

Population and Mobility in the Town Camps of Alice Springs

A report prepared by
Tangentyere Council
Research Unit

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December 2005



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DK-CRC Report Number 9

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ISBN: 1 74158 010 2 (Print copy)
ISBN: 1 74158 011 0 (Online copy)
ISSN: 1832 6684

Citation

Foster, D, Mitchell, J, Ulrik, J and Williams, R 2005, *Population and Mobility in the Town Camps of Alice Springs*, A report prepared by Tangentyere Council Research Unit, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, Alice Springs.

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Abbreviations/Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADC	Aboriginal Development Commission
CRH	Centre for Remote Health
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
DK-CRC	Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CDEP	Community Development Employment Program
ERP	Estimate Resident Population
NDRI	National Drug Research Institute
NP	Night Patrol
NT	Northern Territory
NTDHCS	Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services
NTG	Northern Territory Government
PES	Post Enumeration Survey
SA	South Australia
WA	Western Australia

Introduction

This project comes from a concern that Tangentyere Council had with the ABS census count of people living in town camps: 973 in August 2001 (ABS 2002). The council had long believed that the census counts were extremely low. The use of this 'official' population has affected the level of services for people in town camps, resources for Tangentyere Council, the ability to lobby for services and continues to deny the existence of the town camps and their residents. This concern, and issues associated with visitors to town camps, had been discussed by the Tangentyere Council executive for some time and a submission was developed in conjunction with the Centre for Remote Health (CRH) to conduct research into population and mobility. The proposal was put to the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DK-CRC) and funded in May 2004.

The research model used was a development from previous research undertaken by Tangentyere Council. The aim of Tangentyere Council has been to develop a research model that ensures Aboriginal direction, ownership, participation and accountability back to Aboriginal people.

In April 2004 Tangentyere Council had conducted a survey of the attitudes of Aboriginal town camp residents to the Alice Springs liquor licensing restrictions. An evaluation of the liquor restrictions was planned by the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services (NTDHCS) by means of a phone survey. Tangentyere Council felt that the people whose lives are most affected by alcohol would not have their voices heard, simply because people on town camps do not own telephones. So Tangentyere Council, in conjunction with the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) and the CRH, formed a group of employees and town camp residents to develop and conduct our own survey of town camp residents' attitudes towards the liquor restrictions.

Figure 1: Pamela & Magdaline Lynch conducting the survey



A survey tool was developed that was based on the survey questions agreed by the Evaluation Reference Group¹ and then modified by the research team so they were worded in a way that would be understandable to town camp residents. In addition, an open-ended question was asked with the aim of eliciting more detailed suggestions about ways to address alcohol-related problems in Alice Springs.

Tangentyere discussed at length the need to continue the work and research methods that were established as part of this survey of town camp attitudes towards alcohol restrictions. As this survey had only been conducted a month before the start of the mobility project, the development and strengthening of this approach and survey method was at an early stage. Juanita Sherwood from the CRH and Dennis Grey from Curtin University were involved in the development of this approach and both were asked to be involved in the population and mobility study.

¹ The Evaluation Reference Group for the evaluation of liquor restrictions in Alice Springs was formed by the NTDHCS.

Ilan Warchivker from the CRH was instrumental in getting the research project underway and assisted in conducting the surveys. The researchers were made up of Tangentyere employees and town camp residents who have the language skills, the cultural understanding of our people, have family ties on the town camps and have also lived on the camps. At a two-week training session the Tangentyere researchers developed the survey instrument (questions) and how to conduct the survey. This was followed by the first survey from 15–24 June 2004. The second survey was conducted from 12–29 October 2004 and the third survey from 5–14 April 2005.

In the third and fourth surveys, Denise Foster and Raelene Williams (Aboriginal researchers) who had commenced as researchers in the project became the survey coordinators and Denise Foster, Vanessa Davis and Ricky Mentha (all town camp residents) became responsible for entering all data and initial analysis. The fourth survey training was conducted by Denise Foster and Raelene Williams from 7–8 June, with the survey conducted from 15–24 June.

The Tangentyere Council Research Unit has been formed with the assistance of three university partners (CRH, NDRI and Edith Cowan University) that have a history of working with the council. The aim of the department is to:

- provide and develop Aboriginal expertise in areas of research and social services development
- protect Aboriginal peoples' rights in relation to research
- promote research that is meaningful and results in practical change and development within the community
- give Aboriginal people ownership in research
- use research to inform Tangentyere Council services, government, policy makers and academic institutions.

The process of this research is more than involving Aboriginal people in research as translators, or to provide an introduction to Aboriginal communities to facilitate research projects initiated by external agencies. It is not about the education of external researchers in conducting research on Aboriginal people, it is about the education of Aboriginal people (primarily people from town camps) to conduct research. It means working with the research aims of Tangentyere Council.

History of Tangentyere Council

The town campers, the people themselves, started the organisation. (ANCD 2004)

Tangentyere² Council is an Aboriginal-owned and -controlled organisation based in Alice Springs. It is a resource and advocacy agency for Aboriginal people living on town camps.³ Tangentyere came to being in response to the growing needs of displaced local Arrernte people (and the many people displaced from other language groups and areas in central Australia) for basic infrastructure and services. Today the council represents 19 town camp leases or Aboriginal housing associations around the outer skirts of the township (Tangentyere Council 1990:4).

² Originally spelt Tangatjira in 1974. The spelling changed when Tangentyere was formally recognised as an organisation in 1977.

³ Town camps were referred to as fringe dwellings.

It all started back in 1974 when a group of concerned town camp residents came together in the hope to resolve the issues faced by fringe camp dwellers. The group called themselves Tangentyere, a local Arrernte word meaning ‘Working together, to help each other’ or ‘all speaking together’ (ANCD 2004). One of the founding members of the group, Geoff Shaw, on returning from the Vietnam War, found that living conditions were unchanged and organised a town meeting.

People on these fringe camps were there for various reasons. The most important aspect to remember is that some of these camp sites have been traditional camping areas for some families over a long period, for ceremonial purposes. Other residents are people who had moved to town in order to be closer to their children who were forcibly removed and placed in The Bungalow in Alice Springs. When the NT Cattle Industry moved to equal wages for Aboriginal stock workers in 1965, many pastoralists refused to comply and many workers were laid off, and with their families were forced off the stations and into town.

With the move to award wages from the stations like the Gurindji walk off, that's why they walked off because they were going to be paid flour, sugar and tea and the unions were pushing for award wages. But the station owners didn't want to pay Aboriginal people award wages, they still wanted to pay them flour, sugar and tea and Aboriginal people saying, 'No, we need wages.' And so that movement of people from station work into town increased the volume of people living on the fringes of Alice Springs.

Apart from DAA⁴ and welfare there was no group responsible for any of the town camps. It was the incorporation of each town camp and then incorporating into one body that actually formed Tangentyere. Each town camp is separately incorporated but decides to become a part of a bigger corporation and that was Tangentyere Council, so they make up Tangentyere (Pers. comm., William Tilmouth⁵).

Town couldn't cope. There was no place for people to live, no jobs (Pers. comm., A McCormack⁶).

The town camps are small communities made up of family members or members of the same language groups, gathered together in one area. They are situated in and around the fringes of the Alice Springs township, and as previously stated some sites are traditional ceremonial camping areas from before European settlement.

Decisions are made through the Tangentyere Executive Committee which comprises eighteen representatives—one from each town camp⁷, who are leaders in their community and representatives from the men's and women's cultural committee. At each town camp AGM a president and two delegates are elected. The president is automatically on the Tangentyere executive, and the delegates go if he/she is unable to attend a meeting.

Only Tangentyere belongs to, works for, and speaks for its town campers. (Pers. comm., G. Shaw⁸)

⁴ The Department of Aboriginal Affairs was created in 1972, replacing the Office of Aboriginal Affairs and was superseded by ATSIC in 1991.

⁵ William Tilmouth is the current Executive Director of Tangentyere Council, from 1998 to 2005.

⁶ Audrey McCormack is a town camp resident and executive member of Tangentyere Council.

⁷ Except Basso's Farm and Mount Nancy, which share one representative.

⁸ Geoff Shaw is a founder, current executive member and president and former executive director of Tangentyere Council.

Today Tangentyere Council offers a broad range of social services. There is a youth service that provides sporting and recreational activities for kids aged six to eighteen, a holiday program to keep kids occupied through the school break, the circus program for children aged six months to fifteen years, an after-school program that takes care of children aged five to sixteen and a youth caseworker. At one camp, Yarrenyty-Arltere there is a learning centre/school. The Central Australia Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS) works with young people affected by petrol sniffing across central Australia. There is a Safe Families program to support kids who are homeless and families at risk of breakdown, and a Families Wellbeing program that provides counselling and support. There is the Homemakers and Old People's Services (HOPS) department that provides support and personal care for people with disabilities and the aged.

The housing department is there to assist town campers to manage their housing associations, help with rent collection, repairs and maintenance. The school bus service operates from 7–8.30am picking up kids and from 2.30–4pm dropping kids back home. The food order bus provides transport for people from the town camps to Tangentyere and Alice Springs. There is a Centrelink office and the Job Shop office that provides employment and training information to job seekers and also provides personal support for people who have limited access to employment. There is a financial counselling service and a Westpac bank agency. Recently an art project was started that aims to support artists in town camps in producing and retailing their artworks. There is the Day and Night Patrol, support for Remote Area Night Patrols, the Wardens and the referral officers who work with clients referred from other services including the patrols. Today 80% of Tangentyere staff are Aboriginal people who live on the town camps or have family connections to people living on the town camps.

Dwellings on town camps

Set out on the next page (Table 1) is a list of the town camps on Alice Springs, their name(s), the principal language group and other language groups who live there and the date of the establishment of the lease. The development of houses and associated infrastructure has been a difficult and contested process.

The great majority of the current town camp sites were initially settled in the 1970s. No essential services were provided to the people living in town camps and no attention given to their eligibility for permanent housing or services (infrastructure, education, health etc).

In 1976 Wrigley noted: There are 800 people in Alice Springs who every day have to dig in a dry creek bed or be dependent on someone else to have a drink of water or wash their hands. Half of these people dig soakages that fill with the highly contaminated water of the Todd River. Others wait for a tanker to be filled or for one to two 44-gallon drums to be dumped in their camps once or twice a week. A further 200 people have to walk between 60–400 yards to a tap. There are 10 hot showers, 11 lavatories and no power points for 1,000 people living permanently in Alice Springs (Dixon 1985 cited in Coughlan 1991).

Right where the community is now, 150 yards to the west, is a new housing subdivision. Streets have been put there, sewerage has been put in and the houses haven't been built yet! Here we are [in 1977], east 150 yards and have no sewerage but we are now building three houses after fighting hard for many years. But we have to use septic tanks ... Why can't we have the sewerage facilities as supplied to the rest of the town without argument? (Shaw 1977 cited in Coughlan 1991)

Table 1: List of town camps in Alice Springs

No	Town camp (Other name)	Principal language groups	Other language groups	Lease first applied for	Date lease granted
01	Ilperle Tyathe (Warlpiri Camp)	Warlpiri		Late 1977	30.01.79
02	Aper-Alwerrkngne (Palmer's Camp)	Arrernte		Late 1977	25.07.79
03	Basso's Farm			As for Mount Nancy	
04	Mount Nancy	Kaytetye	Arrernte, Anmatyerre, Alyawarra	Feb 1974	16.07.76
05	Anthelk-Ewelpaye (Charles Creek)	Arrernte, Anmatyerre	Warlpiri	Late 1977	12.08.77
06	Nywerte (Trucking Yards)	Arrernte	Luritja	Late 1977	28.12.78
07	Akngwertnarre (Morris Soak)	Arrernte	Warlpiri	Late 1977	22.12.77
08	Ewyenper-Atwatye (Hidden Valley)	Arrernte	Warlpiri	Late 1977	30.01.80
09	Yarrenyty-Arltere (Larapinta)	Arrernte	Pertame, Luritja, Pitjantjatjara	Late 1977	23.06.81
10	Anthepe (Drive In)	Arrernte, Pitjantjatjara	Warlpiri, Luritja	Nov 1973	18.11.76
11	Inarlange (Little Sisters)	Arrernte, Luritja	Warlpiri, Pitjantjatjara	1973	11.06.73
12	Ilperenye (Old Timers)	Warlpiri, Luritja	Arrernte, Pitjantjatjara	Late 1977	14.09.81
13	Ilparpa	Arrernte, Pertame	Luritja	Late 1977	02.07.80
14	Mpwetyerre (BP or Abbots)	Arrernte	Warlpiri, Pitjantjatjara, Warumungu, Luritja	1979	04.07.80
15	Ilpeye Ilpeye (Golders)	Arrernte	Kaytetye	1979	17.06.86
16	Karnte	Pitjantjatjara	Pintupi/Luritja	1981	01.02.88
17	Tangentyere Council				
18	Lhenpe Artnwe (Anmatyerre/Hoppies)	Warlpiri	Arrernte, Anmatyerre, Pintupi/Luritja, Kaytetye	1981	
19	Anhelke (Namatjira's)	Arrernte		No lease as yet	
20	Irrkerlantye (Whitegate)	Arrernte		No lease as yet	

In 1970 the Town Management Board of Alice Springs (precursor to the Alice Springs Town Council) identified 16 'town camps' (town special leases) for Aboriginal people, although only leases and facilities for five were recommended. The Aboriginal Land Commissioner recommended leases for town camps on a needs basis in 1974, although needs-based land claims were excluded from the final draft on the Land Rights Act and applications for lands in urban areas were required to be submitted to the NT Lands Board rather than the Land Commissioner. This also removed urban lands needs from the mandate of Central Land Council. In 1973 the first special purpose lease was granted at Inarlange followed by Anthepe and Mt Nancy in 1976.

After self-government in 1978, the Northern Territory government (NTG) gradually assumed control of state functions and the NT Lands Department became responsible for issuing leases. In 1981 the NT Lands Department began a major offensive to stop the granting of any further special purpose leases for town camps, and pulled down and impounded temporary shelters, pit toilets and a water tank erected on Ilwemp-Akerte (now part of Anhelke) town camp. No new leases were granted until 1986.

Tangentyere Council was primarily established as a mechanism to provide housing services to the people who live in town camps, which existing organisations had been unable to do. The NT Housing Commission had avoided dealing with tenancy issues on town camps, either by

failing to make provision for building houses in the camps or by building the houses and passing the management of them to Tangentyere Council. The high maintenance costs of the houses and infrastructure in town camps was a result of overcrowding, and difficulties in accessing services, employment, and income entitlements. People living in town camps then found it difficult to obtain and maintain income sufficient and stable enough to ensure that rent, utility and other house costs were paid.

In November 1982 the NTG announced that from July 1983 it would no longer pay essential services costs for communal areas on town camps—it would no longer pay for power or water used in street lights, sewerage pumps, playgrounds and park areas, community facilities or ablution blocks despite the fact that the NTG received a special purpose grant from the Commonwealth for these (Coughlan 1991). The NTG proposed that public facilities such as streetlights be ‘user pays’ in Aboriginal town camps and not in the rest of Alice Springs. At the same time the NTG ceased to install, maintain or read water meters for individual households and planned to bulk-bill each camp. After threats by the NTG to disconnect the town camps, the issue was resolved in 1985 with the NTG agreeing to pay for the current public essential services except street lights, and restoring water meters to houses (Coughlan 1991).

