

Location and Jobs - the Real Story

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1 Introduction

Bennelong is no longer a lone voice protesting the shameful effects of 'living museum' policies. The Howard Government, starting with the abolition of ATSIC and culminating in the Northern Territory 'intervention', started to attack the apartheid policies that, to Australia's shame, created Third World conditions for substantial numbers of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Kevin Rudd's proposal to begin each Parliamentary year with a statement of the gaps between Indigenous and mainstream health and education indicates the strength of electoral support for ending disgraceful living standards in welfare dependent Indigenous settlements.

But the policy reforms that have to be implemented to end these shameful conditions are far from clear, in part because of communitarian/liberal differences, but also because of the weakness of the data being used to shape policies. Myths about Indigenous work status and location, in particular, are being used to justify poor education, ill health and high levels of violence.

Part 2 of this paper works through the data mazes and inconsistencies used to justify separatist policies that are the real cause of Aboriginal deprivation. Part 3 focuses on assumptions of 'remoteness' that are said to be the causes of poor education, low employment, ramshackle housing, poor health services and inadequate policing.

The data show that more than a third (36% or 164,000) of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, live in the mainstream open society. They work, are buying or renting private houses, send their children to public or private schools, send a disproportionately high number of children to universities, and have similar health outcomes to other mainstream Australians.

Most Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders –some 84% or more than 380,000 live near jobs, supermarkets, primary and secondary schools and medical services. A high proportion, nearly 300,000 are welfare dependent, but this is not because they live far away from jobs. At most 16%, or 74,000, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders live in non-mainstream locations. Of these less than 5%, or 23,000, live in very small settlements with populations of less than 500 people. Most of the non-mainstream Indigenous population is concentrated in large settlements such as Manigrida, Wadeye and Arrakun. Even in these non-mainstream areas there are jobs, but because education has been so appalling that most Indigenous school leavers cannot read, write or count, jobs are held by non-Indigenous people.

A brief conclusion draws attention to the real policy causes of Indigenous deprivation.

2 Rubbery Figures – Indigenous Population Data

Indigenous public policy, just like other public policy, requires data for policy analysis, formulation, and evaluation of effectiveness. Erroneous data and erroneous perceptions lead to policies that at the very least provide no benefits, and at the worst cause actual harm. Data interpretation and perception errors have made a major contribution to the failure of Indigenous policy to deliver mainstream living standards to two thirds of those identifying as Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is a thoroughly professional organisation dedicated to serving Australia's needs for basic data in a wide range of fields but in Indigenous data gathering it faces many difficulties. The ABS covers the characteristics of Indigenous Australians in censuses and also produces regular periodical surveys and 'one-off' data.

Table 2.1 Principal ABS publications of Indigenous population data

ABS Catalog No.	Title
2000 Series	Census – every 5 years, last issue 2006
4704.0	The Health and Welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples - last issue 2005, next issue 2008
4705.0	Population Distribution, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians 2006
4714.0	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002
4715.0	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004-05
3238.0	Experimental Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 1991-2009. Issued 2004
4710.0	Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, 2004 – 2006

ABS definitions and methodologies that are appropriate to seeing the whole Australian picture are not always useful for analyzing the characteristics of sub-set populations, including Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

Problems start with the population count. An objective count of the numbers of Aborigines and Torres Strait islanders has not been possible in the past. ‘Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders’ or ‘Indigenous Australians’ are only defined by ‘self-identification’ a subjective process that leaves out many Australians of Indigenous origin. Identification by group acceptance is even more subjective, giving rise to acute conflicts when special benefits such as additional welfare or royalties are an issue.¹ An objective count of Indigenousness as a characteristic of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent would only be traced in the Australian population by DNA testing. The number of Aborigines and Torres Strait islanders would be likely to be substantially higher than current estimates. It would also probably indicate a substantially different socio-economic population composition than current estimates.

Despite these limitations, ABS data are the accepted source of the number of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders/Indigenous people in Australia. Data for the last three censuses show that Indigenous Australians are an increasing - though small - percentage of all Australians.

Table 2.2: Indigenous population as a percentage of Australians²

Census	Indigenous	
	Count	% of Australians
1996	352,970	2.0
2001	401,916	2.2
2006	455,028	2.3

The increase of the Indigenous population as a proportion of the Australian population during the last ten years as recorded by censuses is generally thought to be mainly the result of a higher Indigenous birthrate and increases in Indigenous self-identification. But changes in respondents opting for ‘not-stated’, variations in the census undercount and variations in census implementation must also be taken into account.

