

# **Between places: Indigenous mobility in remote and rural Australia**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Indigenous people in remote and rural Australia are frequently between places; people might be found walking between the household of one relative and that of another; people might be found leaving the house they shared with other relatives and moving into another house within the same community, after living in a regional centre for a while. People might be found ploughing through bull dust on a bush track on their journey to join relatives on an outstation. People might be found travelling off road to a story place or in search of bush foods. People might be found in the early morning cruising along a highway in a community bus to a town such as Mt Isa to use health services or to participate in a regional sporting event; they might be found in a dinghy during the middle of the dry season following a dugong or turtle, or at Christmas time travelling to an Island community to attend a tombstone opening. People might be found in a light plane travelling to a community or regional centre to attend a 'law' meeting. A group of men might be found slowing down for a cattle grid as they return to work on a station after a weekend with family and friends in their home town. People might also be found travelling to a place of incarceration or flying to a major city for specialist medical treatment. A group of people might be found in one place travelling to other places in their thoughts and the words of narratives and songs. There exist what might be described as a culture of mobility amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of Australia.

It has been argued that the main determinant of change in local population size and composition in Australia is internal migration – a fundamental force “shaping and modifying the pattern of human settlement...with significant impacts on the demand for services” (Newton & Bell 1996:1). While this may be the case, there exists a range of factors and aspirations that shape and influence the movements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and populations. In many instances the act of moving is secondary to these motivations for moving. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mobility can be described as an epiphenomenon that reflects the setting within which people live and their situation (Young & Doohan 1989:32-38).

Whereas larger scales of mobility are analysable (to a limited degree) using the statistical methodologies of demographers and using the gross census units of Statistical Divisions and ATSI regions, there is a need to develop a greater understanding of smaller-scale regional characteristics. In the mobility literature, very little empirical work on these smaller intervals of time and space has been undertaken since the geographer-anthropologist team of Young & Doohan wrote '*Mobility for Survival: A Process Analysis of Aboriginal Population in Central Australia*' (1989). Young and Doohan called for a regional approach that investigates Aboriginal (and Torres Strait Islander) mobility as it is experienced by these people. Such an approach has the potential to examine any differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations and further differences within local Aboriginal populations (communities). It might therefore provide data that allow services and policies to respond more accurately to the lifestyle and aspirations of the communities to which they are targeted. (Young & Doohan 1989:200-220.)

## **1.1 Project Aims**

The aim of this project is to develop a better understanding of Indigenous perspectives, experiences of and aspirations for mobility in remote and rural Australia, in order to influence current and future programs and policies that facilitate or inhibit the types of mobility that Indigenous people wish to enjoy. The project considers various spatial (intra-settlement, intra-regional, inter-regional) and temporal (short-term, long-term) scales of mobility that involve a range of settlement types. The study will seek to determine the extent of such movements and any causal factors that underlie them.

## **1.2 Key Research Questions**

- To what extent is Indigenous service need (including housing) being shaped by residential mobility?
- Is there an ongoing trend for Indigenous people to migrate from remote regions to regional centres and capitals?
- How much circular movement takes place between settlements within and across regions?
- What is the spatial extent of such movements?
- Who takes part in the movement?
- Are there identifiable mobility regions?
- Why do Indigenous people move from discrete remote or rural settlements?
- To what extent do people return to home communities due to obstacles to their goals in regional cities and capitals, and if so what are the more significant impediments (eg housing problems, employment chances, social problems, cost of living, trouble with police)?
- How do all these forms of mobility impact on household profiles, stability, tenancy and household behaviours?



## 2 THE LITERATURE ON INDIGENOUS MOBILITY

### 2.1 The Literature Base

A useful starting point for the literature analysis is the monograph “*Indigenous Settlements of Australia*” prepared by two members of the research team, for the Commonwealth’s most recent ‘State of the Environment Australia’ survey (Memmott and Moran 2001). This draws upon literature based on the various census findings in 1986, 1991 and 1996 and the accompanying demographic analyses on changes in Indigenous population size, distribution and movement (eg Ross 1999, Taylor 1989, 1998, Taylor & Bell 1996, 1999).

Another very useful literature source is the recently published book edited by two other researchers in the team, John Taylor and Martin Bell (2004a), “*Population Mobility and Indigenous Peoples in Australasia and North America*”. The most up-to-date literature overview on Indigenous demography in Australia is contained in this volume (Taylor and Bell 2004b). Amongst other things, it examines the two competing demographic paradigms on Indigenous Australia, (a) circular mobility within regions and between capital cities and regions, versus (b), the post-war urbanization view of permanent out-migration from the bush and the deserts to metropolitan centres; or in succinct terminology, short-term mobility versus long-term migration.