In 1985, a review commissioned by the Aboriginal Development Commission⁹ (ADC) noted that there were 19 town camps with a total core permanent population of 1,071 and a large floating population of men and women. The review looked at population data from 1981, 1983 and 1985 and concluded that the camp populations were relatively stable, noting that 60% of adults surveyed indicated that as far back as they could remember they had always lived at town camps, a further 20% for the last five years (Dixon 1985). A comparison with residential patterns of non-Aboriginal people in Alice Springs at that time might have indicated that this was the more transient mobile population. Certainly there was a tension between the government agencies (DAA, Department of Health and Ageing and NTG) who saw the town camps as temporary transient places and the residents who saw them as permanent (Coughlan 1991). The tension translated into policy, programs and funding decisions that resulted in the considerable underdevelopment of the town camps in comparison with other residential areas in Alice Springs.

Set out below is a table of the types of dwellings available for residents on the town camps. The dwelling types consist of 2–5 bedroom houses, single and double tin sheds. The community facilities and ablution blocks are included as potential dwellings. A community facility is a meeting centre or small building generally used for community purposes. Due to the shortage of housing, some community facilities are occupied. In Survey 1 there were 35 people living in the five community facilities surveyed.

Table 2: Types of dwellings on town camps, July 2005

2Br	3Br	4Br	5Br	Total housing	Single tin sheds	Double tin sheds	House to be demolished & replaced	Ablution block	Community facility
31	91	68	1	191	82	15	43	20	15

Source: Tangentyere Housing Department

Tin sheds can be moved between houses or town camps to accommodate changes in population needs. For example a tin shed that has become vacant or is near a house that is to be demolished will be pulled down and rebuilt near another house that needs the additional dwelling space. This

⁹ The ADC was a statutory authority created in 1980 and with DAA was superseded by ATSIC in 1991.

may or may not be in the same town camp. Sometimes residents request that a tin shed be pulled down, for example if there is sorry business and the family move out of the house and the tin shed for a while and people have moved into it and are causing disturbance on the town camp. The town camp's boss might ask that the tin shed be pulled down until the family come back.

Figure 2: Map of town camps



Previous population estimates of town camps

As noted previously, in 1985 an ADC review noted that there was a total core permanent population of 1,071 and a large floating population of men and women in the 19 town camps. Prior to the 2001 census the town camps in Alice Springs were not clearly distinguished from the surrounding suburban areas in census data. In 2001 the ABS grouped the 19 town camps into census collection districts which could then be analysed separately from and in contrast to the rest of Alice Springs. The Apatula ABS region corresponds to the Central Remote ATSIC region.¹⁰

Table 3: Number and age distribution of people, Alice Springs and Apatula region, 2001 census

	Indigenous			Non-Indigenous
	Town camps	Rest of Alice Springs	Apatula region	in Alice Springs
Number of people	973	3,279	8,904	20,820
% of Alice Springs population	4%	13%		83%
% of Indigenous population of Alice Springs and Apatula	8%	27%	66%	

The ABS data would indicate that there has been a decrease in the town camps population between 1985 and 2001, which seems unlikely.

Source: ABS 2002

For Indigenous people in remote areas (and including town camps), there is a specific Indigenous Enumeration Strategy that uses modified forms¹¹ and interviewers, often local people who have undergone some training sessions. The suitability of the data provided by the census for policy and funding decision-making is a function of what and how it was collected. A detailed appraisal is contained in Martin et al (2002).

The accuracy of the population count is important. In 1996, the ABS national estimate of undercount was 7% for Indigenous people and 1.5% for non-Indigenous people, and in 2001 it was 6.5% and 2.2% respectively. The estimated net undercount is obtained from a sample follow-up survey (Post Enumeration Survey (PES)).¹²

One drawback in establishing the accuracy of undercount estimates applied to remote areas (and town camps), is the fact that a PES is not conducted in such areas. Thus, in the NT, the urban undercount rate was applied in developing Estimated Resident Populations (ERP) for remote Statistical Local Areas (SLAs). No rigorous check has been made of the applicability of applying suburban undercount rates to remote and town camp populations. Perhaps the closest is that conducted at Aurukun in regard to the 1986 Census (and estimated for the 1991 Census), which suggested a census undercount of 17%. The 'missing' people were the young, more mobile and more socially marginalised (Martin & Taylor 1996). A population projection of the ERP for Indigenous people in central Australia was completed for each five years through to 2021 in Mitchell et al (2005). Applying these population projection rates to the ABS 2001 census data for town camps provides an estimated population in 2005 of 1,115 in the town camps.¹³

10 The southern boundary is the NT/SA border, the eastern boundary is the NT/Qld border, western boundary is the NT/WA border, the northern boundary crosses the Tanami desert including Yuendumu and Ti Tree and across to Lake Nash in the east.

11 The Special Indigenous Household Form (SIHF) that has one form for each household group on a community, and the Special Indigenous Personal Form (SIPF), that is supposed to be filled out for each person.

12 The net undercount estimates used in the NT were derived from the PES conducted in NT urban centres and towns, including Alice Springs.

13 The assumptions on which the projection is based are: the fertility rate used is the SLA registered births in Alice Springs and Central Remote ATSIC regions aggregated to desert region in 2001 which provides a total fertility rate of 2.6 held constant; the mortality rate used is the ABS NT Indigenous survival ratios held constant; and net migration is assumed to be zero at all ages. A standard cohort component method of projection was applied to the 2001 Indigenous ERP for Alice Springs and Central Remote regions combined and projections established (Mitchell et al 2005).

Methods and Results

Study population

The study population is comprised of all people living in the 19 town camps in Alice Springs. There is no sample within the population as the survey was aimed at being as comprehensive as possible, similar to a census process. There were four surveys conducted over a 12-month period.

In addition to the town camps, public housing in Alice Springs that had Aboriginal residents was surveyed. This was an additional part to the survey of the town camps undertaken at the request of the CRH and NT Department of Housing. A list of addresses of the relevant public housing was provided to the CRH in June 2004. The data from the public housing survey forms was entered and provided in electronic form to the CRH.

Survey tool

The survey tool or survey form, information sheet and consent form were developed as part of the training before the first survey and are in Appendix B.

Data analysis

A brief review of the data analysis and population projections was conducted by Dr John Taylor of ANU, whose expertise was greatly appreciated by the research team.

The completed survey forms were collected from the interviewers each day and each form was checked before entering data into the computer. If any section of the survey form was incomplete, a follow up system was made for the researchers to complete the form before returning it again for data entry. This may mean that they needed to go back to the dwelling as maybe they didn't have enough time to complete the whole form when they were doing the interview. When all the data had been entered and all the forms checked, the spreadsheet was transferred to the SPSS program to get the results of each camp.

Aboriginal research process

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 residents' attitudes towards the liquor restrictions. Tangentyere Council researchers and executive knew the difference that real Aboriginal involvement in undertaking research could make.

Active participation in research is significantly better when Aboriginal people from the community conduct the research. In the survey of town camp residents' attitudes towards the liquor restrictions, only 12 out of the 1,270 people selected declined to participate. More importantly there is a comprehensive understanding of the context so that the response is much more accurate and detailed. In the training, researchers talked about their experience of other research and surveys—

how many Aboriginal people would just answer yes/no, or often yes/yes to get it over and done with as they may not understand the reason for the survey, the questions, or regard it as an impolite interference on the part of the researchers but are too polite to just walk away.

There was discussion about how non-Aboriginal external researchers would not understand an answer and would say, ‘Sorry, I’m here to ask you about only this subject’. They have an understanding of a narrowly defined topic from their field or approach and may not understand the relevance of the comment made or question asked of them. The Aboriginal person answering the questions may become frustrated at not being understood or not being tried to be understood. They may also have answered what they felt were similar questions or research before and try and tell the researcher this, but the researcher still wants to do their research. There was also discussion about respect—if an old man talks about another issue that may not be directly related, you must listen with respect. Many non-Aboriginal researchers would not listen and would cut people off and go onto another question.

The most important thing was context and having a much more in-depth understanding. 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. For Tangentyere Council and the researchers, a key aspect is that the research is being conducted ‘on this mob by this mob’, and therefore they control the process. It is not about having an external person or organisation come in and use their information and take it away. Aboriginal people are not passive in the process.

Having local people collecting the data and conducting the analysis has an impact on the results. In talking about the results at the end of each survey, there was discussion about why the data might give the results it does, and what it might be missing of people’s experience and knowledge of the situation.

It was also important for the researchers that you don’t go in empty-handed if you can do something—no survey without service. The researchers talked about what they could do, such as an immediate response for repairs and maintenance issues, or referring people to appropriate service support.

The following sections show in more detail how the Aboriginal research process was applied in each of the surveys and in interpreting the results.

Survey One

The first survey was conducted from 7–24 June 2004, by 17 research workers. A total of 151 dwellings (59% of all dwellings) were surveyed with a total number of 906 people recorded. Inarlenge (Little Sisters) and Ilperenye (Old Timers) were on sorry business¹⁴ at the time when conducting this survey.

We show our respect towards families in grieving by not approaching these camps.

The research workers came from various departments within Tangentyere Council as well as town camp residents, executive members and presidents of the town camps. Our team of researchers covered a wide range of language speakers who can speak in Warlpiri, Luritja, Arrernte (Central, Eastern, Western) Pitjantjatjara, Kaytetye and Anmatyerre.

The dates were chosen to avoid the Alice Springs Show (1st July) and our awareness of royalty payments from Yuendumu, Ntaria and Ayers Rock, when families had to come into the Central Land Council to collect their payments. Many people would be coming into town just for these weekends.

Figure 3: Survey 3 workshop



This was the very first time for many of the researchers to do a survey project so we did not know what to expect, what to do and how to enter and use the information gathered.

The questions were based on who camped at that house last night. We identified each house boss and their partners. When asking the house boss the question we asked their names, who else stayed in that house, age, duration of stay, where they are from and where they last stayed. The house boss would inform you who is the resident

and who is the visitor, and we placed a ‘V’ for visitor or ‘R’ for resident in the box. ‘Blank’ means the house boss wasn’t quite sure what they were, although there were very few of these—4 in a total of 906 for Survey 1.

¹⁴ Sorry business is mourning ritual that requires exclusion, often physical.

Two groups of researchers were formed called ‘north’ and ‘south’. The north group completed 8 town camps situated north of Tangentyere Council and south group completed 6 town camps situated south of Tangentyere Council. After completing those 14 town camps we then focused on the two largest camps Ewyenper-Atwatye (Hidden Valley) and Yarrenyty-Arltere (Larapinta) where both teams combined together as one.

Figure 4: Lorraine Pepperill and Sadie Williams conducting an interview



With few vehicles on the town camps, residents would walk to the town centre or catch the food order bus. The food order bus is provided by the Tangentyere Council to pick up town camp residents and take them to the Tangentyere Council to collect their cheques from the Tangentyere Bank, make appointments at Centrelink or report damages to the Tangentyere housing office, or to do other business in Alice Springs. To catch the residents we needed to go out early. The researchers who were early birds would go out on to the town camps from 7.30am and the late starters at 8.30am.

Pension day (Thursday) is always hard to get residents on any town camp for any kind of survey to be completed. You have to be early enough to catch the residents, or you will have to try again on another day. Residents talk to us and half-way through the survey they wave the food order bus down and jump on, then call out to you to come back the next morning to finish off the survey. You may think that this sounds rude but it is not to us, it is part of having an understanding of how a town camp resident's way of life is. The only transport they have from their camp to Alice Springs and Tangentyere Council is the food order bus. We are not going to lose anything, all we have to do is try again the next day and they will be waiting to finish where they left off.

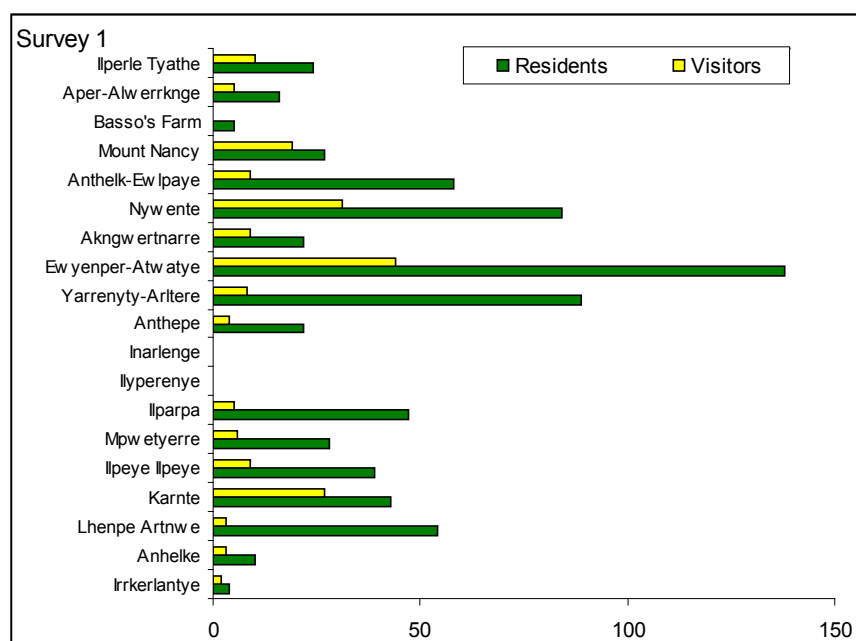
First we made a table of the visitors and residents for each town camp and a graph from the table.

Table 4: Residents and visitors, Survey 1

Camp	Resident	Visitor	Blank	Camp	Resident	Visitor	Blank
Ilperle Tyathe	24	10		Inarlenge			
Aper-Alwerrkngge	16	5		Ilperenye			
Basso's Farm	5			Ilparpa	47	5	
Mount Nancy	27	19		Mpwetyerre	28	6	
Anthelk-Ewelpaye	58	9		Ilpeye Ilpeye	39	9	
Nywente	84	31		Karnte	43	27	1
Akngwertnarre	22	9		Lhenpe Artnwe	54	3	
Ewyenper-Atwatye	138	44	1	Anhelke	10	3	
Yarrenyty-Arltere	89	8		Irrkerlantye	4	2	
Anthepe	22	4					
Total all camps	710	194	2	Total number surveyed	906		

Table 8 after the Survey 4 results that shows the proportion (%) of residents and visitors at each camp for all four surveys.

Figure 5: Residents and visitors, Survey 1

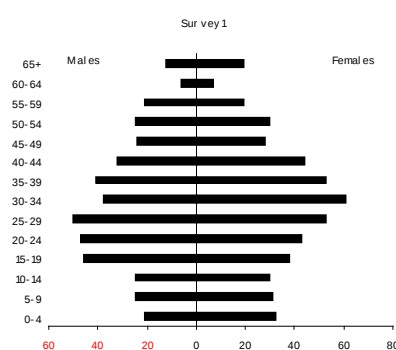


Ew yenper-Atw atye (Hidden Valley) had the highest number of residents with 138 and the highest number of visitors with 44.

Karnte also had a high number of visitors with 27. The table shows no residents or visitors for Inarleng (Little Sisters) and Ilperenye (Old Timers) due to both town camps being on sorry business at the time of this survey.

The Survey 1 results showed fewer children under the age of 15 years than we expected.

Figure 6: Number of people living in dwellings surveyed by age, Survey 1



In the first survey we missed out on a huge number of children living on the town camps so we had to discuss how we were going to get this information. When it comes down to children on the town camps, parents and grandparents are very protective so you have to be careful how you ask about their children. To ask a parent on the town camp, you have to ensure them your trust and confidence and for us to get the appropriate answers from them we had to judge by their body language and expressions on their faces.

Some researchers might think that this is not the right way or it introduces bias in gathering the information. That's where we are different, as Aboriginal people are brought up to respect each individual. If you sense these signs and gestures like body language, expression on their faces, turning their back towards you or even hiding from you then you know that it's not the right time to ask them questions and you have to stop.

There are reasons why people are not willing to talk about their children. People are worried about Centrelink and welfare wanting to know about their children's business and are very protective as to who they should give information to and why. They may think you are from the education department or do not trust that you will not tell the education department if their children are not at school. Within most families there is direct experience of their children being removed as part of what is now known as the Stolen Generations.

