

PRESS RELEASE

A study just finalised by Tangentyere Council Research Unit has found the actual resident population in Town Camps to be double that reported by the ABS. The findings provide the first formal understanding of the issue of mobility in the region and how this impacts on the Town of Alice Springs and the Town Camps. The research will inform Tangentyere and all Government agencies who are responsible for service delivery in the region.

This project was driven by Tangentyere Council due to the combination of the interest in accurately reporting the town camps population, the effect of mobility and through the recent successful experience with a research project in the survey of town camp resident's attitudes towards the liquor restrictions.

The research shows that there is an average base population (1910) in the town camps and approximately 20% of these people are visitors. Occupancy estimates are between 10.8 – 16.1 people per house in the town camps¹, with 20% of houses surveyed having 10 people or more living in the house. The housing stock in the town camps is inadequate with a lack of houses with sufficient bedrooms for the number of people living in them.

Tangentyere Council Executive Director William Tilmouth says, "We have always known that our population was high, our housing levels were inadequate and that we were servicing a mobile population who are adding to the stress in Town Camps. Now we have clear evidence for the first time and I call on Governments to work with Tangentyere to respond by providing services to meet demand."

Factors which contribute to the high level of mobility include overcrowding and the inadequacy of housing – in June 2004 the waiting list for public housing in Alice Springs was 4 years for a for a 4 bedroom house and over 3 years for a 3 bedroom house, and most hostels had 100% occupancy. The movement of people from bush to town leads to many visitors staying on Town Camps due to the lack of other available accommodation. The enforcement of the 2 km law also leads to visitors who are drinking being pushed onto camps, leading to overcrowding and social stress.

The research was undertaken over a 12 month period by an all indigenous research team at Tangentyere Council, funded by the Desert Knowledge with assistance from the Centre for Remote Health. Tangentyere researchers know the people, live the context, speak the language and understand the complexities of the issues in a way that an external researcher cannot.

¹ Excludes those houses that need to be replaced.