The other contributions to the Taylor and Bell volume also contain a range of analyses of the underlying motives for travel and migration, eg to obtain rental housing (Gray 2004), to discharge social, ceremonial and ritual obligations (Peterson 2004), and to return to home country (Smith 2004). These supplement earlier qualitative case studies (eg Altman 1987, Young 1990, Young & Doohan 1989). Although some of the circumstances of the case studies and findings in Young & Doohan’s (1989) “*Mobility for Survival*” may now be out of date<sup>1</sup>, their work provides significant insights to Aboriginal mobility experiences within a remote region and it provides an important guide to methodological approaches suitable to studies of Indigenous mobility.

### 2.2 The Two Categories of Literature

The literature on Indigenous mobility can be grouped into two broad categories. Firstly there is a body of literature dominated by the disciplines of anthropology and human geography that is concerned with qualitative analysis or what might be described as the experience and role of Indigenous mobility or the cultural context of mobility. This body of literature generally sources information using ethnographic techniques. Aside from the literature explicitly concerned with Indigenous mobility a range of anecdotal information concerning aspects of Indigenous mobility is embedded within the wider and much larger body of ethnographic and anthropological literature concerned with Indigenous Australia.

The second category of literature is concerned primarily with migration demographics. This body of literature uses Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data as a primary source for analysis and it seeks to compare Indigenous and non-

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<sup>1</sup> Young & Doohan’s field work for that publication commenced 20 years ago in 1984. (Young & Doohan: 1989:ix.)

Indigenous mobility patterns. This second category of literature has for a decade been dominated by the work of Taylor & Bell (1996,1999, 2004). Taylor and Bell's work has four significant characteristics: (1) a concern with comparisons of Indigenous and non-Indigenous mobility patterns; (2) a focus on residential migration gauged by change of address in the last five years and within the last year, and visitation on the census night; (3) an inability to analyse all types and scales of mobility due to the reliance on and limitations of the census data; and (4) a search for broad patterns of mobility or macro-scale analyses that are gauged by statistical and mapping techniques, for example they compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous migrations from and towards urban areas. Taylor & Bell argue that it is necessary to compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous mobility patterns in order to demonstrate distinctive Indigenous social and economic behaviour(s) that require specific or targeted policy responses (Taylor & Bell 1996:392-395).<sup>2</sup> The studies in this category are less to do with Aboriginal perceptions and experiences of mobility and more to do with non-Aboriginal concepts of migration.

### **2.3 ABS Mobility Data**

Three types of mobility data are collected in the Australian Census. The first type concerns visitation or temporary migration whilst the other two concern more permanent migration. Temporary visitation (sometimes called 'temporary migration') is defined as movements that involve a stay of one or more nights away from home, but do not entail a lasting change of usual residence. This information can be obtained from the Census through analysis of an individual's place of enumeration on census night compared with their place of usual residence: if the two do not match then the person is considered to be temporarily away from home. In addition, information concerning place of usual residence one year ago and five years ago is also collected, which we can term 'semi-permanent' and 'permanent' migration respectively. Again if these do not match an individual's current place of usual residence, they are considered to be migrants either in the last year or last five years.

### **2.4 The Limits of Census Data Analysis**

...on a global scale, the statistical basis for a consistent description of Indigenous demography is tenuous at best. (Taylor & Bell 2004:6.)

The demographers who use ABS census data as their primary source and those who have made qualitative observations of Indigenous mobility warn of the significant limitations associated with the use of ABS census data to determine the characteristics of Indigenous mobility in remote and rural Australia. Firstly, there are doubts concerning the accuracy of the enumeration of remote Indigenous populations with undercounts and overcounts occurring (Doohan & Young 1989:20, Taylor & Bell 1996:397, Martin & Taylor 1996, Martin et al 2002). Indigenous population counts are susceptible to shifts in ethnic identification (Doohan & Young 1989:20, Taylor & Bell 1999:3, 2004:6.) The census is designed to collect non-Indigenous categories of information that may make little sense within Indigenous contexts, or may be interpreted differently in cross-cultural situations. The ABS

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<sup>2</sup> Similar demographic analyses have been made of Aboriginal populations in Canada (see Clatworthy & Norris 2003).

census is based on the standard definition of a mainstream nuclear family whereas many Aboriginal people think of family in broader terms that may include blood relationships and classificatory relationships. The ABS methodology assumes that households occupy one place of residence whereas there is strong evidence in remote Aboriginal communities of linked households or clustered households that are characterised by an extended family group dispersed across a number of places of residence. There is also the question of the distinction between 'visitor' and 'usual resident' in the Aboriginal context. Transient members of households or family groups may not necessarily be considered as visitors by Aboriginal people yet the ABS methodology does. (Doohan & Young 1989:20,109, Martin & Taylor 1996:27.)