Survey Two

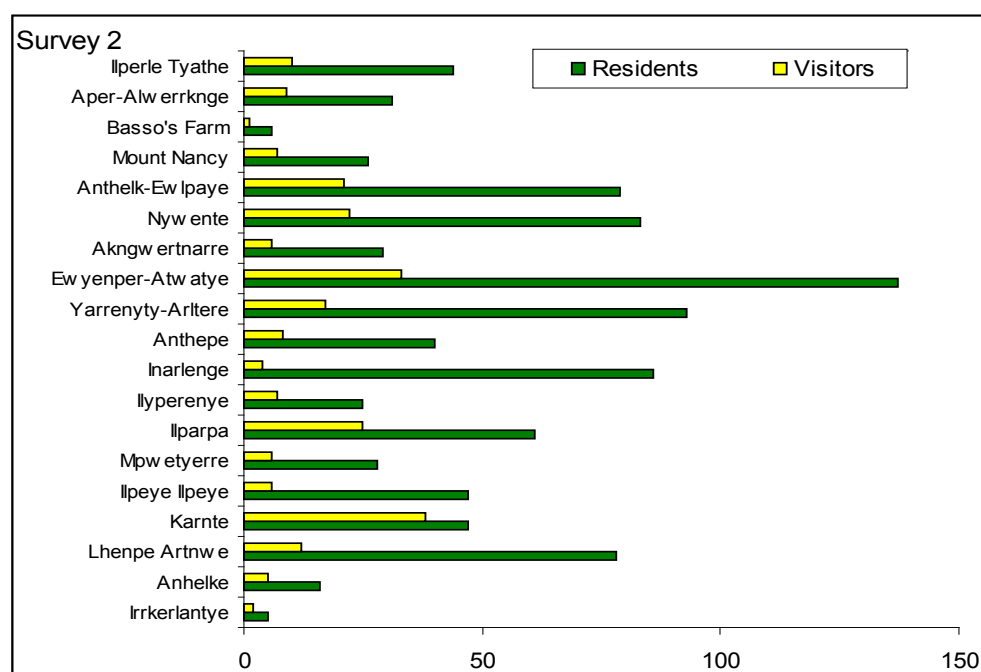
The second survey was conducted 12–29 October 2004, by 28 research workers. A total of 202 dwellings (80% of all dwellings) were surveyed with a total number of 1,205 people recorded. The survey forms were printed for each dwelling with the list of the people present from the previous survey. This enabled the interviewers to ask the house boss about people from the last survey, if they were there or not, where they had gone and if they were coming back.

Survey 2 was originally planned for December 2004. With discussion from the male and older members of our research team we were told of the ceremonial business¹⁵ which is carried out during this time, so we had to move the dates to October 2004.

Table 5: Residents and visitors, Survey 2

Camp	Resident	Visitor	Blank	Camp	Resident	Visitor	Blank
Ilperle Tyathe	44	10		Inarlange	86	4	
Aper-Alwerrkng	31	9		Ilperenye	25	7	
Basso's Farm	6	1		Ilparpa	61	25	
Mount Nancy	26	7	1	Mpwetyerre	28	6	
Anthelk-Ewelpaye	79	21	1	Ilpeye Ilpeye	47	6	
Nywente	83	22		Karnte	47	38	
Akngwertnarre	29	6	1	Lhenpe Artnw	78	12	
Ewyenper-Atwatye	137	33		Anhelke	16	5	1
Yarrenyty-Arltere	93	17	1	Irrkerlantye	5	2	
Anthepe	40	8					
Total all camps	961	239	5	Total number surveyed	1,205		

Figure 7: Residents and visitors, Survey 2



¹⁵ A period of approximately three months during the summer period when Aboriginal cultures undertake ceremony. It often involves travelling long distances to specific locations.

Ewyenper-Atwatye (Hidden Valley) had the highest number of residents at 137 (85%) and Karnte Camp had the highest number of visitors at 38 (45%).

To get an even better result than the first survey, we looked at problems that we had when completing Survey 1. We identified which researcher had family ties on the town camps, so in this situation we would gather more information from the house boss and the visitors. We never entered a house alone as residents can become very abusive towards you, or if a woman enters a house dominated by men or visa versa. We paired a language speaker and English speaker together, where the English speaker would conduct the survey with the language speaker translating back in their language to the house boss.

Figure 8: Tracey Larkins, Doreen Abbott and Peter Ferguson at the Survey 2 training workshop

To become a researcher was very different and difficult for us. Our first impressions were just a basic introduction and then about the sort of questions we were to ask. We didn't really know about the ethics of research and about how to not be biased when choosing the questions, forms and places. We did know about and have an understanding about the consent and confidentiality issues.



We spent a lot of time on consent and how to engage participants because most of the researchers had very unsatisfactory experiences of giving verbal consent and knew that people didn't trust written consent. This has been not only through research that has been conducted in communities and town camps, but other administrative processes such as hospitals, police and welfare. We went for a process of getting verbal consent so that we could explain the research in the first language and so that the informants could respond back to us and indicate their willingness to actively participate.

We drew up an information sheet about the survey and joined it with a consent form to make those two things work together. We spent a lot of time working on how to say it well in our own language and context. For example you would say it differently to an older person than to a younger person. We practiced by doing role-plays. The information sheet was not a sheet that was read out, but was a concept to explain to people and the sheet could be left behind with people. The sheet had contact names and a phone number for the Tangentyere research unit if people wanted to talk more about it privately.

The responsibility and onus of consent was on the researcher—if somebody feels they were not fully aware or were misinformed, the researcher may be in trouble in their own community. So all of the researchers felt a personal and moral obligation to make sure this was done well. The researcher signed the consent form so that if there was any problem, we knew who the person was who had done the explaining. There were no problems with consent from participants that we were made aware of after any of the surveys.

We didn't have the qualifications but we have the knowledge.

To do the survey in the European way can sound offensive to some town campers so we had to explain it and put it in the Aboriginal way.

Aboriginal way—We can not get an estimation of the number of people in a camp that is in grieving. We had discussion about this in Survey 1 because we were asked to go into the two camps in sorry business and do an estimate of how many people were there. To show them our respect we don't approach the sorry camp. We don't approach a house more than four times in a week; if you approach them so many times families can become abusive.

Figure 9: Ricky Mentha surveying a public housing resident

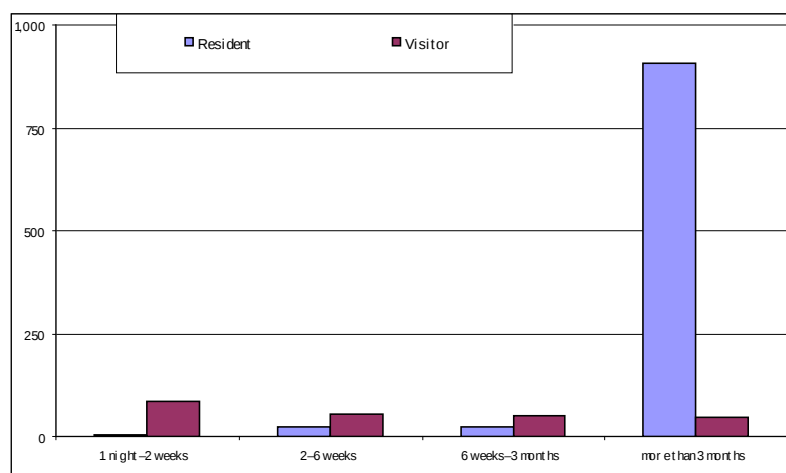


If a resident or visitor has passed away, we needed to check with the elders of town camps or the Tangentyere council executive members of deaths in the camp before the next survey. So when we speak to a resident with the same name we can't say that dead person's first name so instead we call them kumentjaye. That's where our culture awareness comes into play. If you don't have the language and culture awareness, that's where you can get yourself in some sort of trouble. We came across this situation during the last three

surveys, so we had to ask the house boss to point out the names to us from the list rather than say the names and ask if they were there or not. This was for our own safety and to be respectful of culture.

The figure below shows the length of stay for residents and visitors in Survey 2. There are four options that the interviewers can fill out when they ask how long someone has been staying at the house: 1 to 2 weeks; 2 to 6 weeks; 6 weeks to 3 months; and more than three months.

Figure 10: Length of stay, resident and visitor, Survey 2



There were people who the house boss classified as visitors who had been staying at the house longer than three months. The definition of residents and visitors was a long discussion when designing the survey questions. The options discussed included calling the person a resident or visitor based on how long they had been staying there. In the end it was decided to have the house boss tell us if people

were a resident or visitor, and ask how long each person had been staying. It seemed that who is a visitor is related to the right to be at a particular camp or dwelling.

Figure 11: Sharlene Swan and Oscar Ah Mat conducting a survey at Nywente



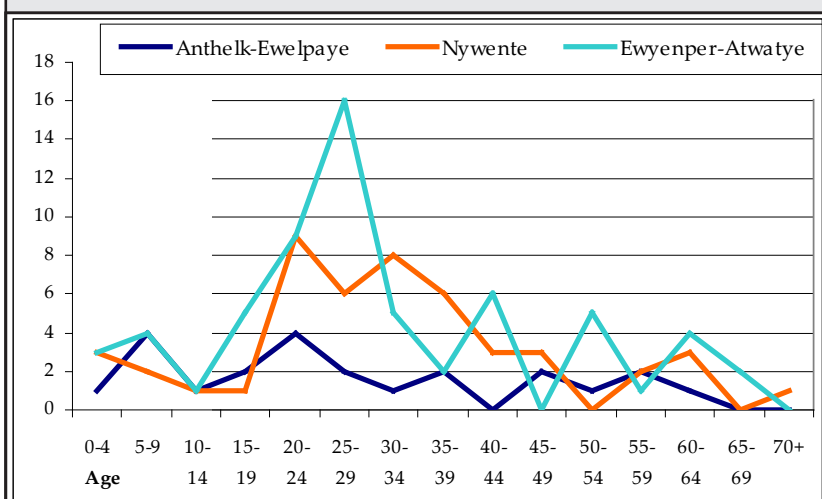
Surveying on the town camps is not all we did. We helped the residents in any way possible. The researchers reported matters such as broken down stoves, broken water pipes, hot water system, dogs (unwanted), removal of rubbish and firewood, calling ambulance, school bus, food order bus, and the congress bus. With each matter we directed them to the appropriate departments within Tangentyere council. These are just a few matters to mention that we deal with every day on the town camps.

Case study: Ages of residents and visitors

The research sub-committee¹⁶ of Tangentyere Council were shown the results of Surveys 1 and 2 by Denise Foster at a meeting in November. The committee talked about a couple of issues: they felt that a lot of the visitors were young males aged between 18 and 25; and some town camps had a disproportionate number of young people at their camp. The committee asked the research team to follow up these matters.

The following figure shows the age distribution of people (both residents and visitors) at three town camps: Anthelk-Ewelpaye, Nywente and Ewyenper-Atwatye.

Figure 12: Number of people by age, Survey 2, Anthelk-Ewelpaye, Nywente and Ewyenper-Atwatye



On Ewyenper-Atwatye (Hidden Valley) there is a peak in the age group 20–29 years. Such a high number of young people would probably include a lot of visitors. This can lead to a high level of repair and maintenance reports for houses, damages to

property and public disturbance followed by trouble on the camp. This trouble can also escalate to other town camps. The number of people at Anthelk-Ewelpaye is fairly even across all age groups. This camp is strong about controlling their visitors as well as their residents.

¹⁶ The research sub-committee is made up of executive members, who are town camp bosses.

Survey Three

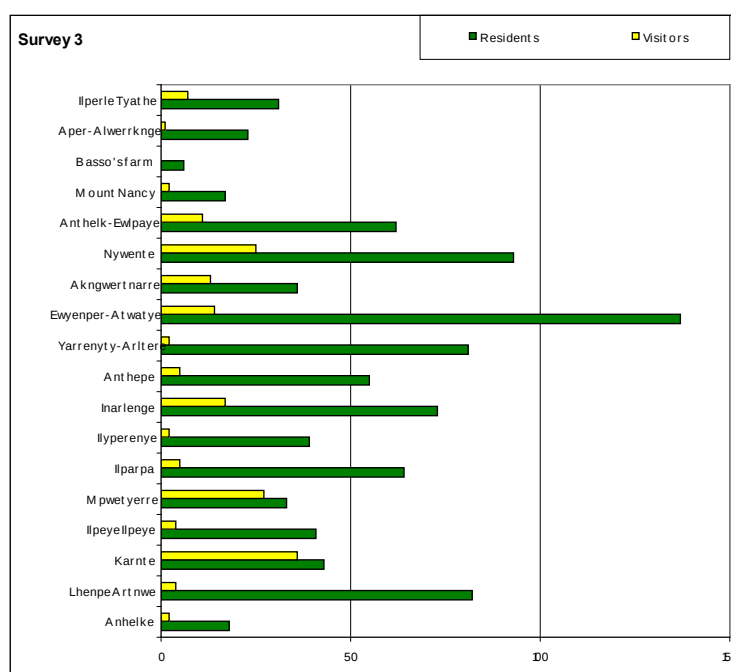
The third survey was conducted from 30 March–15 April 2005, by 24 research workers. A total of 177 (69% of all dwellings) dwellings were surveyed with a total number of 1,111 people recorded.

These dates were chosen to be after the Easter long weekend (19–23rd March) and to be a week either side of the Central Australian Football League Lightning Carnival. The carnival attracts football teams from each community throughout Central Australia and South Australia.

Table 6: Residents and visitors, Survey 3

Camp	Resident	Visitor	Camp	Resident	Visitor
Ilperle Tyathe	31	7	Inarlenge	73	17
Aper-Alwerrknge	23	1	Ilperenye	39	2
Basso's Farm	6	0	Ilparpa	64	5
Mount Nancy	17	2	Mpwetyerre	33	27
Anthelk-Ewelpaye	62	11	Ilpeye Ilpeye	41	4
Nywente	93	25	Karnte	43	36
Akngwertnarre	36	13	Lhenpe Artnwe	82	4
Ewyenper-Atwatye	137	14	Anhelke	18	2
Yarrenyty-Arltere	81	2	Irrkerlantye		
Anthepe	55	5			
Total all camps	934	177	Total number surveyed	1,111	

Figure 13: Residents and visitors, Survey 3



Ewyenper-Atwatye (Hidden Valley) had the highest number of residents at 137 and Karnte had the highest number of visitors (36). Mpwetyerre (Abbott's Camp) also had a significant number of visitors at 27 (45%).

When the results of Survey 3 were shown to the research sub-committee, they asked why in Survey 3 there were less houses surveyed and if it meant that people were out and about more so that they were not home as much as in previous surveys. There had been discussion during the survey about whether the survey teams should go down to the football on the Friday

if they thought some house bosses and families would be there. It was decided not to go to the football as we should be able to catch people in the week after the weekend carnival. However the follow-ups were not as successful as in other surveys and this shows in the results. Partly this was due to a smaller number of cars being available to do the follow-ups in the second week.

As the lightning carnival attracts football teams throughout Central Australia we felt that there would be a lot of visitors coming—day visitors, weekend visitors, children and their grandparents—who would not be included as they were not camping at the house the night before the survey team came. From our knowledge of which community each football team came from we worked out which camps those families would spend the night at or visit.