Fertility, baby bonus, and life span

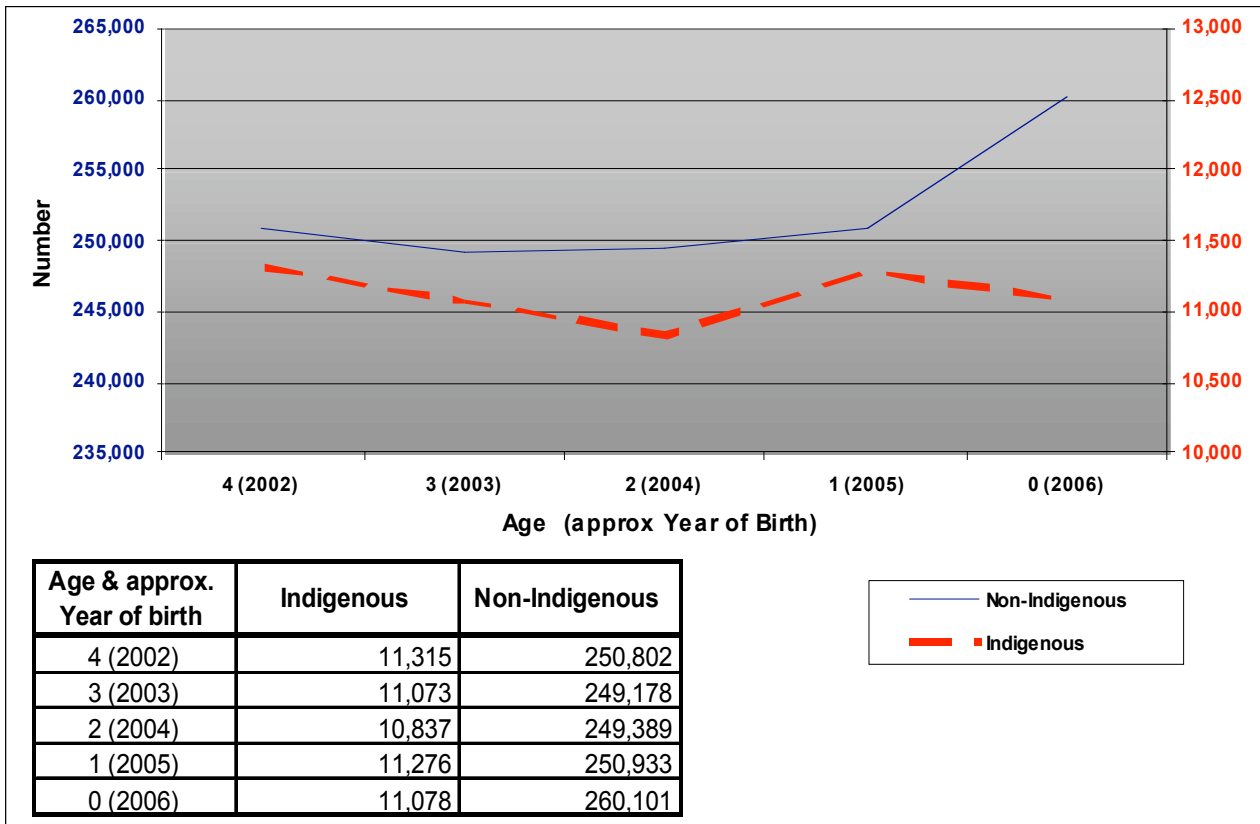
A higher Indigenous total fertility rate (the number of babies per woman) than non-Indigenous total fertility rate would contribute to the increasing Indigenous population proportion.

The latest issue of the regular ABS *Births* publication (3301.0) shows that in 2006 the total fertility rate was 1.81 babies per woman for all Australians, but that for Indigenous women it was higher at 2.12. It is noteworthy, however, that the Indigenous total fertility rate of 2.12 was equal to the ‘replacement total fertility rate of 2.1’ that results in a stable population size. Therefore higher Indigenous fertility would only account for an increasing Indigenous population component if total Australian population was falling. But immigration has resulted in total population growth.

There has been substantial speculation about a boom in the Indigenous birth rate, especially in teenage and young adult Indigenous women. Anecdotal evidence claims that the introduction of

the ‘baby bonus’ (in operation in its current form since July 1 2004) has been a major contributing factor to an indigenous ‘baby boom’. The census data do not support these claims:

Figure 1: Ages 4 to 0 cohort size, 2006 Census



It is clear from the census data and graph above that the recent increase in non-Indigenous births has not been matched by an increase in Indigenous births. Teenage fertility appears to be also in decline. At the national level it continued to decline in 2006, to 15.4 babies per 1,000 teenage women, the lowest on record. However, the data fluctuates by state. The largest reductions were in Queensland and Western Australia, while the only increase was in the Northern Territory.