The spatial units of ABS data collection are different to the spatial units with which Aboriginal people identify (and are identified) and within which their social networks operate. In remote Australia where Aboriginal people consider themselves to reside in an area or within a number of localities the concept of 'usual place of residence' that underlies the ABS data is problematic (Doohan & Young 1989:15,20, Taylor & Bell 1996:397, Taylor & Bell 2004:6).

A significant methodological problem with the census data is that the fixed-period migration questions of the census do not record circular population movements. The one-year mobility indicator (change of address over the last year) is more reliable than the five-year mobility indicator (change of address over last five years) because (i) fewer Indigenous people fail to respond to this question than fail to respond to the five-year question, and (ii) the response to the one-year movement question is probably more reliable being closer to the actual timing of those events. The five-year question only records one move within that period; it does not register multiple moves. Taylor & Bell (1999:3) note that just because people reported that they did not change their residential address in the census period, this does not mean they did not move between 1991 and 1996, it simply means that if they did, they returned to the same address. In contrast, if the one-year data is extrapolated over a five-year period it indicates a much higher level of movement than was recorded for this period. Taylor & Bell argue that the ABS data, its classification and analysis leads to a deceptive portrayal of Indigenous populations in northern and remote parts of Australia as immobile, whereas other observations indicate such areas are in fact characterised by high rates of mobility. There is thus a need to improve understanding of the regional significance of mobility that cannot be captured by census analysis. (Taylor & Bell 1996:397, 1999:4-7,35-37.)

Access to fine-grain/small-scale census data that may provide critical information concerning mobility in remote and rural Australia is prohibited by confidentiality provisions covering the ABS data. (Doohan & Young 1989:20.)

## **2.5 A Regional Approach to Investigations of Aboriginal Mobility and de jure Populations**

Young & Doohan (1989:217) argue that it is important to define mobile populations on a regional basis and to use Aboriginal perceptions of regions which might include the country of a language group, the country of a subsection, or the physical properties of country (eg mulga country). They argue that the use of such regions is more useful than place specific typologies and regions as defined by the ABS. The mobility region within which a population operates collectively should be mapped (some settlements may fall on the edge of several mobility regions whereas others

may lie in the heartland of a mobility region). Within this region it is possible to map all of the places where one might expect to find members of the population at any point in time. (Young & Doohan 1989:217, Martin & Taylor 1996:21,30.)

Young & Doohan argue that the Aboriginal population for areas within a region should be enumerated on a *de jure* basis. The population of many Indigenous settlements can be divided into two broad categories. The first category is an identifying population, or *de jure* population, which is a population who identify and are identified with a settlement (or region). They may regularly visit it, or reside there, and their presence in that settlement (or region) is seen as normal or usual. People may be identified with a number of settlements in this way. The second category is an in-residence population, which is the number of people residing in a settlement at any point in time (a subset of the *de jure* population). The ABS census attempts to record the latter category by aggregating data taken on a household basis. The importance of a regional approach to mobility and enumeration on a *de jure* basis was illustrated by Martin & Taylor's comparison of ABS data collected for Aurukun and Martin's ethnographic data collected at the same time. They found the census undercounted the Aurukun population by 17% and failed to identify a significant number of young people, socially marginal and more mobile people. Martin collected basic data on all Wik people whose families were Aurukun residents which provided a list of people who were likely to be encountered in Aurukun at any point in time. Martin also mapped all conceivable residential sites where people might be encountered at the time of a census; this included places that did not include a physical dwelling.<sup>3</sup> (Young & Doohan 1989:220, Martin & Taylor 1996:18,20-21,28, Long Forthcoming.)

## 2.6 Data Gaps within the Quantitative and Qualitative Literature

...description of movement in remote regions requires other more composite sources of information including from field-based surveys.. (Taylor & Bell 1999:37.)

Gaps remain within both bodies of literature, or both approaches to the study of Indigenous mobility. Since Young & Doohan's (1989) fieldwork and subsequent publication, there has been very little qualitative work that has directly addressed the question of mobility within Aboriginal regions. Nonetheless, there are works that contain relevant data, for example the collection of Native Title claim evidence attempts to show the continuing movements of a group of people within a Native Title Claim area so as to prove an unbroken 'connection'. However, the mobility region of a group of people may extend well beyond their Native Title Claim. Surprisingly there does not appear to have been any attempts to extend Young & Doohan's work either by conducting similar types of field work in the same communities/ region, or, and perhaps more relevant to this project, by conducting a similar investigation in another mobility region (perhaps a neighbouring region).

Gaps also remain within the second body of literature with regards to the quantitative approach. An ongoing concern to the demographers is the lack of "...a sense of the overall spatial structure of Indigenous mobility behaviour...." (Taylor & Bell 2004:1, see also Taylor & Bell 1996:394-395). Although work by Taylor & Bell

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<sup>3</sup> In contrast the ABS census is conducted on a house by house basis.

