, op.cit., p. 355, Recommendation No. 23.
- 25 Cane and Stanley, op.cit., p. 207.
- 26 Transcript of Evidence, p. S93.
- 27 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1665.
- 28 Transcript of Evidence, p. S360.
- 29 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1664.
- 30 Miller Report, op.cit., p. 351.
- 31 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1596.
- 32 Miller Report, op.cit., p. 351.
- 33 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S1664-65.
- 34 Altman, Additional Information, February 1987, p. 8.
- 35 Altman, Additional Information, February 1987, p. 9.
- 36 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S509-10.
- 37 For a description of these changes see W. Sanders, 'The politics of Unemployment Benefit for Aborigines : some consequences of economic marginalisation', in D. Wade-Marshall and P. Loveday (eds.), Employment and Unemployment : a collection of papers, North Australia Research Monograph, Darwin, 1985, pp. 137-62.
- 38 Transcript of Evidence, p. S486.
- 39 Transcript of Evidence, p. S60.
- 40 Transcript of Evidence, p. S818.
- 41 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S818-19.
- 42 Transcript of Evidence, p. S820.
- 43 Transcript of Evidence, p. S825.
- 44 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 915-16.
- 45 Young, op.cit., p. 79.
- 46 Calculated from figures at Transcript of Evidence, p. S482.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid.

- 49 Cane and Stanley, op.cit., p. 197.
- 50 Transcript of Evidence, p. S483.
- 51 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 423-24.
- 52 Transcript of Evidence, p. 969.
- 53 Transcript of Evidence, p. S88.
- 54 S. Cane, 'Bush Tucker - Intensified Use of Traditional Resources on Aboriginal Outstations', in B. Foran and B. Walker (eds), Science and Technology for Aboriginal Development, CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Rangelands Research, Project Report No. 3, 1986.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Miller Report, op.cit., Recommendation No. 82, p. 353.
- 57 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1600.
- 58 Transcript of Evidence, p. S486.
- 59 Transcript of Evidence, p. S275.
- 60 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1666.
- 61 Transcript of Evidence, pp. S1597-99.
- 62 Altman, Additional Information, February 1987, p. 10.
- 63 Transcript of Evidence, p. S1665.
- 64 Altman, Additional Information, pp. 10-13.
- 65 Transcript of Evidence, pp. 986 and S486-87.