The proportion of the Indigenous population in the age 0-4 cohort is much higher than the same age cohort in the total population:

Table 2.3: Age 0-4 cohort as % of population

Census	Indigenous		All Australians	
	Number	% of Population	Number	% of Population
1996	50,287	14.2	1,264,906	7.1
2001	52,013	12.9	1,235,537	6.6
2006	55,566	12.2	1,260,405	6.3

The difference between the Australian total fertility rate of 1.81 and the Indigenous total fertility rate of 2.12 does not appear to be large enough to explain the large difference in young people as a percent of population. The shorter average Indigenous life span, however, means that Indigenous younger age cohorts have a higher percentage, and older age cohorts have a lower percentage of the Indigenous population than equivalent non-Indigenous cohorts.

Table 2.4: Age 50+ cohort as a % of population

Census	Indigenous		All Australians	
	Number	% of Population	Number	% of Population
1996	32,061	9.1%	4,616,522	26.0%
2001	40,444	10.1%	5,316,837	28.6%
2006	55,290	12.2%	6,152,845	31.0%

The increase in the Indigenous share of the Australian population over time as recorded in the census can not have been caused by higher fertility rates or a recent Indigenous ‘baby boom’.

Self identification

If there is no net inwards migration of Indigenous Australians, then each age cohort should have less members at each census, resulting from deaths within the cohort. The census data however, shows that Indigenous age cohorts are not decreasing at a rate equal to deaths in the cohort, while some age cohorts actually increase between censuses.

For example, if we follow the Indigenous age 0-4 cohort from 1996 to 2006, we find that the numbers have increased from 50,287 through 55,846 in 2001 (when they were aged 5-9) to 57,591 in 2006 (when they were aged 10-14). Not only have the numbers not declined due to deaths, but there has been an increase of 15%. Similarly, the Indigenous cohorts that in 1996 were aged 5-9, 25-29, and 30-34, all increased their numbers by 2006.

One possibility is that the ABS was finding significant numbers of Indigenous people - adults as well as children - that had not been counted in the prior census. But it is generally accepted that at each census over the last twenty years, a number of people who previously recorded themselves as ‘non-Indigenous’ have changed and are now recording themselves as ‘Indigenous’. That is, ‘self-identification’ has increased.

There may be more than one motive for the change in self-identification. It may be caused by people of Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal heritage changing their perception of themselves. It may also be caused by people of non-Aboriginal heritage identifying as Aboriginal. Their motivation might be to access additional welfare available only to Indigenous people, or simply because they feel like doing so. There is no evidence about the numbers in this category. Dictionary definitions of aboriginal and indigenous include ‘born in’ and ‘native of’. As the numbers of people identifying as Indigenous who previously did not do so is probably have declined as the backlog of those who failed to identify as Indigenous has been reduced, it is possible that recent increases in self-identification are largely the result of respondents who were merely born in Australia.

On balance, increasing ‘self-identification’ appears to have contributed significantly to the increase in the proportion of the Indigenous population in the total population.

Not stated

Question 7 on the 2006 census form asks³:

<p>7 Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For persons of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, mark both ‘Yes’ boxes. 	<p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, Aboriginal</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, Torres Strait Islander</p>
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The answer on the census form only allows three categories: No; Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islander. But census data shows another category: ‘Not Stated’. A significant number of respondents have refused to answer the question.

Table 2 5: Growth of the ‘not stated’ category

Census	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Not Stated	
	Number	% of Aust	Number	% of Aust	Number	% of Aust
1996	352,970	2.0	16,874,456	95.1	525,403	3.0
2001	401,916	2.2	17,446,702	93.9	739,690	4.0
2006	455,028	2.3	18,266,812	92.0	1,133,448	5.7

In the 2006 Census the number of people in the ‘Not Stated’ category was more than twice as large as the Indigenous population. It consisted of two groups:

- Those declining to answer the question when filling in the census form
- Those for whom no census form was received

The ‘Not Stated’ category has grown so rapidly that it dwarfs the number of people changing from Non-Indigenous to ‘Indigenous’. It dwarfs the Indigenous numbers. How many Australians in the ‘Not Stated’ category Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders? The answer could significantly affect the size of the Indigenous population.

The undercount

The ABS devotes considerable resources to making the census accurate, but it acknowledges that ensuring all Indigenous (and other) persons are counted is a continuing problem. The ABS’ continuing Indigenous Enumeration Strategy makes it likely that the 2006 census was more accurate than any prior ones in counting the Indigenous population.