(1996,1999) has significantly contributed to the understanding of Indigenous mobility on a macro-scale, it has simultaneously highlighted the limits of such knowledge. Given the question of accuracy that looms over the ABS data that underlies the work of the demographers it seems that this “sense of the overall spatial structure of Indigenous mobility behaviour” will not emerge from macro-scale statistical analysis alone. However, such a picture may be obtained from a combination of such analysis with a series of regionally based small-scale studies.<sup>4</sup>

Taylor & Bell have displayed an ongoing interest in comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous mobility patterns but lament that disparities in the type of information available on each group make this difficult (Taylor & Bell 1996:395, 2004:1,2). Such comparisons include the simple yet important observation that there exists “...two distinct populations in remote regions- a relatively stable and long-standing Indigenous resident group and a chronically transient non-Indigenous group” (Taylor & Bell 1999:5). Until appropriate data for comparison becomes available, much more may be gained by tackling Indigenous mobility as a phenomenon in its own right and by making comparisons of the mobility patterns of the socially and geographically diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of Australia (Taylor & Bell 2004:265). This second approach may achieve what Taylor & Bell perceive as a primary focus of mobility research:

...further elaborating the way in which mobility dynamics and settlement outcomes are shaped by the changing interface between Indigenous culture and the encapsulating state. An enhanced understanding of these interactions, in diverse settings and at varying temporal and spatial scales, is fundamental to articulation of a robust and comprehensive theory of mobility among Indigenous people. (Bell & Taylor 2004:265.)

In 2004, Taylor & Bell observed:

Given the central role of public intervention in guiding Indigenous mobility and settlement outcomes over the course of history, a policy focus seems uniquely appropriate for research in this field. The challenge....lies not only in establishing how policies and programmes have shaped previous mobility outcomes, but in gauging the policy responses that will best facilitate the future goals and aspirations of Indigenous people in developed country settings. (Bell & Taylor 2004:265.)

No studies to date have considered the mobility aspirations of Indigenous people. To date both paradigms of mobility research have attempted to understand existing mobility patterns or those of the recent past by asking questions such as: Why do people move? Who takes part in movement? Where do they go? What effect does that movement have on source areas, destination areas, and other places in between? (Young & Doohan 1989:23, Taylor & Bell 1996:392). Additional questions may be: Do people want to move? Where do people want to move? Who wants to move? Who wants to stay? How do people want to move? What effects will these future movements have on source areas, destination areas, and other places

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<sup>4</sup> Early work by Taylor & Bell (eg 1996:395) seems to downplay small-scale approaches in favour of macro-scale analysis. At the same time they have described some of the difficulties in achieving reliable macro-scale analysis (Martin & Taylor 1996, Martin et al 2002).

in between? It is only in tackling the first and second series of questions in combination that the implications of Indigenous mobility for policy, programs and services can be fully understood.

In order to contribute to the knowledge of Indigenous mobility the current project employs methods from both research paradigms. It aims to extend previous research by investigating mobility using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This includes analysis of the most recent (2001) census data.

## **2.7 Why focus on settlements in remote Australia?**

The literature on Indigenous mobility and in particular the literature that has analysed census data indicates that remote Australia is generally characterised by low Indigenous migration (change in place of residence). By comparison, parts of urban Australia and urban hinterlands are marked by high rates of Indigenous migration. Yet it is known from the qualitative literature that regional mobility is high in remote Australia (Young & Doohan 1989).

In terms of service delivery and access there is a clear distinction between remote and other Indigenous populations. Whereas Indigenous populations close to or within urban areas may make use of Indigenous specific or targeted services, they also have access to a range of mainstream services. In contrast, remote Indigenous populations often only have access to Indigenous specific (and often limited) services and programs.

## **2.8 Remote Australia**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics employs a Remoteness Classification that comprises five categories of remoteness (see Table 1 and map in Figure 1). The level of remoteness of a place is determined by the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) that measures remoteness based on the physical road distance from a place to services. (This index involves measuring the distance of a place to five different categories of service centres ranging from urban centres with a population greater than 250,000 and a full range of goods and services to an urban centre of population between 1,000 and 4,999 with limited goods and services.). This remoteness classification is solely based on the physical road distance to service centres and it does not take into account other factors that may influence access to those centres and services such as access to public or private transport, travel times, road conditions, seasonal conditions, social and economic status of the population or the mobility of a population. (ABS 2001:9-11.)