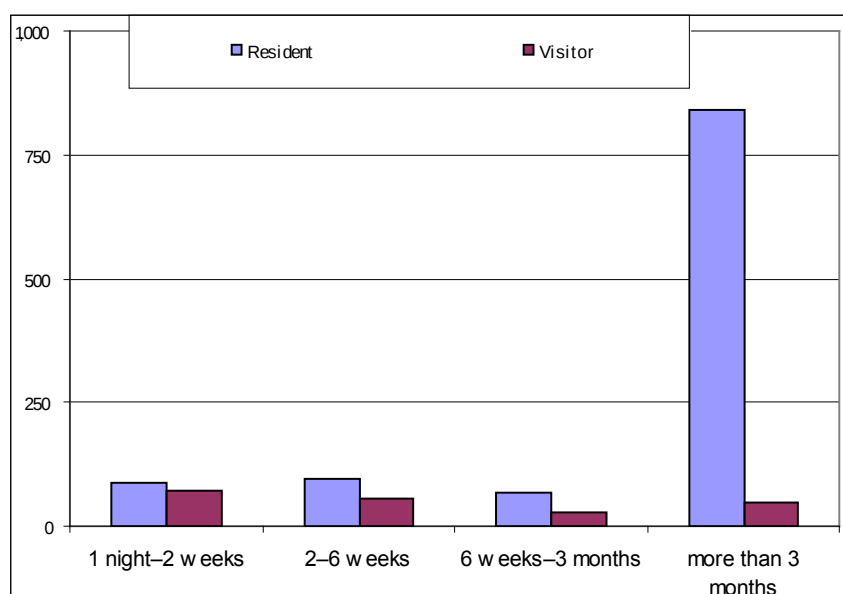
We asked house bosses at those camps about how many visitors they were expecting for the Lightning Carnival on the next weekend. These visitors had not yet camped at the house when the survey was done so were not included in the survey results. Following are some of the responses:

- House boss No.1 at Ilperle Tyathe (Warlpiri Camp) was expecting 10–20 family members from Ti Tree, Yuendumu, Napperby, Mt Allen and Kintore.
- House boss No.2 at Ilperle Tyathe was expecting 10–15 family members from Yuendumu.
- House boss No.1 at Nywente (Trucking Yards) was expecting 10 family members from Ntaria.
- House boss No.2 at Nywente was expecting 10–15 family members from Papunya and Mt Liebig.
- House boss No.3 at Nywente was expecting 10–15 family members from Papunya and Ntaria.
- House boss No.4 at Nywente was expecting 5–10 family members from Nyirrpi.

Yuendumu Magpies players and supporters would spend the night at Warlpiri Camp or have family ties at Old Timers Camp. Ntaria Bulldogs players and supporters would spend the night at Hidden Valley.

The football visitors were not at the camps after the weekend, and there was not a significantly higher level of visitors. It seemed that most of the football visitors came in for the weekend only and went back to their communities straight away.

Figure 14: Length of stay, resident and visitor, Survey 3



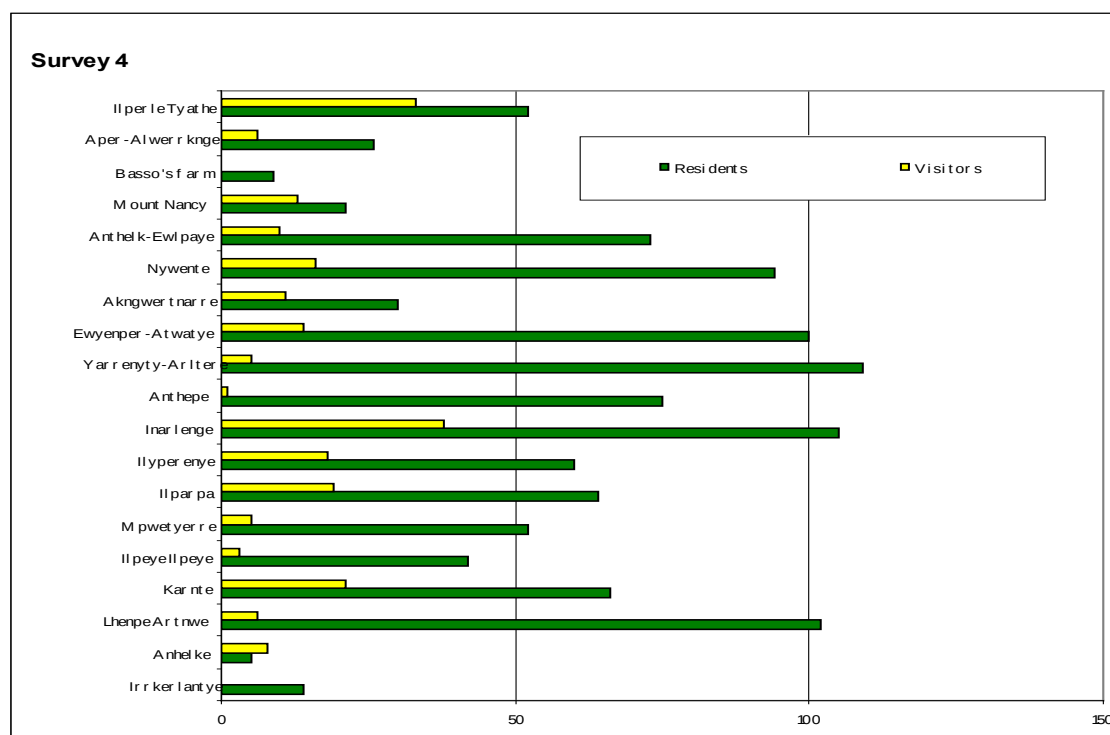
Survey Four

The fourth survey was conducted from 14–24 June 2005. There were a total of 21 Aboriginal researchers. A total of 195 houses (78% of all dwellings) were surveyed with a total number of 1,341 people recorded.

Table 7: Residents and visitors, Survey 4

Camp	Resident	Visitor	Blank	Camp	Resident	Visitor	Blank
Ilperle Tyathe	52	33		Inarlange	105	38	
Aper-Alwerrkngne	26	6		Ilperenye	60	18	
Basso's Farm	9	0		Ilparpa	64	19	
Mount Nancy	21	13		Mpwetyerre	52	5	
Anthelk-Ewelpaye	73	10		Ilpeye Ilpeye	42	3	3
Nywerte	94	16		Karnte	66	21	6
Akngwertnarre	30	11		Lhenpe Artnwe	102	6	
Ewyenper-Atwatye	100	14	1	Anhelke	5	8	5
Yarrenyty-Arltere	109	5		Irrkerlantye	14	0	
Anthepe	75	1					
Total for all camps	1,099	227	15	Total number surveyed	1,341		

Figure 15: Residents and visitors, Survey 4



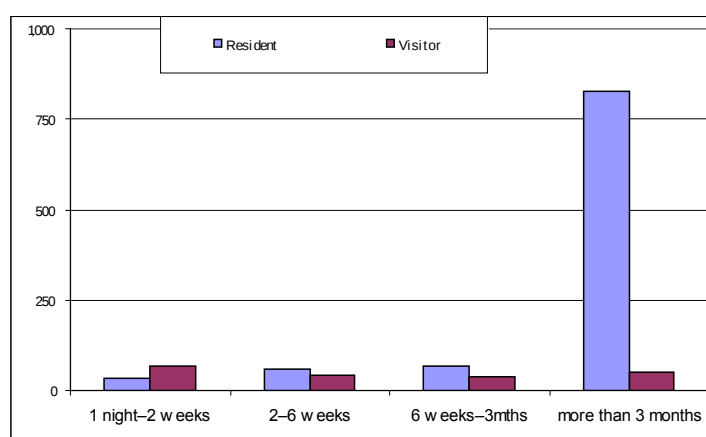
Yarrenyty-Arltere (Larapinta Valley) had the highest number of residents at 109 closely followed by Lhenpe Arntewe (102). Inarlange had the highest number of visitors at 38.

Table 8: Percentage of residents and visitors, Surveys 1–4

Camp name	Survey 1		Survey 2		Survey 3		Survey 4	
	R	V	R	V	R	V	R	V
Ilperle Tyathe	71%	29%	81%	19%	81%	19%	61%	38%
Aper-Alwerrkge	76%	24%	78%	23%	95%	4%	81%	18%
Basso's Farm	100%			86%	14%	100%		100%
Mount Nancy	59%	41%	79%	21%	89%	10%	61%	38%
Anthelk-Ewelpaye	87%	13%	79%	21%	84%	15%	88%	12%
Nywente	73%	27%	79%	21%	78%	21%	85%	14%
Akngwertnarre	71%	29%	83%	17%	73%	26%	73%	26%
Ewyenper-Atwatye	76%	24%	81%	19%	90%	9%	87%	12%
Yarrenyty-Arltere	92%	8%	85%	15%	97%	25	95%	4%
Anthepe	85%	15%	83%	17%	91%	8%	98%	1%
Inarlenge			96%	4%	81%	18%	73%	26%
Ilperenye			78%	22%	95%	4%	76%	23%
Ilparpa	90%	10%	71%	29%	92%	7%	77%	22%
Mpwetyerre	82%	18%	82%	18%	55%	45%	91%	8%
Ilpeye Ilpeye	81%	19%	89%	11%	91%	8%	87%	6%
Karnte	61%	39%	55%	45%	54%	45%	71%	22%
Lhenpe Artnwe	95%	5%	87%	13%	95%	4%	94%	5%
Anhelke	77%	23%	76%	24%	90%	10%	27%	44%
Irrkerlantye	67%	33%	71%	29%			100%	

Basso's Farm, Nywente, Ilpeye Ilpeye, Yarrenyty-Arltere and Lhenpe Artnwe have a high proportion of residents and a low percent of visitors. The committee members on these camps decide who can stay and how long a visitor can stay. These town camps have a lot of control about the family connections living and visiting.

Figure 16: Length of stay, residents and visitors, Survey 4



Karnte has a low percentage of residents and a high percentage of visitors throughout the year, as does Ilperle Tyathe camp to a lesser extent. These camps have a high level of mobility as they are at the northern (Ilperle Tyathe Camp) and southern (Karnte Camp) edges of town and are the main entry point for remote visitors to town. Secondly the people in these camps historically have had a much stronger connection to their traditional homelands and have tended

to move back to their homelands more often, thus there has been a much greater movement of people between their homelands and these town camps.

At the end of each survey we came up with a lot of new topics, questions and issues to work out before conducting the next survey. Some issues were as follows:

- House boss is in jail, sick in hospital or out bush for ceremonial/sorry business.

In situations like these we ask their partners or the caretaker of the dwelling.

- Dwellings were being renovated or demolished.

Residents from the house have moved out bush until work on the house is completed.

Houses are demolished because the house is too old to live in, this is for safety reasons.

Tin sheds are being demolished because the residents believe that the tin sheds bring trouble from other communities to the town camp.

- House swapping.

When a family member has passed away the family moves into another house with another family member.

- House is vacant, no consent or refusals.

It was agreed that after four or more attempts at that particular house and the people or house boss is not home that it became a 'not home'.

A vacant dwelling is one that is due for major repairs or demolition and is not habitable.

No consent if the house boss doesn't want to take any part in the survey.

Figure 17: Lorraine Pepperill and Denise Foster at Ilperle Tyathe (Warlpiri Camp), Survey 4



Table 9: Survey counts and proportion of dwellings surveyed by town camp, Surveys 1–4

	Survey counts				Dwellings surveyed	Dwellings surveyed				Average
Town camp	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4		Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	
Ilperle-Tyathe	34	54	38	85	13	5	9	8	9	60%
Aper-Alwerrkng	21	37	24	32	8	4	7	5	6	69%
Bassos Farm	5	7	6	9	2	1	2	2	2	88%
Mount Nancy	46	33	19	34	12	8	9	6	8	65%
Anthelk-Ewelpaye	63	100	73	83	18	13	17	12	16	81%
Nywente	115	110	118	110	20	18	19	19	19	94%
Akngwertnarre	31	33	49	41	11	6	8	10	8	73%
Ewyenper-Atwatye	183	167	151	115	28	22	24	22	19	78%
Yarrenyty-Arltere	97	115	83	114	30	21	23	17	21	68%
Anthepe	26	43	60	76	9	5	7	5	7	67%
Inarlenge		91	90	143	17	0	14	14	16	65%
Ilperenye		48	41	78	10	0	8	6	9	58%
Ilparpa	52	86	69	83	14	11	12	12	12	84%
Mpwetyerre	34	59	60	57	6	5	6	5	5	88%
Ilpeye Ilpeye	48	53	45	48	9	8	9	9	9	97%
Karnte	71	86	79	93	14	10	12	10	10	75%
Lhenpe Artnwe	61	90	86	108	17	10	12	11	10	63%
Anhelke	13	22	20	18	6	3	4	4	4	63%
Irrkerlantye	6			14	11	1	0	0	5	14%
TOTAL	906	1,234	1,111	1,341	255	151	202	177	195	70%

The results indicate a changing level of the number of people living in the dwellings surveyed. At Nywente there was a reasonably consistent level of dwellings (18–19) and of people (110 to 118) surveyed. The average number of people per dwelling surveyed was between 5.8 and 6.4. At Ewyenper-Atwatye the number of people surveyed changed from 183 in Survey 1 to 115 in Survey 4, although the difference in the number of dwellings surveyed was only 3 (22 to 19). The average number of people per dwelling surveyed was higher in Survey 1 (8.3) and lowest in Survey 4 (6.1) with approximately 7 for Surveys 2 and 3. Anthepe shows a higher variation in the number of people surveyed (26 to 76) although the number of dwellings surveyed was between 5 and 7. The average number of people per dwelling surveyed was 5.2 in Survey 1 and 12.0 in Survey 3.

Population estimates

In each of the four surveys, there were dwellings where it was not possible to survey the occupants. For example in Survey 1, no dwellings in Inarlenge and Ilperenye were able to be surveyed due to sorry business at those camps. In other cases people were not home when the researchers were at that camp, although a minimum of three attempts were made to catch people at home. In a few cases, consent for the survey was refused. Set out below is a summary of the number of dwellings surveyed by type of dwelling.

Table 10: List of dwellings by type and number surveyed, Surveys 1–4

Dwellings (by type)	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4
Houses	191	191	191	191
Community facilities*	6	6	6	6
Ablution blocks†	1	1	1	1
Tin sheds	57	57	57	53
Total dwellings	255	255	255	251
Dwellings not surveyed (by type)				
Houses	62	12	34	19
Community facilities	1	4	4	5
Ablution blocks	1			
Tin sheds	40	37	40	32
Total	104	53	78	56

* A community facility is a meeting centre or small building generally used for community purposes. Due to the shortage of housing, some community facilities are occupied.

† There is an ablution block on most town camps, however only one was occupied during the survey period (for all four surveys) thus is the only one we have included.

It should be noted that there is a changing number of tin sheds at the town camps at different times. The maximum number of tin sheds available at any one time is 67, and they can be rebuilt as single or double (two room) tin sheds according to need. They are relocated as needs expand in one town camp or as noted before may be removed at the request of a town camp boss if people move into it and cause a disturbance in the camp. As noted earlier, although each town camp has an ablution block and community facilities, only those that are known to have people living in them were included.

As a result of not all dwellings being surveyed, a proportion of the population is missed in each of the surveys. Set out below is an estimate of the town camps population at each of the surveys based on applying the survey occupancy—the average number of people at the dwellings surveyed for each survey, multiplied by the number of dwellings not able to be surveyed. This would indicate that the estimated population may be between approximately 1,590 and 1,730.

Table 11: Estimate of population in town camps based on Surveys 1–4 counts

	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4
Number of people in town camps from dwellings surveyed	906	1,234	1,111	1,341
Estimate of people not surveyed	624	324	490	385
Total estimate of population of town camps	1,530	1,558	1,601	1,726
Average of population of estimates (rounded to nearest 5)	1,605			

It was noted that there is an under-reporting of the number of children and young people under 20 years of age recorded in each survey, for reasons stated in the previous section.

Two methods are included to attempt to adjust for under-recording of children and young people. Firstly, by using the age distribution of the ERP of the Indigenous population of central Australia¹⁷, and secondly, by using case studies where supplementary data on the number of children at specific camps was available. Unfortunately there was no case study data available for the 0–5 year age group.