After the September - October 2006 census, the ABS carried out a large Post Enumeration Survey to estimate any census undercount and overcount and thus enhance the accuracy of the census. The post 2006 census Post Enumeration Survey was the first to include remote Indigenous communities.

The Post Enumeration Survey showed a national undercount rate of 2.7%, but the Indigenous undercount for the Northern Territory was 19.2%, and for Western Australia it was 24.1%, with the national Indigenous undercount estimated at 11.5%. This gives a national Indigenous population of 513,977 - an increase of almost 60,000 on the 2006 census count of 455,028. This figure is likely to be a more accurate figure than the 2006 census figure, and the ABS says the ‘final estimated resident population by Indigenous status will be available in mid 2008’. As the census data has full details including components such as demographic structure, employment, housing, etc, the 2006 census count is therefore used in this paper.

The census forms

Most people have filled in the standard census forms used throughout Australia. These are the ‘Household Form’ distributed to households, and the ‘Personal Form’ used by individuals spending census night in a hotel, motel, etc. But few are aware that in some remote Indigenous communities, a different form – the ‘Interviewer Household Form’ is used. As the 2006 Census Dictionary (2901.0) describes them:

Household form

‘The household form is the primary means for collecting Census data and is used in all private dwellings. A copy of the form used for the 2006 Census is included in Appendix A of this publication. A personal form records person characteristics in cases where a household form is not appropriate. If there are more than six people in a household on Census Night, a personal form is completed for the seventh person, and any subsequent persons.’

Interviewer Household form

‘The interviewer household form is used in nominated discrete Indigenous communities (communities of Indigenous people in which language differences or other factors make use of the standard self-enumeration forms impractical). The interviewer household form is an interview based Census form which is used to record the details of up to 12 persons in a household, and some dwelling data. If there are more than 12 persons in a dwelling a second interviewer household form is used to record the details of subsequent persons.’

Obvious problems arise in the use of a different form for some Indigenous households. The criteria used to determine which form is used are not stated. For example, how do census staff decide who gets the standard Household form and who gets the Household Interview form in a remote community? Clearly a racial divide is deemed appropriate. Non-Indigenous teachers, council workers and others presumably get the standard Household form no matter what the state of their English literacy. But which form does the Indigenous teacher or office manager get? Or the Indigenous truck driver over-nighting in the community? Do the ABS enumerators contracted for the census have special radar that enable them to determine who, respectively, should receive the Non-Indigenous and Indigenous form? Literacy in English is clearly not the issue. When census staff deliver standard Household forms in mainstream locations, they inform the householders that they are ready to assist them in filling out the form if their English or literacy is not adequate or if for some other reason they are unable to fill out the form. The most recent illiterate non-English speaking refugee from Somalia receives the standard Household form, not the Household Interview form.

The form structure, general instructions and wording, and question sequence is not identical between the two forms. Notably, the standard Household form has a privacy exemption which allows an individual member of the household to ask for a separate Personal form so that it is not filled out by, or with the knowledge of, the householder.. There is no such exemption for Indigenous census respondents. They are all deemed to be members of one household of up to 12 persons, none of whom can read or write

Wording of the questions, their possible responses, and even the questions asked, are not identical between the two forms. The notable additional question asked is whether the respondent is a CDEP recipient. This question results in distortions to national employment figures. The ABS counts CDEP recipients as ‘employed’ even if they are receiving CDEP for home duties or attendance at funerals. Not including CDEP as employment would increase the national unemployment rate by 0.3%.

Overall, the weakness of self-identification suggests that census figures are a poor base for any determination of an ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ nation. But group-identification would be even weaker. The use of different forms for a significant proportion of Indigenous respondents leads to inaccurate employment data and is likely to affect qualitative and subjective aspects of health and housing that reflect the direct views of respondents on the Household form but interviewers’ views on the Interviewer Household form. But such as they are, census data are the only source for establishing where Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders live.

3 Remote and Very Remote – Where the bloody hell are you?

The terms ‘Remote’ and ‘Very Remote’ are commonly used about Indigenous data related to health, education, employment, housing, policing, justice and other fields. There is a widespread perception that remoteness is a principal factor in Indigenous disadvantage because Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders live in locations physically remote from the mainstream Australian economy where there are no jobs and where delivery of housing, health, education and policing is costly and difficult. But the perception that remoteness is a major factor in Indigenous disadvantage is simply wrong. The overwhelming majority of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders - 84% or 379,000 - live in mainstream employment locations, near mainstream education, health and policing services;

only some 16% or 74,000 live in non-mainstream locations, and even here most live in large settlements where there are many jobs. Less than 5%, or 23,000 live in settlements of less than 500 people.