**Table 1: The ABS Remote Classification for Australia based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index (ARIA) (ABS 2001)**

Classification	Other Classification	Access to services	Examples	ARIA index
Major Cities of Australia	Highly Accessible	Imposes minimal restriction to access to services	Brisbane (including Gold Coast)	Less than 0.2
Inner Regional Australia	Accessible	Imposes some restriction to access to services	Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Gladstone (Queensland)	0.2 to < 2.4
Outer Regional Australia	Moderately Accessible	Imposes moderate restriction to access to service	Darwin (Northern Territory), Roma, Cairns (Queensland),	2.4 to < 5.92
Remote Australia	Remote	Imposes high restriction to access to services	Charters Towers and Cooktown (Queensland) Alice Springs and Katherine (Northern Territory).	5.92 < 10.53
Very Remote Australia	Very Remote	Imposes highest restriction to access to services	The far west parts of Queensland, most of the Northern Territory	greater than 10.53

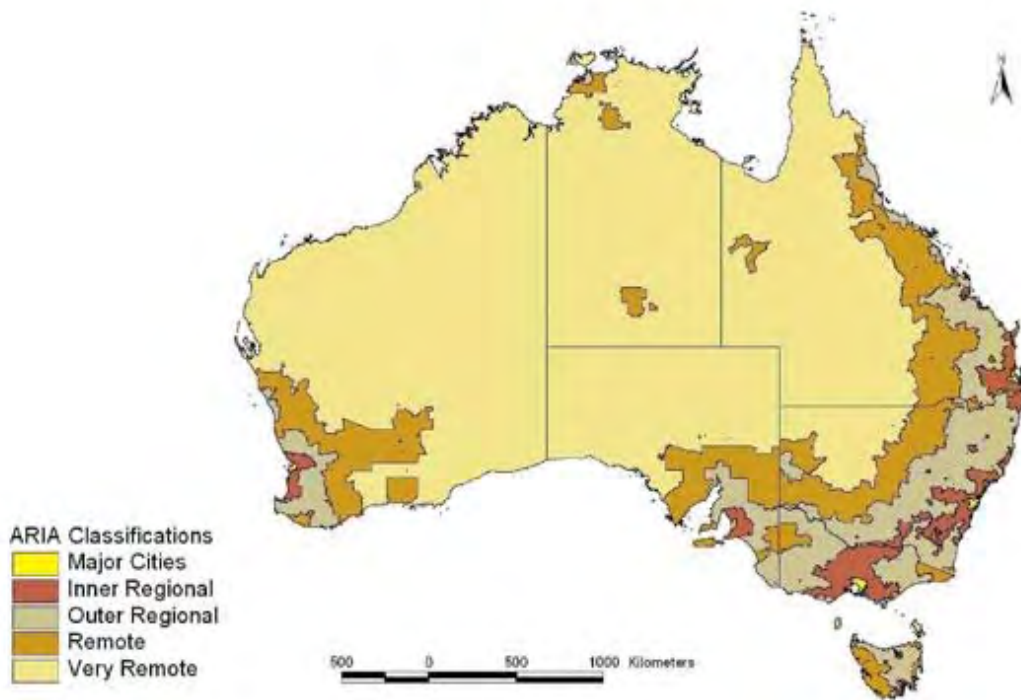


Figure 1: Classification of Australia according to the Accessibility/Remoteness Index (ARIA).

**Figure 1: Classification of Australia according to the Accessibility/Remoteness Index (ARIA)**

The most interesting and relevant element of the ARIA classification is that it is a classification based on the relative distance a population must travel/move to access services. The ABS (ABS 2001) notes that 'remoteness' is a subjective concept that can have different meanings to different people.<sup>5</sup> From an Indigenous perspective remoteness might also be defined as relative distance from one's homeland or the ability or ease with which people can access their homeland. In many instances this would produce an inversion of the ARIA classification, that is parts of Australia that are very remote in terms of service delivery are highly accessible in terms of home country. For an Aboriginal Elder in his outstation in Arnhem Land, Melbourne may be perceived as a remote place.

## **2.9 Remote Settlements**

Memcott & Moran (2001) have defined five Indigenous settlement types that are encountered in remote Australia: (1) Discrete Settlements that are generally separate or bounded from other centres and often referred to as 'communities'; (2) Discrete Urban Settlements that usually comprise an enclave or precinct within a rural town or regional city (they usually have origins as a 'fringe settlement', town camp, ration depot or mission on the periphery of a town); (3) Outlying Discrete Settlements consisting of outstations or homelands which are small family-based settlements often located on traditional Indigenous countries, 'estates' or 'homelands' (and usually associated with a return to country from a larger settlement); (4) Dispersed Settlement in Urban Centres, a high proportion of the Indigenous population live in housing dispersed through regional centres; and (5) Dispersed Residence in Rural Centres, a high proportion of Indigenous people live in smaller rural towns. (See also Young & Doohan 1989:22.)