Set out below is an estimated population using the first method. This is calculated by applying the relative population weights, for example over 30 years of age and under 30 years of age, of the ERP distribution to the age distributions of the survey counts. It is estimated that about a quarter of the town camps have less than the normal number of children, as these camps are made up of predominantly older people (J Vadiveloo¹⁸ pers. comm., 29 September 2005). In the following population estimate, the effect of the age distribution according to the ERP of the Indigenous population is reduced by 50%, resulting in distribution which falls between the ERP age distribution and the survey data. This approach recognises that the ERP distribution is not the most appropriate for town camps, thus we have taken a conservative approach by moderating the age distribution as provided by the ERP.

Table 12: Estimate of population in town camps with adjusted age distribution (ABS ERP for central Australia)

	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4
Estimate using weighting of population 30 years and over	2,036	1,854	1,854	2,032
Moderated by 50%	1,745	1,705	1,725	1,880
Average (rounded to nearest 5)	1,765			

Source: Mitchell et al 2005, Survey data

This would indicate that the estimated population, adjusted for age, may be between 1,705 and 1,880. An average of the estimated populations is 1,765.

¹⁷ ABS ERP 2001 of the Central Remote (Apatula) region and Alice Springs regions combined.

¹⁸ J Vadiveloo is the Manager of Social Services at Tangentyere Council, 2001-2005.

Case study: Young people at Mpwetyerre camp

The Reconnect Youth Service attended a meeting at Mpwetyerre on 19 May 2005 just after Survey 3 was conducted and provided a list of young people resident at, or visiting Mpwetyerre camp who access their service. Reconnect Youth Service provides services to 5–19 year olds, so any children under 5 years of age would not be included on the list provided by the service.

A summary of the number of children and their age distribution according to the list provided by Reconnect Youth Service and the Survey 3 data is set out in the following table. This indicates that the number of young people at the camp is three times the number in the Survey 3 data.

Table 13: Number of young people by age at Mpwetyerre, Reconnect Youth Service and Survey 3 data

Age	Reconnect	Survey 3	Difference
5–9	12	2	10
10–14	18	2	16
15–19	16	10	6
Total	46	14	32
Young people without ages listed (number and %)	6	3	3
	13%	36%	
Total young people	52	17	35

The names on the list provided were checked against the survey data to see: firstly, if the names appeared at Mpwetyerre camp; secondly, if they appeared at any of the other town camps in Survey 3; and thirdly if they appeared on Surveys 1–4 across all the camps. Families with similar surnames were checked to see if anyone on the list appeared in the survey data of children or young people associated with that family or dwelling. A significant number of the children (35) did not appear on the survey data at Mpwetyerre, and none appeared at any of the other dwellings surveyed in other town camps.

As an example, there were four young people aged between 6 and 17 years with the same surname, say Jones¹⁹, on the list provided by Reconnect Youth Service. One was listed at a dwelling in Mpwetyerre in Survey 1, but was not there for Surveys 2 and 3. In this dwelling in Surveys 1, 2 and 3 there were three women and one male aged between 21 and 35 years with the same surname, however there were no children listed at this dwelling for Survey 3, and only one of the four young people of that surname listed in Survey 1. The remaining three people from the list did not appear in any of the surveys at any camp. Reconnect youth workers indicated that the children resided at this house at Mpwetyerre camp or with another carer at a different town camp.

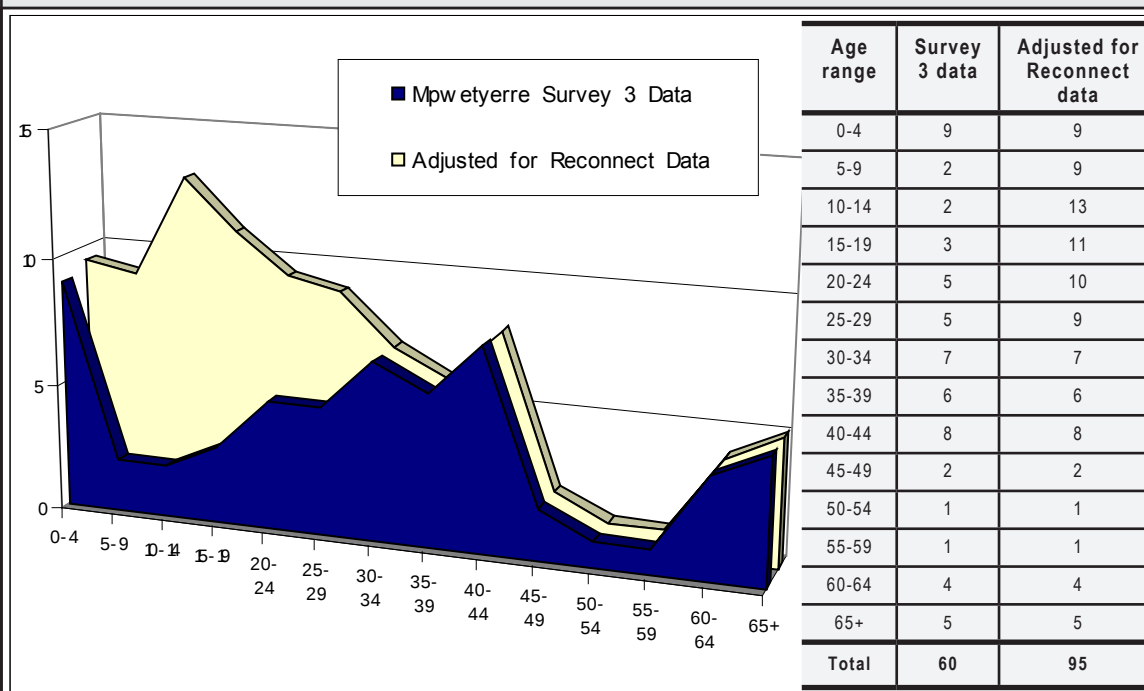
This indicates that there were younger family members whose names were not provided to the researchers, despite a very high likelihood of the children having stayed there, or at the very least at the other camp where the secondary carer is known to reside. There were two other similar examples involving three children each, where parents of children were listed at a house but these children's names were not in the survey data.

¹⁹ Not a real surname.

There are a number of reasons why people are reluctant to give details of their children to researchers as outlined in the Survey 2 results section. The coordinator of the Reconnect Youth Service estimated that approximately 25% of the young people on the list went to Mpwetyerre for the purpose of accessing the service, and would not have been staying there overnight. From knowledge of the families she indicated that they were likely to be in hostels, public housing or other accommodation outside of the town camps (A Carroll, pers. comm., 14 August 2005.)

The following figure and table show the age distribution of the Mpwetyerre camp of the Survey 3 data, and of the survey data adjusted per the Reconnect Youth Service data, including a 25% reduction in the number of young people in each age category.

Figure 18: Survey 3 count of Mpwetyerre camp, and adjusted per Reconnect Youth Service data



* Note the Reconnect Youth Service Data has been reduced by 25% in all age categories

The following table shows the population estimate for the town camps if the age distribution of Mpwetyerre camp adjusted per the Reconnect Youth Service data as above, is applied to the survey data and the results averaged.

Table 14: Estimate of population in town camps with adjusted age distribution per Reconnect Youth Service data

	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4
Estimate using weighting of population 30 years and over	2,110	1,991	1,991	2,182
Average (rounded to nearest 5)	2,065			

Case study: Young people at Ewyenper-Atwatye camp

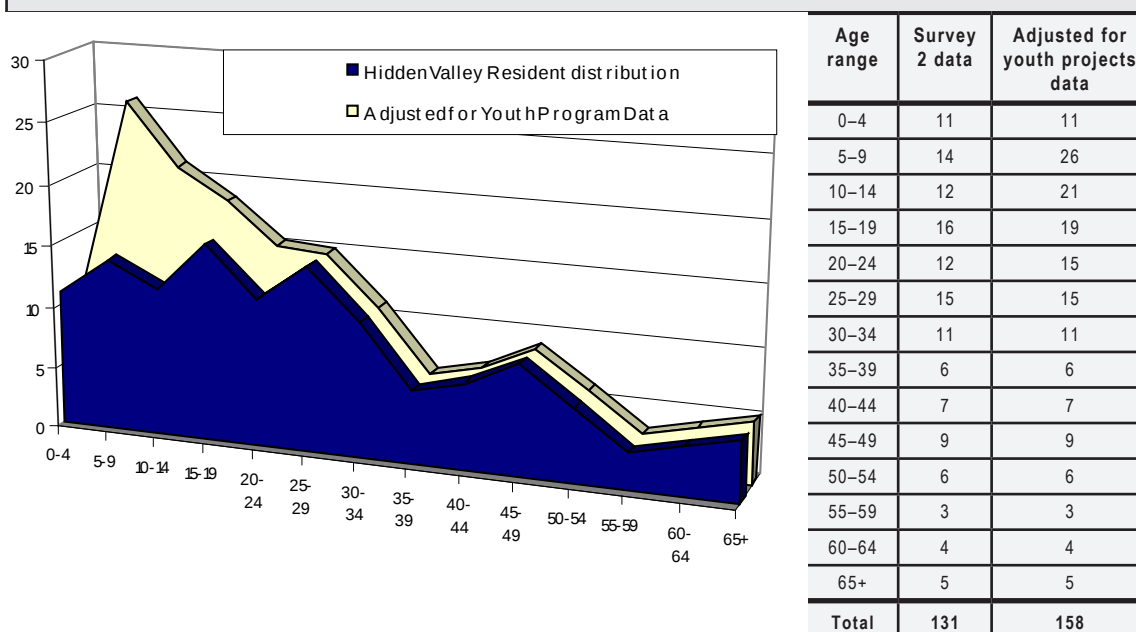
There are a number of youth projects for 5–15 year olds run from the community facility at Ewyenper-Atwatye (Hidden Valley) camp. A list was provided by the service of resident and regular visitor children and their parents/guardians, and which dwelling they live in as at November/December 2004. We compared this data with the Survey 2 data.

All of the resident parents/guardians on the list appeared in the Survey 2 data as residents. A summary of the number of children and their age distribution according to the list provided by youth projects and the Survey 2 data is set out below. This indicates that the number of young people at the camp is approximately double the number in the Survey 2 data.

Table 15: Number of young people by age at Ewyenper-Atwatye, youth projects and Survey 2 data

Age	Youth projects	Survey 3	Difference
10–14	26	14	12
15–19	21	12	9
Total young people	47	26	21

Figure 19: Ewyenper-Atwatye camp: Survey 2 data and adjusted per youth projects data



The following table shows the population estimate for the town camps if the age distribution of Ewyenper-Atwatye adjusted per youth projects data as above is applied to the survey data and the results averaged.

Table 16: Estimate of population in town camps with adjusted age distribution per youth projects data

	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4
Estimate using weighting of population 30 years and over	2,418	2,293	2,293	2,514
Average (rounded to nearest 5)	2,380			

Total surveyed people

The data at the end of all four surveys provided a list of all people surveyed. A small number of people were listed in the survey data more than once as they had moved from one dwelling or camp to another between surveys. We excluded the multiple names in all but their last location to produce a list of all people surveyed where everyone only appeared once in the list—a total of 2,326 people.

Table 17: Number of people surveyed in all surveys, by town camps

Camp		Camp	
Ilperle Tyathe	130	Inarlange	200
Aper-Alwerrkngke	63	Ilperenye	103
Basso's Farm	8	Ilparpa	130
Mount Nancy	78	Mpwetyerre	105
Anthelk-Ewelpaye	139	Ilpeye Ilpeye	83
Nywente	204	Karnte	219
Akngwertnarre	76	Lhenpe Artnwe	181
Ewyenper-Atwatye	300	Anhelke	45
Yarrenyty-Arltere	149	Irrkerlantye	17
Anthepe	96	Total	2,326

The table to the left provides the list of people by town camp. It should be remembered that this is not a population, as not all dwellings were surveyed in any one survey—an overall average of 70% of dwellings were surveyed for all four surveys.

This includes people classified as residents and visitors. As people may be present for one, two, three or all of the surveys it is possible for them to change their status.

The following table provides the resident and visitor status of all people, and, for the group that changed status, the details of those changes. It is interesting that there are 597 people classified as

Table 18: Number of people surveyed in all surveys, by resident and visitor status

Resident /visitor status	No.	%	Status changes	No.
Resident status	1,610	69%	Visitor -> Resident	18
Visitor status	597	26%	Resident -> Visitor	92
Changed status between resident and visitor	115	5%	Resident -> Visitor-> Resident	5
Not stated	4	0%		
Total	2,326	100%	Total	115

visitors and of these 443 or approximately 75% were present in only one survey. The remaining 154 (25%) of visitors were present for two, three or four surveys indicating they may have resided at the town camps for well over three months. People may also have moved in and out of the town camps once

or more between the surveys as well which could explain their continuing visitor status. A detailed examination of the visitors shows that only a small proportion, 5% have been there for 2 or more surveys continuously. This will also be affected by whether a particular dwelling was able to be surveyed in each survey or not.

What is surprising is that more people changed status from resident to visitor than from visitor to resident. Only a very small number of people changed status more than once. It is important to remember that the status (resident or visitor) is defined by the house boss, and does not necessarily relate to a specific length of time that people have been living at a town camp. People may well classify someone or a group of people as visitors indicating that they do not consider them as having a right to live in the house, despite being there a long time. Considerations about paying rent may also influence people's classification of resident and visitor status, although the researchers made a big effort to let participants know that they would not be passing the information on to the housing office.

Mobility

The survey data shows three main types of movement of people as follows: in and out of the town camps, to communities and other housing or camping in Alice Springs; between town camps, inter-camp mobility; and between houses in town camps, intra-camp mobility.

Mobility in and out of town camps

People in this category can be identified in the data by their presence in surveys: present in Survey 1 and not present in Survey 2; present in Survey 2 but not present in Survey 3; present in Survey 3 but not present in Survey 4. This group of people are essentially those who have left the town camps²⁰ between surveys.

The survey forms for each dwelling were printed with the list of the people who had been there in the previous survey(s). This was to reduce people being accidentally omitted and also enabled the interviewers to ask the house boss about people who were not there from the last survey—where they had gone, and if they were coming back. The following table summarises what the house boss had stated for where the people had gone. This gives an indication of the likely regions of mobility.

Table 19: Where people not present from the previous survey have gone, Surveys 2–4

Summary table	Total	%	
Alice Springs: includes hostels, hospital, public housing	85	11%	Total Alice Springs 42%
Other town camps	229	31%	
Outstations and communities close to Alice Springs: includes Amoonguna 6	47	6%	Total outside of Alice Springs 52%
Santa Teresa	33	5%	
Warlpiri Region: Yuendumu 21; Mt Allen 17; Willowra, Lajamanu	55	7%	
Western Arrernte: Ntaria 50; Areyonga 14	64	9%	
Pintupi/Luritja region: Papunya, Haast's Bluff, Kintore	18	2%	
Ngaanyatjarra lands communities	7	1%	
Anmatyerre: Ti Tree, Laramba	11	1%	
Pitjantjatjara: Mutitjulu; Kings Canyon; Imanpa	54	7%	
Anangu-Pitjantjatjara lands	10	1%	
Warumungu: Tennant Creek; Alekarenge	19	3%	
Other (outside Alice Springs)	68	9%	
Not stated	42	6%	Not stated 6%
Total	742	100%	

The largest proportion (52%) of people had gone to communities outside Alice Springs, and predominantly to remote communities (46% if the communities and outstations close to Alice Springs are removed). The largest sole category is other town camps (31%) followed by Alice Springs (31%). The category of Alice Springs includes people going to hostels, public housing and camping, such as the river or creek. The highest individual community was Ntaria (50) followed by Santa Teresa (33).