Taking another cut of the Indigenous Census population, by employment rather than location, about a third of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders live in mainstream society. They work at a variety of jobs ranging from low skilled to trades, professional, managerial and entrepreneurial, own or rent houses privately, send their children to public or private schools and access private and public health services just like other Australians. They are excluded from ABS data that purport to cover Indigenous characteristics such as housing. Their socio-economic characteristics are probably still skewed toward lower incomes because they are a rising group in Australian society, but like other rising groups, they send a disproportionately high number of their children to university. These Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are more heavily represented in the southern states, but a number also live in areas characterized as 'Remote' by the ABS. There is no deprivation to end and there are no gaps to be bridged for these Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

Their characteristics are constantly underrated and masked by averaging outcomes for this group with the two thirds, also mainly living in mainstream labour markets, who are on welfare. For example, the average difference of 17 years in life expectancy at birth between Indigenous and non-Indigenous, stated to be the headline indicator of Indigenous disadvantage by COAG, is simply wrong.⁴ It is much less for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the mainstream open society where it is probably the same as for mainstream Australia when socio-economic status is taken into account. For those living in Aboriginal welfare settlements, however, the gap in the expectancy of life at birth is much greater. Education data are particularly distorted by averaging with the mainstream component of Indigenous society. Many non-mainstream Aboriginal children have not sat benchmark literacy and numeracy tests in the past because it was known that they could not pass them. Enrolment and graduation figures give totally erroneous results when Year 10 children cannot pass Year 1 literacy and numeracy. Vocational data are particularly misleading when based on vocational 'certificates' awarded to candidates who cannot read, write or count.

ABS remoteness areas

For the ABS, Remote and Very Remote are two of five categories in a 'Remoteness Area' geographical classification. The ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classifications include several geographic classifications to group data. In 2001 the ABS introduced a new geographic classification - 'Remoteness Area'. As the ABS explains:

'The Remoteness classification was developed by the ABS in response to a demand for a statistical geography that allowed quantitative comparisons between 'city' and 'country' Australia where the defining difference between 'city' and 'country' is physical remoteness from goods and services.'

'Within the Australian Standard Geographical Classification, the Remoteness classification comprises five categories, each of which identifies a (non-contiguous) region in Australia being a grouping of Collection Districts (CDs) sharing a particular degree of remoteness. The degrees of remoteness range from 'highly accessible' (i.e. major cities) to 'very remote'.'

The degree of remoteness of each Census District was determined using the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia, developed by the National Key Centre for Social Applications of Geographical Information System.

The Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia has been developed as an index (continuous variable with values between 0 and 15), based on a purely geographical methodology in which remoteness is defined on the basis of road distance from any point to the nearest town (service centre) in each of five population size classes. The population size of the service centre is used as a proxy for the availability of a range of services and road distance is used as a proxy for the degree of remoteness from those services. There are five remoteness categories.

Table 3.1 Accessibility Remoteness Index values

Category	Accessibility/Remoteness Index value of Collection Districts	
	Min	Max
Major Cities of Australia	0.00	<= 0.20
Inner Regional Australia	>0.20	<= 2.40
Outer Regional Australia	>2.40	<= 5.92
Remote Australia	>5.92	<=10.53
Very Remote Australia	>10.53	
Migratory	Off-shore, Shipping, & Migratory	

The accessibility/remoteness index and Indigenous location

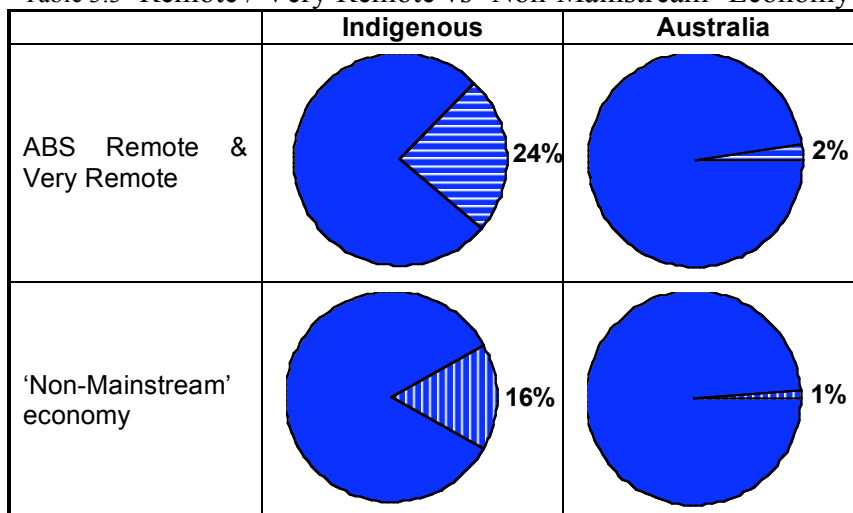
The Remoteness Area classification is consistently and objectively calculated, but it does not provide data useful for Indigenous employment, health, education and other policies. Forty two percent of Indigenous Australians live in NSW, VIC, Tasmania and ACT – States that either have no Remote / Very Remote categories, or have minimal population in those categories. So ‘remoteness’ can’t be a factor in poor employment, health, or education outcomes for those 42% of Indigenous Australians. For the remaining States and Territories, large parts of their Remote / Very Remote populations reside in substantial towns that have a thriving economy providing many employment opportunities as well as mainstream retail, education and health services.