In investigating Aboriginal mobility, a range of 'un-official settlements', or places where people reside for periods of time should be added to this settlement typology, such as temporary and perennial camping places; this includes dinner/day camps, ceremonial camps, and sorry camps (see for example Young & Doohan 1989:3,7). Such places are unlikely to appear in administrative records, and are unlikely to be supported by mainstream services and infrastructure, yet they are important centres of Aboriginal lifestyles in remote Australia. Investigation of Indigenous mobility must not be restricted to, or simply focus on residential movements between settlements. There are a wide-range of movements between settlements that are 'non-residential'. In addition to the settlement typology experienced by Indigenous people in remote Australia, there is a repertoire of other places that are visited for various purposes. There also exist places that are purposefully not visited. Both categories of places are equally relevant to investigations of Indigenous mobility. For example, the residential mobility (or stability) of an individual or group of people may be understood in terms of their customary responsibilities to specific places. (Young & Doohan 1989:92,131-144, Memcott & Moran 2001.)

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<sup>5</sup> The anthropologist Peterson gives an alternate definition of remote and settled Australia: "By settled Australia I refer to the area east of a line from Cairns to Port Augusta and the southwestern portion of Western Australia, west of a line from Carnarvon to Esperance. The remaining part of Australia is the area referred to as remote." (Peterson 2004:236.)



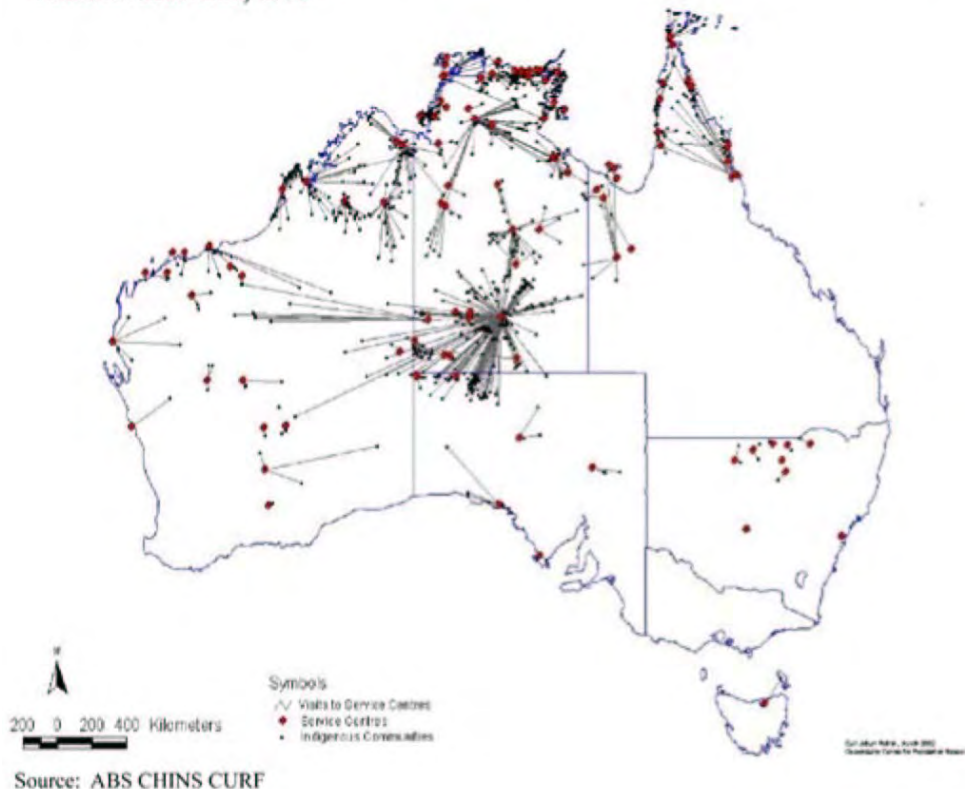
## 2.10 Service Centre Catchment in Remote Australia

The physical separation of population from major services across remote Australia generates substantial population mobility. The fact is, despite the predominance of usual residence in small, widely dispersed communities, urban centres loom large in the lives of remote Indigenous populations. According to one calculation from census data, as much as 10 per cent of Indigenous populations in regional centres such as Darwin and Alice Springs are temporary residents from a smaller rural communities. (Taylor 1998,2002.)

The effect of this mobility to service centres is to create a pool or catchment of population around each service town. Some sense of the size of these population catchments, and their spatial extent, is provided for the first time using data from the ABS CHINS which asks key informants to indicate the nearest town that members of each community usually go to for banking and major shopping services. In answering this, a total of 96 service centres across remote and very remote Australia were identified. These ranged in size from large centres, such as Darwin and Cairns, to small localities such as Timber Creek and Bamaga. (Taylor 2002.)

An indication of the spatial pattern of these catchment areas is provided in Figure 2, while Table 2 shows the major service centres ranked according to the number of communities they service and the population served.