²⁰ Analysing people coming into the town camps was considered, however there was no clear way to identify these people. For example, people who were not listed in Survey 1, and who appeared for the first time in Survey 2 were classified as a visitor. It could be that the house was not surveyed in the previous survey and visitor status does not necessarily mean a short-term visit – there is a proportion of visitors who are present for all four surveys and who are listed as being there for over three months in each survey.

This indicates that distance to Alice Springs influences the level of movement. It may also indicate that people who come from communities further out have difficulties returning to communities.

Estimate of service population

To establish the level of movement of people out of the town camps in the survey data, the number of people who have been recorded as not being present in a following survey can be used. A person who was present in one survey might not be included in the next survey as:

- they had left the town camps
- their dwelling (which might have changed) was not surveyed as they were not home or did not consent
- the house boss (who might have changed) did not include them.

This last category is probably very minor as the names from the previous survey were on the forms, so the house boss had to state that they were not there, rather than just omit them from a new list.

The second category could influence the results and needed to be excluded. A subset of the data that contained only dwellings that were surveyed in all four surveys were analysed for people's movements in and out of the town camps. However, as Survey 1 did not include two camps²¹ and a lower overall proportion of dwellings were surveyed (56% compared to 80% for Survey 2, 69% for Survey 3 and 78% for Survey 4), a further subset of the data that contained dwellings surveyed in Surveys 2–4 was analysed and added for the last two categories of the table below. The table provides the numbers and proportions of people present and not present from the previous survey, and of people who are new in the survey data (since the previous survey) indicating they have come into the town camps.

Table 20: People present and not present from the previous survey, Surveys 2–4

	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4
Present from previous survey	373	521	544
	74.7%	62.0%	63.3%
People who have left from previous survey	176	334	315
	25.3%	38.0%	36.7%
People who have come in since previous survey	240	312	357
	31.5%	36.4%	39.6%

The data on people's movements can be used to estimate a service population. There is a base population level (residents and visitors) at any one time, however the overall visitor population is larger than the number of visitors present at any one time. The estimated service population is the base population with an average estimate of visitors that allows for turnover of visitors (using the average proportion of people

²¹ See Survey 1 results. Ilperenye and Inarlenge were unable to be surveyed due to sorry business.

who have stayed and of those who have left after each survey). We have used the average from Surveys 2–4 because it is more consistent as it includes all camps and a greater proportion of dwellings surveyed.

Table 21: Estimated service population

Estimated base population	1,605	1,765	2,065
Estimated service population	2,560	2,820	3,300

Note: these figures have been rounded to nearest 5

The base populations are selected from the population estimates from Tables 11 (based on Surveys 1–4 counts), 12 (with adjusted ERP age distribution) and 14 (with adjusted age distribution per Reconnect Youth Service data) respectively. This would estimate a service population of between 2,560 and 3,300. The estimated base population from the Ewyenper-Atwatye case study of 2,380 is not included as a base, as a conservative approach to the modelling has been taken.

Mobility between town camps and houses

Mobility within the town camps includes people moving between town camps (inter-camp mobility), and people moving between houses in town camps (intra-camp mobility). People who are in these two categories are listed in the survey data file twice, under the different house IDs that they have moved between, and we are able to identify these people as a group for analysis. The survey form contains a question asking where people are from. Set out below is the summary for the people who have moved dwelling or camp according to the survey data. It should be noted that the survey data is a subset of the population as not all dwellings were able to be surveyed—Table 9 lists the number and proportion (70%) of dwellings surveyed for all town camps.

Table 22: Where people listed at more than one location in the town camps are from

Location		Location	
Alice Springs	94	Anmatyerre: Ti Tree; Napperby	15
Other town camps	20	Pitjantjatjara: Mutitjulu; Kings Canyon; Docker River	15
Outstations and communities close to Alice Springs	27	Anangu-Pitjantjatjara region	7
Warlpiri Region: Yuendumu (51); Mt Allen (10); Willowra; Lajamanu	67	Warumungu: Tennant Creek; Alekarenge	8
Western Arrernte: Ntaria; Areyonga	45	Other	9
Pintupi/Luritja region: Papunya; Haast's Bluff; Kintore	28	Not stated	48
Ngaanyatjarra lands communities	19	Total	402

The largest category is Alice Springs, and may well also contain people from other town camps as this may not be distinguished in the reply that people give. People may also come from public and other housing in Alice Springs, hostels or be camped in other temporary situations.

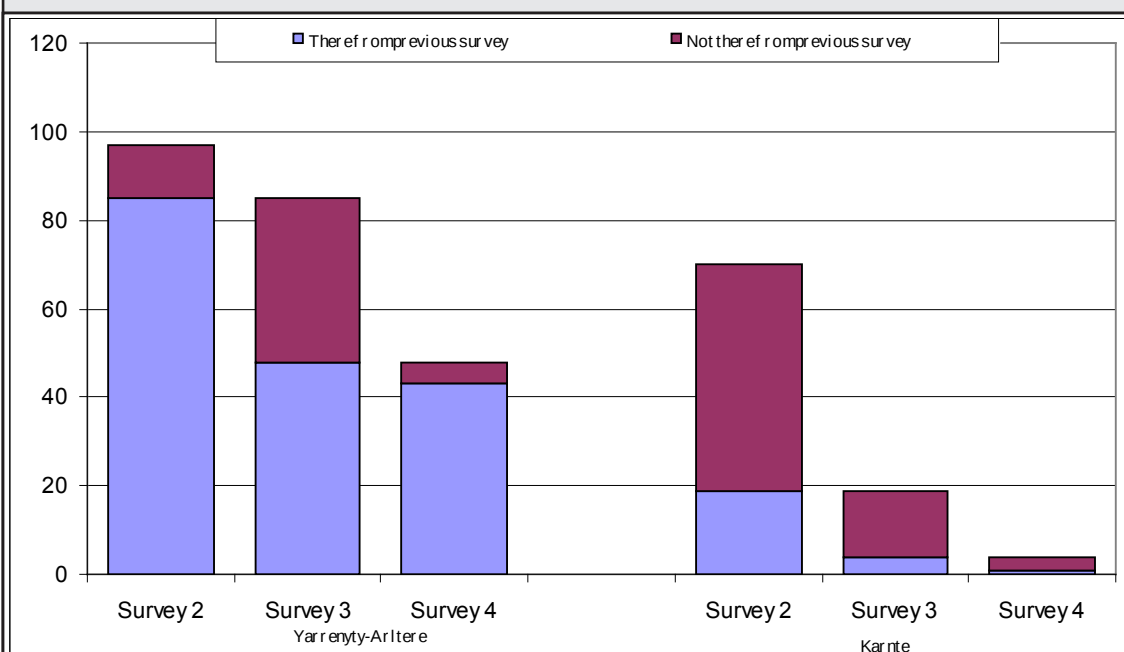
Case study: Yarrenyty-Arltere and Karnte camps

A comparison of two camps was decided by the research team. The camps selected were Yarrenyty-Arltere and Karnte, on the basis of: differences in size as Yarrenyty-Arltere is nearly twice the size of Karnte; differences in the way the camps are run; and a fairly consistent number of dwellings surveyed in all four surveys. The average percentage of dwellings surveyed for all four surveys was 68% for Yarrenyty-Arltere and 75% for Karnte.

Yarrenyty-Arltere camp is situated west of Tangentyere Council. The camp usually caters for families from Ntaria. The community has a strong committee which controls who can live on the camp and how long the visitors can stay while in town. The camp's main language group spoken is Arrernte. Karnte camp is situated south of Tangentyere Council. The camp caters for families living at Amata, Ernabella and Imanpa and in the western desert area. The main languages spoken on the camp are Luritja, Arrernte and Pitjantjatjara.

The following figure shows how many people are present from one survey to the next. For Yarrenyty-Arltere camp, 88% of people recorded in Survey 1 were recorded as also being there in Survey 2; 56% of people recorded in Survey 2 were recorded as also being there in Survey 3; and 90% of people recorded in Survey 3 were recorded in Survey 4. In comparison, the percentages for Karnte camp were 27%, 21% and 25% respectively.

Figure 20: Number of people recorded as present at Yarrenyty-Arltere and Karnte, Surveys 1–4



This shows that the population at Yarrenyty-Arltere is much more stable than the population at Karnte.²² One of the reasons for the difference is the level of services to the two town camps, in particular, the presence of the learning centre (YALC) at Yarrenyty-Arltere.

²² This will be affected by a dwelling where people were staying in one survey not being surveyed in the following survey, however this effect would be small as the same dwellings were fairly consistently surveyed.

The YALC began in 2000 as a grass roots response to the chronic social distress faced by families in the community. Yarrenyty-Arltere means ‘white devil dog’ and refers to the Western Arrernte dog dreaming. The hill opposite the learning centre is a sacred site where the ancestral dogs fought.

The YALC has grown to be both a Family Resource Centre and an intergenerational centre where adults and children work and learn side by side. The centre has enabled people to make dramatic changes in their lives and has been highly successful in strengthening the community.

The centre and programs are based on Aboriginal social and cultural structures. It recognises the central role of the family in the lives of Aboriginal people. The strength of the centre is its ability to develop services in a flexible way to respond to the vision and strategies the community has to address their own social and family issues. The YALC committee believes that change is something that requires a long-term commitment and consistent approach that addresses the broad needs of the individual and the family.

Over the past five years every social indicator in Yarrenyty-Arltere has improved including decreases in inhalant misuse, alcohol misuse, domestic violence, crime and neglect. Education and health have improved with all young kids attending school. The community has become stable. Prior to the centre operating, the town camp had high numbers of visitors who were difficult to manage.

Long survey

The long survey had questions about people’s feelings about visitors, people’s movements from town camps, their communities and to Alice Springs (see Appendix B for the survey forms). Both the house boss and their visitors were asked questions. We had to approach each house boss for consent to speak to the visitors in their house. We asked the house boss the good and the bad things about having visitors. The visitors were then asked why they are in town, how did they come to town, how long do they plan to stay in town, how they are going to get back to their community and have they got any problems getting back to their community.

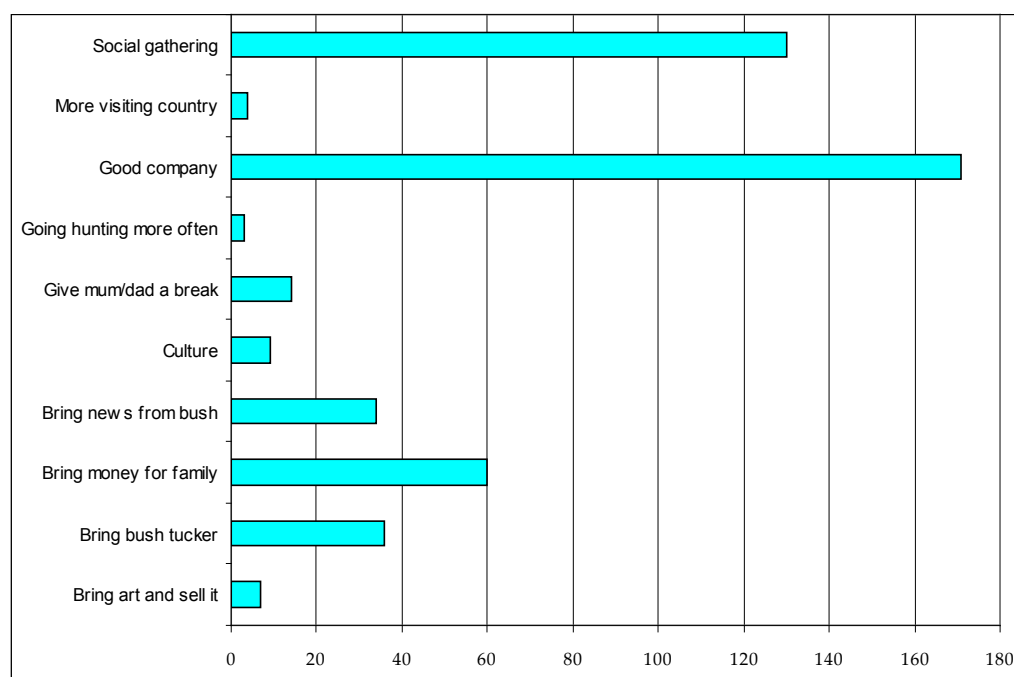
The long survey was conducted at approximately every second house of each town camp. There were 73 long surveys done in Survey 2²³, 64 in Survey 3 and 65 in Survey 4.

It was more difficult to conduct the long survey in Surveys 3 and 4 as some people became sick of being asked the same questions, and did not like to talk about their visitors. The research team decided to continue with the long survey because it had been started and were advised not to change the way the survey was being done part-way through the project. There was much discussion in the training before Surveys 2–4 about the long survey and alternate ways of getting information about people’s movements, visitors and why people come to town—such as doing longer and more in-depth interviews with the town camp boss at each camp and choosing a couple of houses in each town camp to do longer interviews with.

The first question asked the house boss the good things about having visitors. Set out below are the results from Surveys 2–4 combined.

²³ The long survey data from Survey 1 could not be combined due to a difference in format and time. The comments from the long survey in Survey 1 have been included.

Figure 21: Good things about having visitors, Surveys 2–4



The most common answers from each house boss were that they enjoyed family and friends, good company and for some social gathering for those who haven't seen families for a long time.

I always have visitors they are all good shouters. They play band and they always come and camp at my house. It makes me happy to see them spin yarns, drink grog and they bring me money all the time.

Cause I'm old and sick it's good to have family now and then. I get happy to see them myself. We talk about my country and all the other family.

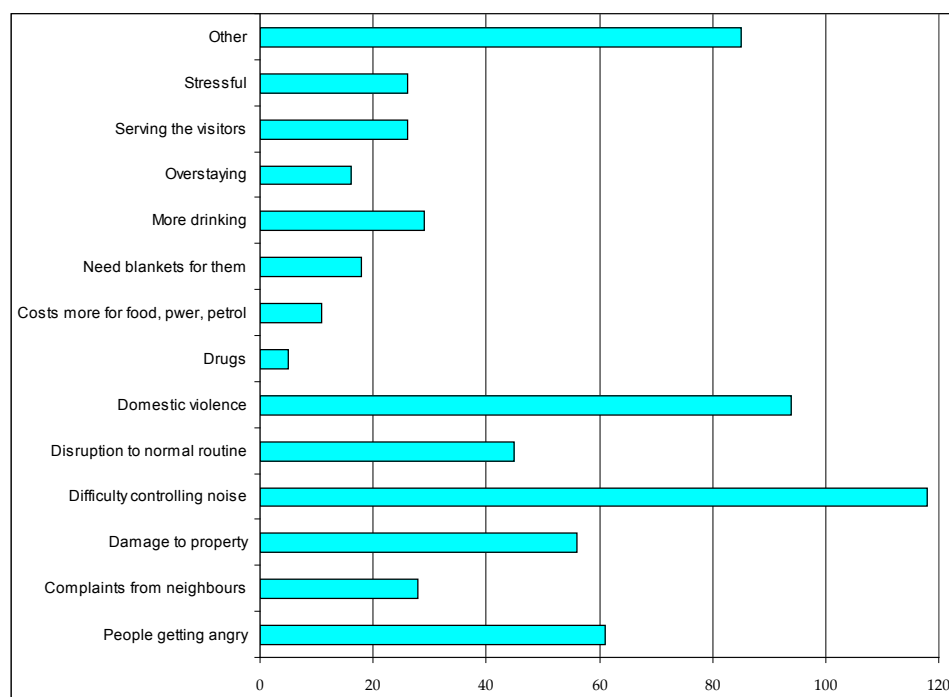
Company. I'd rather have the visitors staying here than in the creek.