Table 3.2 Examples of Major Employment / Service areas in Remote / Very Remote

State	Some towns in Remote / Very Remote	Population
Queensland	Mount Isa	18,857
South Australia	Port Lincoln / Eyre Peninsula	30,530
Western Australia	Esperance, Carnarvon, Port Hedland, Broome, Karratha	49,651
Northern Territory	Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy	28,005

Both the ABS and the National Key Centre for Social Applications of the Geographical Information system that developed the Accessibility/Remoteness Index, are aware that the Remoteness Area classification is not a definitive measure of whether a location has substantive private and public sectors, including opportunities for employment. The Geographical Information System’s analysis of service availability in towns of various sizes showed that towns with populations larger than 5,000 generally provided at least a basic level of all categories of private and public services and that the number and the level of services increased with size. Adjusting the Remote / Very Remote category to exclude sizeable service centres significantly changes the proportion of the Indigenous population living ‘out-of-range’ of jobs, mainstream health, and mainstream education.

Table 3.3 Remote / Very Remote vs 'Non-Mainstream' Economy



In addition to 'Remoteness Area' being different from 'away from the mainstream economy', it is also not a guide to disadvantage. When the ABS introduced the Remoteness Area classification, it documented that Remoteness was not a good fit with social disadvantage by showing the distribution of the most disadvantaged Collection Districts across the existing 'Sections of State' Classification, and the new 'Remoteness Area' Classification:

Table 3.4 Geographic distribution of the 20% most disadvantaged Collection Districts⁵

Section of State	Highly Accessible %	Accessible %	Moderately Accessible %	Remote/ Very Remote %	Total %
Major Urban	55.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	55.7
Other Urban	17.3	11.9	2.9	1.7	33.8
Bounded Locality (rural)	1.0	1.9	1.0	1.2	5.1
Rural Balance	1.2	2.2	0.7	1.4	5.4
Total	74.7	16.5	4.6	4.2	100.0

(a) Described using two classifications of CDs, 'Section of State' and Remoteness class.
 (b) Based on place of enumeration census counts.
 Source: Australian Social Trends 2000 and unpublished data, 1996 Census of Population and Housing.

The table shows that only 4.2% of the most disadvantaged Collection Districts are in Remote / Very Remote locations.

Analytically, the relevant measurement is location with respect to the range of private and public sectors and services of the mainstream economy, that is, within an hour or so drive to a supermarket, a hospital, an accountant, and so on. It is clear that only a small proportion of the Indigenous population is actually in Remote or Very Remote areas according to the ABS classification. The proportion in non-mainstream locations is estimated at 16%

Estimating the numbers of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders living in the mainstream open society is difficult because of the distortions introduced by counting CDEP as employment⁶ and by the reservation of jobs for Indigenous community members by Indigenous organisations. The percentage of households purchasing or renting private homes therefore seems a more realistic proxy for the population working and living in the open-society. The 2006 census indicates that more than a third (36% or 164,000) were buying or renting private homes, that is, presumably living in the mainstream open society. This suggests (in the absence of welfare and CDEP data) that nearly 300,000 were Indigenous people on welfare. The majority, again, were living within the reach of jobs with a considerable proportion in principal cities and in country towns such as Port Lincoln in South Australia, Shepparton in Victoria and Dubbo in New South Wales.

The demand for labour

Employment has a 'demand for' as well as a 'supply of' labour aspect. Most Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders live in areas of high employment demand. Unlike previous economic booms, the greatest labour shortages have developed in areas where Indigenous people are concentrated.