**Figure 2: Indigenous journey to service centres: discrete communities in remote Australia, 1999**



**Figure 2: Indigenous journey to service centres: discrete communities in remote Australia, 1999**

Some subjectivity applies to these data due to the nature of the survey methodology based on key informants. Also, the nature of banking services accessed at each service centre is unknown, although this no doubt ranges from a full bank branch to an EFTOS facility at a community store. With these caveats in mind, the map clearly illustrates the major role played by Alice Springs in servicing vast areas of central Australia. In all, 259 communities nominate Alice Springs as their primary source of banking services, and this encompasses a population of some 15,000. Moving north, Darwin and Katherine emerge as other major regional centres, as are Thursday Island, Broome and Nhulunbuy. Away from these, a string of smaller centres emerge as measured by the size of populations serviced. These include Mt Isa, Cairns, Cooktown, Weipa and Bamaga in Queensland; Tennant Creek, Jabiru, Maningrida and Yulara in the Northern Territory; and Derby, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing and Kununurra in Western Australia. Elsewhere, catchments are quite small and some surprises emerge. For example, the apparent minor role played by Port Hedland – part of which appears to be due to a watershed between the western desert region and the Pilbara whereby some desert populations appear to retain allegiance to Kintore in the Northern Territory. Another feature of note are the vast distances traversed within many of the catchment areas. Once again, communities linked to Alice Springs stand out, but so do those associated with Port Hedland, Derby, Kununurra, Katherine, Mt Isa and Cairns. (Taylor 2002.)

**Table 2: Service centre catchment Indigenous populations, 1999**

Service Centre	Communities serviced	Service Centre	Population serviced
Alice Springs	259	Alice Springs	15,112
Broome	61	Darwin	7,963
Katherine	50	Katherine	7,254
Kununurra	42	Thursday Island	6,674
Maningrida	39	Nhulunbuy	4,426
Nhulunbuy	32	Mount Isa	3,803
Halls Creek	30	Cairns	2,910
Darwin	28	Broome	2,777
Tennant Creek	27	Weipa	2,227
Derby	26	Cooktown	1,894
Fitzroy Crossing	26	Halls Creek	1,863
Galwinku	26	Kununurra	1,720
Borrooloola	22	Derby	1,676
Gununa	22	Fitzroy Crossing	1,452
Docker River	18	Tennant Creek	1,428
Port Keats	17	Jabiru	1,299
Thursday Island	16	Bamaga	1,187
Mount Isa	14	Alyangula	998
Cairns	13	Bamaga	962
Port Hedland	13	Maningrida	795
Jabiru	12	Ceduna	752
Kunbarllanjja	12	Yulara	678

Source: ABS 1999 CHINS CURF, and reproduced from Taylor 2002.

## **2.11 An overview of the history of travel and trade in Indigenous Australia**

While movement was intrinsic to the hunting and gathering way of life it was linked with a high value given to returning to the home area and, in particular, in the environmentally richer regions, to staying put. (Peterson 2004: 224.)

There were various traditional geographic patterns of movement across Aboriginal Australia ranging from the localised movements of resource rich wetlands to extensive journeys in the hot dry inland areas (Peterson 2004:223). Although people moved between a number of contiguous ecological systems to effectively exploit seasonal foods and resources, the territorial range of groups of Aborigines was in most areas restricted by various forms of territorial rules as well as by the need to maintain local religious obligations in one's own estate (either land or seas estates) and those of one's grandparents and spouse(s). People were conscious of their place within their own local territory, intimate with its geography, and spiritually attached to its sacred sites and sacred histories. (Memmott 2004: 2.)

A significant pattern of movement was the pattern of trans-continental Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander travel associated with a lively system of trade. These trade routes extend from South Australia through the Torres Straits and into Papua New Guinea's northern provinces such as the East Sepik. Non-Indigenous people engaged with this system of trade, rapidly adopted many of the travel routes, and usurped the centres of exchange as the centres of their own industries (eg pastoralism). Contemporary Aboriginal systems of exchange/trade and associated patterns of movement can be traced in many parts of remote Australia. (Roth 1897:120-125,134-136, Mulvaney 2003, McCarthy 1939:411, Long Forthcoming.)

Movement is a key to the Indigenous maintenance of both social relationships and relationships to places. Movement can also be destructive and in many parts of Aboriginal Australia; it was used by non-Indigenous authorities as a tool to control and destroy Aboriginal societies. Following the impacts of disease and violent dispersals, many Indigenous populations were subject to removals from their country and kin:

Families were split up, children taken from their parents, and leaders separated from their communities...Patterns of long-standing reciprocal relations between groups, involving exchanges of ritual work, marriage partners and economic surpluses, quickly broke down. Kin were scattered between distant centres. (Memmott 1991:188.)