Good help in and around the house and yard. When they are in town they help us a lot in financially good support in that way. When visitors come in mostly families with no good car go in to do shopping they park their cars in our yard and go in a taxi to do shopping. It's good to have families visiting one's we don't catch up on.

Many people also said that it was good when visitors came in for a short time (one or two nights) and then went back bush. A few people replied that they had visitors who only came for the day.

In some situations a house would have joint house bosses. If either one of their families were the visitors, we had to be careful how we asked the questions to each of them, or we asked to speak to just one of the house bosses. If they didn't want to say anything about each other's families, we looked at their body language and their facial expression to help us with their answers and for our safety. Many people answered about visitors in their town camp in general rather than the visitors to their house.

Figure 22: Bad things about having visitors, Surveys 2–4



This graph shows the most common answers about bad things about having visitors. The answers that most house bosses gave were that they had difficulty controlling noise, and there is a lot of fighting, people getting angry and domestic violence on the town camps.

Visitors come from Warlpiri Camp make big noise humbug for smoke and grog giving us cheek ... They bring their argument to this house from another camp. I don't like fighting.

When they come it's good but they bring other people too and they start to fight a lot and I don't like it. They drink drink and then they start to humbug a lot for more money, smokes and gunja.

Petrol sniffing.

They bring their in-laws and other people instead of coming themselves, then they stay too long and got no way of getting home.

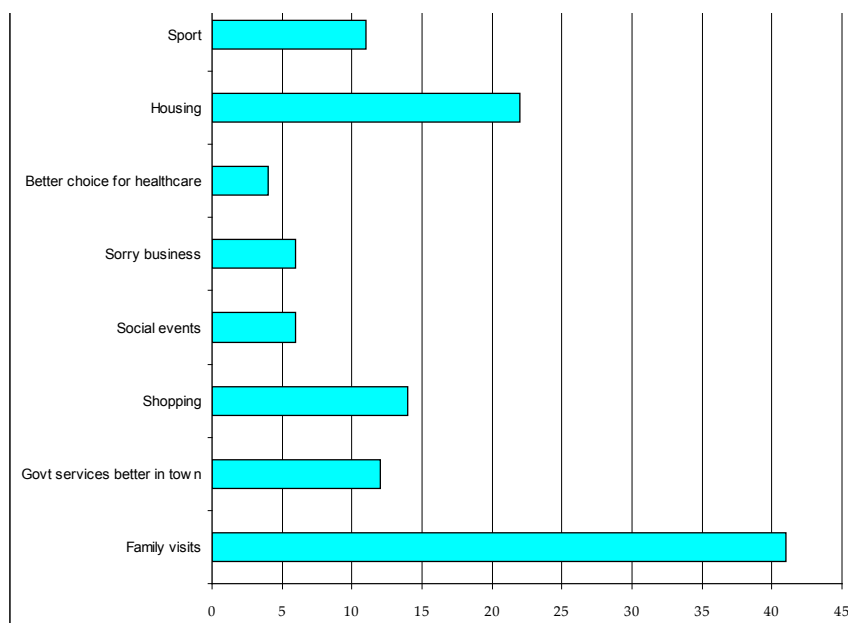
Drunks coming in and talking too much and silly way. I kick them out, I don't like too much noise. This is an old people's home, not a disco for young people.

Cause big trouble but we hunt them out. Come to the house to use the phone, no phone at Ilparpa as visitors wreck the phone. Have to walk to Karnte to use the phone to get help or ring police, ambulance, taxi.

The survey team commented on the difficulties for people in talking about domestic violence. People interviewed may not want to talk about it for fear of causing trouble for themselves and their families.

On the town camp there is a lot of domestic violence between husband and wife, uncle and nephew or even two brothers or two sisters fighting. It's hard to help when families are having domestic violence as the people involved in the violence think that you are interrupting in their business and you have no right to be involved. They can turn on you maybe that night, but they can wait for weeks to continue the violence. People are frightened to get involved.

Figure 23: Why visitors come to town, Surveys 2–4



Family visits are the most common answer as to why visitors come to town, followed by housing, shopping, sport and government services (mainly health). These questions were directed at the house boss and their visitors. We spoke to the house boss of each house for permission to speak to a visitor in their house. If the visitor were too shy to talk to us the house boss would speak on their behalf.

We come in for concert and for sports weekend at Santa Teresa. Now we are going to stop for football carnival and then get lift back with family back to Napperby.

We came in because my husband's mother was getting royalties and now us going to stay for the football carnival. When we come in we got our kids and that's all of them two's grandchildren. We live a long way in SA and it's only now and then they see their grandchildren.

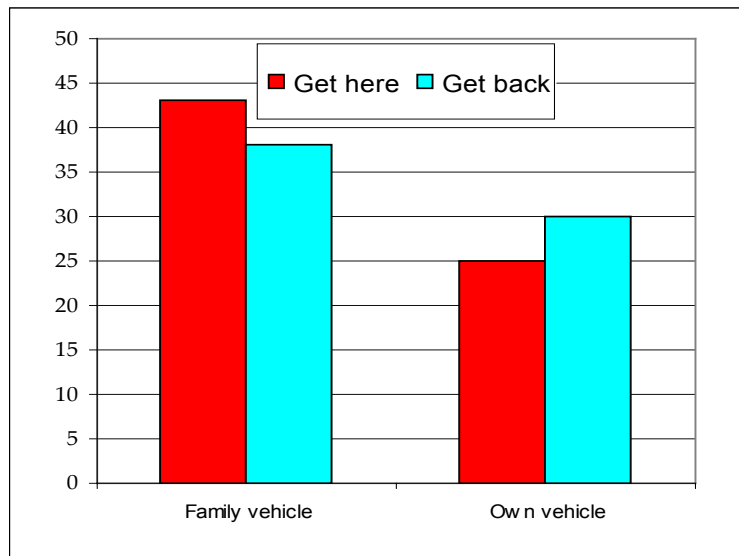
[House boss spoke for visitor and her daughter because she was shy to speak] *They come in every fortnight from Yuendumu to visit husband and father in jail and then go back again.*

Just come in to do a course at Batchelor.

Waiting for a flat.

The following graph shows how visitors make their way to town and how they get back to their communities. The possible answers to this question were: family vehicle; own vehicle; mail plane; bus; ambulance; hitchhike; flying doctor; community vehicle; taxi/mini bus; charter plane and don't know. Only two options—family vehicle and own vehicle—were given in any number; the other options combined had less than 10 responses.

Figure 24: How people come to town and get back to community, Surveys 2–4



Families tend to travel in small groups of up to 7–10 people per car and can do two trips between their community and town. Once in town, the remainder of families stay in town and wait to catch a ride for the next lot of families heading back to their communities.

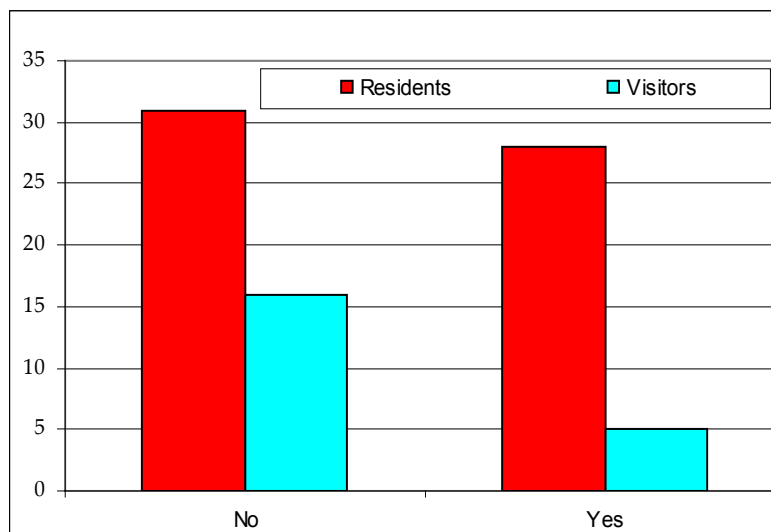
I came in for a conference and got stuck to get home. And now I'm helping with the mobility survey.

I'm visiting family they picked me up and brought me here.

We asked the visitors and residents about families having trouble getting home. Residents who have visitors at their house say they have no problems getting back home. Most of the visitors tend to stay in town until the next lot of family travel back out bush and catch a ride with them. A few visitors said they have problems getting home as car is full, or there is no money until pay day, or they are staying as they want a change from the community lifestyle or have some part-time employment.

The following graph shows the answers to whether people have trouble getting home or not.

Figure 25: Problems getting home, Surveys 2–4



No lift, don't know how to get back to community.

I come in from out bush and want somewhere to camp with my wife and daughter, get a lift into town and I'm stuck until the next time I get my money and car to go out bush.

Been in town a while, just moving around because of nowhere to stay.

Camping in public spaces

A small survey was conducted on the people camping in public places around Alice Springs. Campers set up camp in the creeks, under bridges and in the hills. They come from Ammaroo, Utopia, Napperby and Yuendumu, to name a few places.

We like staying here because Arrernte people look after us ... We like staying together because other people get angry. We are not going back, we are old people.

Each camp can have 5–10 groups staying together. The campers reside in the hills, the creeks, under the bridges and outside of the town camps. Some of the places people camp are the Heavitree Gap causeway over the Todd River, Sissy Hill (near Elder St), Middle Park (Gosse St), South Bridge causeway and Morris Soak Hill. Each camp also caters for different language groups such as Alyawarra, Luritja, Arrernte, Warlpiri and Anmatyerre.

The campers are generally aged between 40–60 years. All they have is each other's company and a few items such as blankets, clothes, billy can (tea) and a grill to cook their meat on. They share what they have with each other and walk together when they go into town or to their camp. Many of the researchers can identify each site by the people's nicknames and family names.

Tangentyere Council Wardens work two mornings, Monday and Friday from 5 am to 8 am in conjunction with workers from the Alice Springs Town Council. They visit all the public places where people are camping and talk to them about why they are there and when they plan on going home. They offer assistance to help people get back to their community, which is the Return to Country scheme. There are two parts to this scheme, one where the wardens themselves will take people back which can be as far as SA and WA, or by assisting people with fuel vouchers or if there are minor repairs needed to get their cars fixed.

For Tangentyere Council, it is based on respect for Arrernte country and law—To prevent camping in inappropriate places, or trees getting burnt, country damaged and behaviour that does not respect Arrernte Country and law. For the town council, it is about inappropriate camping in public places. Both are keen to see a non-punitive system that deals with the issues and avoids unnecessary contact with the criminal justice system.

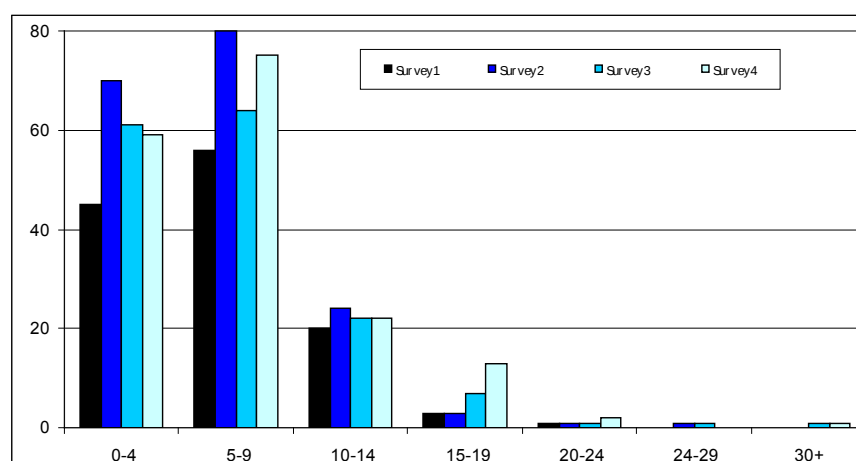
Occupancy

Occupancy and adequacy of housing and infrastructure for people on town camps is one of the issues the executive and research subcommittee are interested in. The occupancy data of the houses surveyed is set out in the following table. This is an underestimate of the occupancy as there are tin sheds attached to some houses that would increase the occupancy for those houses if the number of people living in the tin shed were included.

Table 23: Occupancy of dwellings surveyed, Surveys 1–4

Number of people living in the house	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4
0–4	45	70	61	59
5–9	56	80	64	75
10–14	20	24	22	22
15–19	3	3	7	13
20–24	1	1	1	2
25–30	0	1	1	0
30+	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	125	179	157	172

Figure 26: Occupancy of dwellings, Surveys 1–4



There are questions about the adequacy of the dwellings in the town camps (Table 2 sets out the dwelling types on town camps). If tin sheds, community facilities and ablution blocks are removed from the available dwellings as unsuitable, there are 191 houses left of which 43 need to be demolished or

replaced, as at August 2005. The estimated average occupancy using the base population estimates is set out below.

Table 24: Estimated average occupancy of the town camps

Base population		1,605	2,065	2,380
Total houses	191	8.4	10.8	12.5
Excluding those that need to be replaced	148	10.8	14.0	16.1

Given that the majority of housing on town camps (64%) have 2–3 bedrooms, this indicates that at the lower average occupancy of 10.4 there are 3–4 people per bedroom, and at the higher average occupancy of 16.1 there are 5–8 people per bedroom.

Summary of Population in town camps and Discussion

The population of the town camps in Alice Springs consists of two estimates. The base population is the number of people living in the town camps at any one time. This could be considered similar to the de facto ABS census count. The base population is between 1,765 and 2,065, provided by the moderated ERP adjustment and the Mpwetyerre case study data. A summary of the population estimates is set out below.

Table 25: Summary of estimates of population in town camps

Survey data (allowing for dwellings not surveyed)	1,605
With ERP age distribution (moderated by 50%)	1,765
With adjustment for young people (Mpwetyerre case study)	2,065
With adjustment for young people (Ewyenper-Atwatye case study)	2,380
Service population	2,560–3,300

The lower estimate of 1,605 is based on the number of dwellings not able to be surveyed. As outlined in the population estimation section, in each of the four surveys there were dwellings where it was not possible to survey the occupants. This may have been for reasons of sorry business²⁴, or in other cases, people were not home when the researchers were at that camp²⁵ and in a few cases, consent for the survey was refused. The number of dwellings omitted did not include the full complement of available tin sheds (67) but rather the number that were likely to be used during the survey period (53–57).

The higher estimates are a result of adjustments for difficulties in collecting accurate information on the number of young people. The estimate of 1,765 is based on applying the age distribution of the 2001 ERP of the Aboriginal population of Alice Springs to the survey data, with the effect reduced by 50%. The subsequent estimates were obtained by using the case studies at Mpwetyerre (2,065) and Ewyenper-Atwatye camps (2,380) where there was supplementary data available that was reasonably close to the time two surveys were conducted. The effect of the Mpwetyerre supplementary data was reduced by 25% to allow for a proportion of young people being at the camp for the purpose of accessing the service that provided the supplementary data. In the case of Ewyenper-Atwatye, the data provided an example for an estimate that included young people who were regular visitors, resulting in a higher estimate. It would seem likely that the population of the town camps would be closer to that provided by the moderated ERP adjustment and the Mpwetyerre case study data—between 1,765 and 2,065.

The ABS census data indicates a population of 973 in 2001. A projection of this population in 2005 is 1,115.²⁶ This is clearly significantly lower than the results from the survey data. While an under-count of the Indigenous population is acknowledged, no PESs are conducted in remote Indigenous communities or town camps where the discrepancies are likely to be the largest, which must affect the accuracy of the subsequent ERPs.

²⁴ For example in Survey 1, no dwellings in Inarlenge and Ilperenye could be surveyed due to sorry business at those camps.

²⁵ A minimum of three attempts were made to catch people at home.