Two industries are being driven by economic considerations to make an effort to source Indigenous labour. The pastoral industry is providing 'transition' - literacy and numeracy training - so that Aboriginal youngsters can boot up the computers that are more relevant to to-day's pastoral work than horse riding. The mining industry, driven by its high labour turnover costs, is making the most serious effort to bring Indigenous youngsters into the labour force. Mine managements have recognised that most recruits first have to have transitional training and only then can manage the TAFE courses for drivers and mechanics that are usually necessary for entry level mining jobs. Professional staff who will have managerial opportunities are also being trained

These two industries are exceptional. Most of the towns that have acute labour shortages are doing nothing to employ fringe Indigenous populations. Shepparton, for example, has been leading the Australian Farmers' Federation agitation to bring Pacific Island guest workers to Australia (although they do not speak English and have no work experience). Local Centrelink offices and labor employment agencies have been unable to get local Yorta people who number about 1,800 into fruit picking and canning jobs. An initiative by Shepparton businessmen found more than 100 Aborigines jobs in a few months. Most were still working in these jobs a year later.⁷

A similar agitation for Timorese guest workers is being mounted by the horticulture industry in northwest Australia where labour shortages are even more acute, and farmers rely heavily on backpackers. Indigenous workers will not become engaged in these jobs unless those receiving unemployment or CDEP benefits are exposed to the rules that are supposed to make them take available jobs. This is not just an Indigenous problem. More than 700,000 Australians receive disability benefits. These numbers are growing rapidly because disability benefits are higher than unemployment benefits and no rule ensures that disability pensioners apply for jobs. A core of genuinely disabled people undoubtedly need disability pensions, but those suffering from conditions like 'stress' may well find their illness recede with a stint at fruit picking or fruit canning. Bringing guest workers will reduce employers' incentives to employ Indigenous workers. By providing an outlet for unemployed Pacific workers, a guest worker scheme will also endorse corrupt Pacific elites that are refusing to adopt policies that would lead to rapid growth and improving living standards in the Pacific.

The tourist industry has also neglected unemployed Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, notably in the Top End, in spite of their relatively large numbers in the vicinity of tourist towns. It too, relies on backpackers rather than recruiting Indigenous workers. Darwin, Alice Springs, Broome and Cairns shops, hotels motels, transport and other tourist facilities employ very few Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Tourist visitors to Australia comment that Indigenous employment is limited to a few 'tribal' guide jobs in quintessential locations such as Kakadu and Uluru. Indigenous participation in tourism is largely limited to 'tribal' tourism that is subsidised by low CDEP wages for part-time work

The Top End construction industry has been conspicuously absent from efforts to involve Indigenous labour. Bureaucracies pay lip-service to the involvement of Indigenous trainees in construction, but building design and contract terms are inimical to such involvement.

Two principal factors impede the supply of Indigenous labour. The lack of literacy and numeracy is a critical barrier. Most jobs require at least Year 10 proficiency. Learning-by-doing is still feasible in such sectors as retail trade, but it is well established that for a rising proportion of jobs more formal skills are required. These may be acquired by apprenticeships and traineeships, TAFE and university training. Some 10,000 teens and young twenties in the Top End who do not have basic literacy and numeracy, and often, as a result of so-called bi-lingual schooling, no English are shut out of labour markets in Darwin, Alice Springs, and Nhulunbuy and North Queensland tourist locations. The second factor is the unearned income 'stack' of welfare payments, CDEP and untaxed royalties. Unless Centrelink and its agencies implement the policies that are supposed to

ensure that the unemployed seek jobs, welfare will remain a major disincentive to job seeking. If people do not move from welfare to jobs, they are unable to access private housing and remain condemned to dysfunctional lives despite access to medical services and mainstream schools.

The non-mainstream population

Extremes of Indigenous deprivation are evident in non-mainstream locations, but again, they are not due to remoteness. Most of the 73,000 non-mainstream Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders live in towns of more than 500 people. These include Manigrida, Wadeye, Galiwinku Palm Island, Arrakun, Lockhart river and Warburton. Non-indigenous towns of this size would have a private sector of hotel/motels, cafes, a supermarket and other shops, schools and health services. Some of these settlements such as Wooribinda and New Mapoon are making an effort to become viable. But because discrete Aboriginal settlements lack private property rights, notably in land, they have difficulty in developing private sectors. Many of the communal shops are redolent of the communist enterprises of Eastern Europe. Their public housing is derelict and overcrowded like most public housing world wide. The lack of development and the permit system have denied these towns tourism and hence all weather roads or frequent ferry services. Aboriginal curriculums and health services have served them ill. Older people have been dispirited by years of inactivity and boredom. Youngsters are illiterate, non-numerate and bored out of their minds. Drink, drugs, sex and gangs are the only outlets for their energy.

Preliminary studies carried out for the inauguration of new local government shires in the Northern Territory indicate that there are many jobs in non-mainstream settlements and Aboriginal organisations. The Indigenous population of East Arnhem Shire is 8,500. In the shire area there are about 1,000 jobs currently filled by non-Indigenous staff, as no qualified Indigenous workers are available. Some of these positions may be eliminated in the Northern Territory as the egregious duplication and inefficiency of the more than 60 local government bodies (for a population of 212,000!) are reduced, but numbers of jobs will remain. Twenty Indigenous entities 'homeland' associations are fighting the shire structure attempt at greater efficiency to retain their non-Indigenous employment empires. Queensland would benefit from similar local government reform. Most non-mainstream settlement jobs are not highly skilled. Until Aboriginal schools teach literacy and numeracy and until real vocational education in mainstream TAFEs replaces the Aboriginal vocational courses in the Northern Territory, there will be no increase in Indigenous employment in these jobs.

4 Conclusion – the real causes of Indigenous deprivation

Erroneous beliefs about the characteristics of the Indigenous population cannot be allowed to continue to rule Indigenous policies. It is not remoteness but separatist policies that have created Indigenous deprivation. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders must have the benefit of the same policies that have given Australia one of the highest living standards in the world, social mobility and personal freedom.

All Australian children must have a basic primary and secondary education in English and be able to continue to post-secondary studies. This is the responsibility of all territory and state departments of education. There is no room for pretend 'Learning Centres' that leave Year 10 students with Year 1 reading, writing and counting levels. The current Northern Territory rate of progress that is changing two Learning Centres into primary schools a year means that it would take 27 years to get all Northern Territory primary children into primary schools! The promise of 200 additional teachers for the Northern Territory is not supported by funding for their housing in remote areas. Either these teachers will all be in Darwin and Alice Springs where there is a private housing market or the drive-in/fly-in teaching system that has led to almost universal illiteracy in Aboriginal schools will continue. School attendance must be policed in all schools as it is for non-Indigenous children. Daily attendance for school age children is not optional. Many non-Indigenous country children are bussed to primary schools and more are bussed to high school. Where settlements are not large enough for a school, for example on pastoral stations parents must teach

their children with the help of schools of the air. If this is not possible, parents must move to jobs near schools while their children are young. Indigenous families have the same options. Whether Indigenous adults want to live a 'traditional' lifestyle or not is irrelevant. They may want to live in a homeland outstation or in the middle of Sydney, or for that matter, in New York. That is their business and it is for them to decide. But to have a choice of where they want to live they must be literate and numerate in English so that they can get a job.

Enforcing the rules that mandate those receiving unemployment assistance to seek jobs is of critical importance in getting the majority of Indigenous unemployed workers into jobs and off welfare for they live in mainstream labour market areas. So is abolishing the CDEP system not only in urban and regional Australia where it was supposed to have been ended in June 2007, but also in the many Indigenous locations – such as the Alice Springs town camps that are in major employment areas. Not only does CDEP discourage real, full-time work, but it is a major power base, responsible for mismanagement in Indigenous communities. Royalties must become a transparent, accountable and taxable sources of income to reduce welfare double dipping and the unearned income stack. Private property rights, starting with 99 (and other) year leases must be introduced to facilitate entrepreneurial initiatives and private housing. (Proposed further exceptionalism to stimulate private enterprise, such as tax incentives for investment in Aboriginal enterprises, would invite speculation and corruption). If CDEP workers are filling real jobs then local governments, education, environment, health and other departments should employ them directly and pay them real wages. Territory/state/federal laws must be policed and enforced.

Measures such as reforming dysfunctional settlements, alcohol prohibitions, sequestering welfare incomes, breakfast programs, after school supervised homework, and funding for remedial Multilit courses for young adults will continue to be necessary if a transition to employment and decent living standards is to take place in the near future. But instead of a police station, a primary school functioning to mainstream standards should be the oasis around which other positive services, such as regular dental and medical checks should be organized.

Endnotes

¹ The most recent case involved the Kullilli tribe in Toowomba. K. Meade, Family's history "rewritten": Native title fight gets personal', *The Australian*, June 7-8, 2008

² All population data is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) www.abs.gov.au

³ ABS 2006 Census Household Form

⁴ COAG, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators, 2007*, Melbourne, Productivity Commission, 2007: 11

⁵ 1244.0.00.001 - Information Paper: Outcomes of ABS Views on Remoteness Consultation, Australia, Jun 2001

⁶ Sara Hudson, 'CDEP', Issue Analysis, July 2008, Centre for Independent Studies, forthcoming

⁷ H. Hughes and G. Sodhi, Should Australia and New Zealand open their doors to guest workers from the Pacific? Costs and benefits., *Policy Monograph*,72, Centre for Independent Studies, 2006