²⁶ Fertility rate used is the SLA registered births in Alice Springs and Central Remote ATSIC regions aggregated to desert region in 2001 which provides a total fertility rate of 2.6 held constant; the mortality rate used is the ABS NT Indigenous survival ratios held constant; and net migration is assumed to be zero at all ages. A standard cohort component method of projection was applied to the 2001 Indigenous ERP for Alice Springs and Central Remote regions combined and projections established (Mitchell et al 2005).

There is a part of the population that moves in and out of the town camps as a whole. The Surveys 2–4 data indicate a range of 36.7–39.6% of the population. This mobility increases the level of services that are needed in the town camps. The estimate of the service population based on the level of movement indicated in the survey data is between 2,560 and 3,300.

This does not include inter-camp (between different town camps) or intra-camp (between different dwellings within a town camp) mobility. This mobility places additional stress on the infrastructure although the level of this stress may be related to the cause of the mobility. For example, from the long survey, there are people who move between town camps and houses as they have no other accommodation options such as public housing or short-term hostel accommodation available. Their only option then becomes to move through houses, tin sheds or ablution blocks in the town camps, staying at each one until the house boss or camp boss asks them to leave. This is an extremely onerous task within the family and camp structure, and often may not be able to be broached until the situation reaches crisis point as everybody understands there are not other housing options. Pressure is also placed on people in the town camps by relatives visiting from remote communities to access essential social, health, education and other services in Alice Springs.

Factors which contribute to the high level of mobility include overcrowding and the inadequacy of housing. For example in June 2004 the waiting list for public housing in Alice Springs was four years for a 4-bedroom house and over three years for a 3-bedroom house, and most hostels had 100% occupancy (Mitchell et al 2005). Hostel managers have indicated the lack of places for people in short-term hostel accommodation; priority housing takes longer than six weeks to allocate and six weeks is the maximum length of stay in most hostels and is also the allowed ‘visitor’ time in public housing. This can result in a domino effect of movement within the town camps. Certainly the desire to have visitors stay for 2–3 nights and not more was one issue that was consistently raised in the long survey. Having alternative accommodation, such as hostels, must be part of the solution.

Occupancy estimates are between 10.8–16.1 people per house in the town camps²⁷, 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. As a result, community facilities and ablution blocks become potential dwellings and in Survey 1 there were 35 people living in the 5 community facilities surveyed. Six ablution blocks were occupied during the survey.

The definition of residents and visitors will always be different between agencies collecting data that may have their own definition, and what people in the town camps have as their definition. This was apparent from the early discussions on how to construct the survey tool and what questions best drew out the information. In the results, there were a number of visitors who had been present for all 4 surveys. This may have been coincidence, but it appeared that how a person was classified as a resident or visitor can include an aspect related to the right to be at a particular camp or dwelling. This highlights the difficulty for the *de jure* count of the census, as it is based on the question of where is people’s ‘usual residence’ in comparison to who was actually present when the census form is being completed, which is the *de facto* count.

²⁷ Excludes those houses that need to be replaced.

In asking why people came to town, better housing options and family visits were the most important reasons. Visitors were welcome for the social gathering of families. Most people travelled in and out in a family vehicle, and correspondingly, the reason most people were stuck in town was that there was not enough room in the vehicle going back, and so they were waiting in town until the next lot of family travelled out bush.

Mobility is a part of Aboriginal life in central Australia and is a key to people maintaining social relationships and relationships to places. It may now also be a dangerous part, as a look at related data indicates a disturbing aspect. The leading cause of injury deaths for Aboriginal people in central Australia is land transport accidents (51.9 per 100,000).²⁸ At June 2003, 30% of Aboriginal prisoners were in custody for driving offences, and 39% of Aboriginal people apprehended in 2003 were apprehended for driving offences (Mitchell et al 2005). It is not the first time that movement has been a tool of destructiveness—removals from country and family proved a potent tool in the hands of non-Aboriginal authorities in the past.

Finally one needs to keep a sense of perspective in the trade off between improving data collection and the level of invasiveness in people's lives. We do not want to replicate the 'stud book'²⁹ mentality with an ever-increasing level of detail collected on Aboriginal people that is not undertaken for non-Aboriginal people. Improving the quality of data collected about Aboriginal people may be more effective than increasing the quantity.

Using an Aboriginal research process is fundamental to this. In the training, researchers talked about their experience of other research and surveys—how many Aboriginal people would just answer yes/no or often yes/yes to get it over and done with, about how non-Aboriginal external researchers would not understand an answer and would say, 'Sorry, I'm just here to ask you about only this subject'. The most important thing was context, and having a much more in-depth understanding to first get the question right and then to understand the answer. 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 might not. Being part of an Aboriginal research process is a partnership and means working together to research issues that are important to the community you are working with.

²⁸ The data on the level of hospitalisations due to injury is also high, but well behind interpersonal violence. This may partly be explained by location and relative access, in that many injuries will be treated outside of the hospital system in clinics on communities, given that a larger proportion of accidents are likely to happen outside of Alice Springs. It may also be partly explained by a level of unwillingness to become involved with authorities (health, police) after a motor vehicle accident if it can at all be avoided.

²⁹ The colloquial name for the 1957 Register of Wards that attempted to list all Aboriginal people by name, Northern Territory Government Gazette No. 19B, 13 May 1957. In 1953 the Aboriginals Ordinance was repealed, and replaced with the Welfare Ordinance. On the face of it, this move appeared to release Aboriginal people from legislative control of their lives; however, almost all Aboriginal people were again subject to similar levels of control by being defined as 'Wards' in a sleight of hand which involved the officers of the new Welfare Branch compiling a 'Register of Wards'. People of mixed descent were not listed as Wards, and so were free from the regulation of the Ordinance.

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Appendix A: DK-CRC Submission

The submission was put to the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research centre (DK-CRC) to fund the research. The goals of the research per the submission are as follows:

- Train Aboriginal research officers in methods of conducting interviews
- Offer support to the Aboriginal research officers in undertaking a graduate certificate in multidisciplinary and collaborative research through NTU
- Estimate the current town camp population
- Improve the knowledge of Tangentyere Council about the population that the council is servicing
- Estimate mobility trends and action for undertaking future population projections
- Increase the level of understanding of population mobility by service providers, to influence policies and adapt service provision to the impact of the mobility factor on service delivery
- Identify factors associated with, and influencing mobility
- Increase research capacity of Aboriginal people and Tangentyere employees to understand and assess research processes, to incorporate research outcomes in their work, and inform policy development and program implementation
- Enable Aboriginal organisations to increase the pool of Aboriginal people familiar with research and able to undertake population surveys
- Increase awareness by service providers about Aboriginal population mobility and act to increase the in-kind contribution of stakeholders
- Have a flow on effect on the understanding of systems and how they operate when mobility factors are introduced into the responses of private and public sectors to regional planning.

CRH project submission to DK-CRC, April 2003

Appendix B: Survey forms

Following are the forms that were used in the survey in the following order:

- Information sheet
- Short survey questions
- Short survey data collection form
- Long survey questions—please note that the appendix has a layout that compressed the actual form that interviewers used. In particular, the boxes for writing the answers were a bit larger and the tick box selection was not on the same page, it was on the next page.

Tangentyere Council & Centre for Remote Health Mobility Survey

Information Sheet

We are working with Tangentyere Council doing a Mobility Survey. We want to ask you about who stopped here last night, and find out about how many people are visitors. We have done 2 surveys last year: one in July (winter) and one in October. This information can be used for better planning of services in the future.

This interview will take about 20 minutes.

The Tangentyere Executive Committee and the Aboriginal Housing Information Referral Services have approved this survey.

Do you have any questions about what we are doing?

Do you have any worries about what we are doing?

This information from the survey will be PRIVATE. It will be kept locked away and no information that you give will be used by anyone but the research team.

Is there anything you want to ask about this?

It is your choice to be part of this survey. You will not be penalised if you choose not to take part.

Are you happy to take part in this survey?

You can stop taking part any time.

If you have any problems please call Rayelene Williams or Julia Mitchell on 8951-4286

You can also call the Central Australian Human Research Ethics Committee on 8951-4700

Tangentyere Council & Centre for Remote Health

Mobility Survey

Place Number..... Camp/ Street ID No Date...../...../.....
Day.....

1. Who stopped here last night?
2. How old are they?
3. Are they male or female? (Ask only if you are not sure.)
4. Are they visitors?
5. How long they have been living here?
6. Where did they last stay before coming here?
7. Where are you from?
8. Where are the people who were here during the last survey but are not here now?
9. Are they coming back to stay with you again?

[illegible]

Part 2: Resident feelings about visitors

(To be asked of house boss and partner.)

Now we'd like to ask you and your partner some questions about having visitors in your house. If we can, we'd like to talk to you separately.

Name:

1. Can you tell us the good things about having visitors in your house?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Bring art and sell it | ☐ Going hunting more often |
| ☐ Bring bush tucker | ☐ Good company |
| ☐ Bring money support for family | ☐ More video watching |
| ☐ Bring news from the bush | ☐ Sight seeing, visiting country |
| ☐ Culture | ☐ Social gathering |
| ☐ Give mum and dad a break | ☐ Other (Specify) |

Can you tell us the bad things about having visitors in your house?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Anger | ☐ Leave kids in town while they go drinking |
| ☐ Borrowing car | ☐ Money/Food/Electricity/Fuel (Cost more) |
| ☐ Complaints from others/neighbours | ☐ Need blankets for them |
| ☐ Damage to property | ☐ Others join in with drinking (more drinking around) |
| ☐ Difficulty controlling noise | ☐ Over-staying |
| ☐ Different cultural protocols in town. People need to change the way they behave | ☐ People too frightened to walk in the streets |
| ☐ Disruption to normal routine | ☐ People get themselves into trouble with police |
| ☐ Domestic violence between family members | ☐ Serving the visitors |
| ☐ Drugs/people occupy empty houses | ☐ Stressful |
| ☐ Health & safety | ☐ Other (specify) |
| ☐ Kids are out of school | |

*Give a short explanation about what we are doing.
Consent (agreement) to take part in the survey.*

We're trying to find out why people move around.

DO NOT GIVE THEM IDEAS. Ask the question in a different way for example:
What did you come here for?

[illegible]

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Alcohol | ☐ Inter family problems/fighting |
| ☐ Availability of drugs | ☐ Money |
| ☐ Better choices for health care (for me or relative) | ☐ Painting |
| ☐ Buying vehicle | ☐ Pick up car from garage |
| ☐ Came with family member | ☐ Petrol sniffing |
| ☐ Court/Jail | ☐ Poor power or water supply |
| ☐ Cultural reasons | ☐ Protection against violence |
| ☐ Employment | ☐ Royalty payments |
| ☐ Family visits | ☐ School |
| ☐ Government services are better in town | ☐ Shopping |
| ☐ Health | ☐ Social events |
| ☐ High cost of living in the bush | ☐ Sorry Business |
| ☐ Holidays | ☐ Sport |
| ☐ Housing | ☐ Tourist activity |
| ☐ Looking for a partner | Youth come for activities/recreation |
| ☐ Other (specify) | |

Only ask the next question of people from out of town.

4. How did you get here?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Own vehicle | ☐ Mail plane |
| ☐ Friend's vehicle | ☐ Flying doctor |
| ☐ Family vehicle | ☐ Charter/Commercial plane |
| ☐ Hitchhike | ☐ Community vehicle |
| ☐ Taxi/mini bus | ☐ Ambulance |
| ☐ Bus | ☐ Other (specify) |

5. How long are you planning to stay here?

☐ 1 week

☐ 1–2 months

☐ 2 weeks

☐ More than 2 months

☐ 3 weeks

☐ Don't know

☐ 4 weeks

6. Have you had any problems getting back home?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, ask question 7

If yes, ask 6a

6a. What problems?

6b. Who would you ask for help if you have problems?

7. How do you plan to get back to your community?

☐ Own vehicle

☐ Mail plane

☐ Friend's vehicle

☐ Flying doctor

☐ Family vehicle

☐ Charter/Commercial plane

☐ Hitchhike

☐ Community vehicle

☐ Taxi / mini bus

☐ Ambulance

☐ Bus

☐ Other (specify)

Appendix C: List of researchers

DEPARTMENT	SURVEY 1	SURVEY 2	SURVEY 3	SURVEY 4
Research	Denise Foster, Raelene Williams, Donna Campbell, Jane Ulrik	Denise Foster, Raelene Williams, Jane Ulrik	Denise Foster, Raelene Williams, Jane Ulrik	Denise Foster, Raelene Williams, Jane Ulrik
Night Patrol	Tracey Larkins, Magdelaine Lynch, Sheridan Lynch, Doreen Abbott, Roseanne Payne	Doreen Abbott, Roseanne Payne, Helen Gillen	Beryl Peckham, Chris Forbes, James Briscoe, Julie Heron, Kumentjaye Charles, Troyden Briscoe	Beryl Peckham, Harold Nayda, Teresa Dodd (Snr), Teresa Dodd (Jnr)
Wardens	Oscar Swan, William Tilmouth	Oscar Swan, William Tilmouth	Oscar Swan, Boyd Elston, Doreen Abbott	Oscar Swan, Boyd Elston, Doreen Abbott
Housing	Sharlene Swan, Oscar Ah Mat, Kevin Corby	Sharlene Swan, Oscar Ah Mat	Sharlene Swan, Oscar Ah Mat	Sharlene Swan, Oscar Ah Mat
Helping Old People Service	Lorraine Pepperill	Lorraine Pepperill	Betty Conway, Eva Briscoe, Kimberley Wiseman	Betty Conway, Valerie Burdett
Safe Families		Sharon Miller, Briony Kopp		
Youth Services				Ian McAdam, Munda Gorey
Administration		Dorrie Campbell, Rochelle Fielding		
Town camp residents through CDEP	Vanessa Davis	Vanessa Davis, Kayleen Hayes, Kimberley Wiseman, Peter Ferguson	Clinton Pepperill, Ralph Turner	Tiara Foster, Narelle Davis, Teresa Foster, Philip McCormack
Town camp residents	Peggy Forrester, Helen Gillen	Sadie Williams, John Jebadah, Phillip Miller, Chris Shaw, Helen Gillen, Gloranne Ebatarinja, Phillip Jamima, Cathy Doolan	Sadie Williams, Lorraine Pepperill, Vanessa Davis	Lorraine Pepperill, Vanessa Davis, Elizabeth Erlandson, Audrey McCormack
Others	Marah Edwards (NT Department of Housing), Juanita Sherwood (CRH), Ian Warchivker (CRH)	Marah Edwards, Julia Mitchell, Ian Warchivker	Ricky Mentha (CRH), Shannon McCormack, Julia Mitchell, Ian Warchivker	Julia Mitchell, Ian Warchivker

Appendix D: Days survey conducted

After Survey 2 there was a feeling that the day of the week that the survey was conducted on would affect the data that was collected. In particular, on Thursday and Friday, people were more keen to go in to town, or in some camps there was more drinking which affected how many dwellings could be surveyed, and how long people were prepared to sit and complete the forms. On all the survey forms the day that the interviews were conducted and by whom is filled out. In the data entry for Surveys 2–4, the day of the week was entered as follows: M for Monday; T for Tuesday, W for Wednesday, P for Thursday as it was pension day; F for Friday. The percentage of people included on the survey forms by day of Surveys 2–4 is set out below:

Table 26: Percentage of people surveyed by day, Surveys 2–4

Survey	2	3	4
Monday	30%	27%	8%*
Tuesday	16%	37%	37%
Wednesday	23%	12%	15%
Thursday	18%	14%	28%
Friday	13%	9%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%

* Survey 4 was conducted from Tuesday 14 to Friday 24 June as there was a public holiday on Monday 13 June.

Thursday and Friday are generally the lowest with the exception of Survey 4, but this is probably the result of most of the data being collected by the last Thursday and Friday in the fortnight and those two days being used for follow-ups.