Across Australia the forced dispersal of kin has significantly influenced the spatial extent of Indigenous mobility patterns with significant populations living in diaspora such as the Torres Strait Islander populations living in settlements on the mainland (Memmott 1991, Beckett 1994:1092, Taylor and Arthur 1993, Peterson 2004, Bell & Taylor 2004:263). Indigenous people work at maintaining kinship by either travelling to visit (and reunite with) kin or by moving to live closer to kin:

It is through the practice of regular, frequent travel that the unity of the family community and the continuity of Nyungar social organization are maintained over the distances of time and space which separate the members of the community from one another. (Birdsall 1988:156 cited in Peterson 2004:229.)

Whilst forced to work in the pastoral industry Aboriginal people would leave their work to visit kin and attend a range of social events without the permission of their employer. Pastoralists referred to the unannounced departures and reappearance of Aboriginal workers as 'walkabout'. Peterson argues that 'walkabout' was an "everyday form of resistance" because people did not let their employers know that they were leaving and thus denied employers the ability to control their lives. (Peterson 2004:223.)

## **2.12 Kinship - a driving force in Aboriginal Mobility Patterns**

The great driving force of Indigenous mobility (including the 'walkabout') in remote Australia is kinship. In Aboriginal Australia, kinship is defined by both blood ties, marriage, and through a classificatory system of relationships (Young & Doohan 1989:109,114). Much mobility can be defined as a social process geared simultaneously towards the enjoyment of social interaction, the maintenance of social relationships and the maintenance of social identity.

Socially related population mobility...is clearly a very important component of population movement in Central Australia. Indeed it could be described as a cornerstone. When people visit family and friends they are not merely taking part in an enjoyable social occasion. They are also reinforcing reciprocal ties and obligations, all of which are essential parts of their social fabric. In addition they are ensuring that ritual rights and responsibilities to the land will be carried out. Social visiting demonstrates the high degree of interdependence which is an essential characteristic of past and present Aboriginal society. (Young & Doohan 1989:130.)

While kinship networks are dependant on mobility for their maintenance, these networks simultaneously facilitate Indigenous mobility in remote Australia. Movements are made possible by customs of sharing and reciprocity enjoyed in kin networks. In many cases the spatial extent of mobility is defined by the spatial extent of kin which has been referred to as a 'beat' (see below). The anthropologist Annette Hamilton has reflected on how Aboriginal people "will, at no notice, join a vehicle travelling hundreds of kilometres away, taking with them no money and few provisions, and will have no idea of when or how they will return..." Security is based in the knowledge that the vehicle is in the charge of a relative, and secondly that relatives can be found at the end-destination and intermediate stops along the way.

Travelling from place to place can only be undertaken in this apparently haphazard way precisely because an elaborate network of reciprocal exchanges underpins it, whereby relatives accept unannounced visits from one another and provide the wherewithal for the visitor's survival if necessary. (Hamilton (1987:49) in Peterson 2004:229.)

The anthropologist Nicolas Peterson (2004:224) concludes that mobility “is fundamental to an Aboriginal individual’s social identity.” Referring to Fred Myers’ thesis concerning the tension between relatedness and autonomy in Aboriginal society, Peterson argues:

People have to work at producing relatedness and shared identity through visiting, participating in ceremonial life, marriage arrangements and exchange, constantly renewing their networks. Yet at the same time adult men and women place great emphasise on their personal autonomy, rejecting attempts by others to control or direct them, often solving the problem by moving. (Peterson 2004:224.)

### **3 FINDINGS ON SPATIAL PATTERNS OF MOVEMENT**

Data collected in the 1986 and 1991 Census concerning those who had moved (changed residential address) in the previous five years, indicated low rates of movement amongst Indigenous populations in remote and northern Australia and high rates of movement elsewhere (eg south-east Queensland). This north/south difference in Indigenous mobility was mirrored by non-Indigenous mobility, which was relatively high in remote and northern Australia. Thus Taylor & Bell argued there were "...two distinct populations in remote regions- a relatively stable and long-standing Indigenous resident group and a chronically transient non-Indigenous group" (Taylor & Bell 1999:5). The relatively low rate of Indigenous migration recorded over this census period did not necessarily indicate an immobile Indigenous population in northern Australia. A lack of migration (change of usual place of residence) did not necessarily mean immobility: "...the importance in these regions of frequent mobility in the daily, periodic and seasonal round of activities associated with Indigenous social and economic life has been extensively recorded..." (Taylor & Bell 1999:4). Indigenous mobility is higher over shorter distances (within regions and states) and lower over longer distances (interstate) compared to the non-Indigenous population. (Taylor & Bell 1996:396,397,1999:4.) (See Figure 3.)

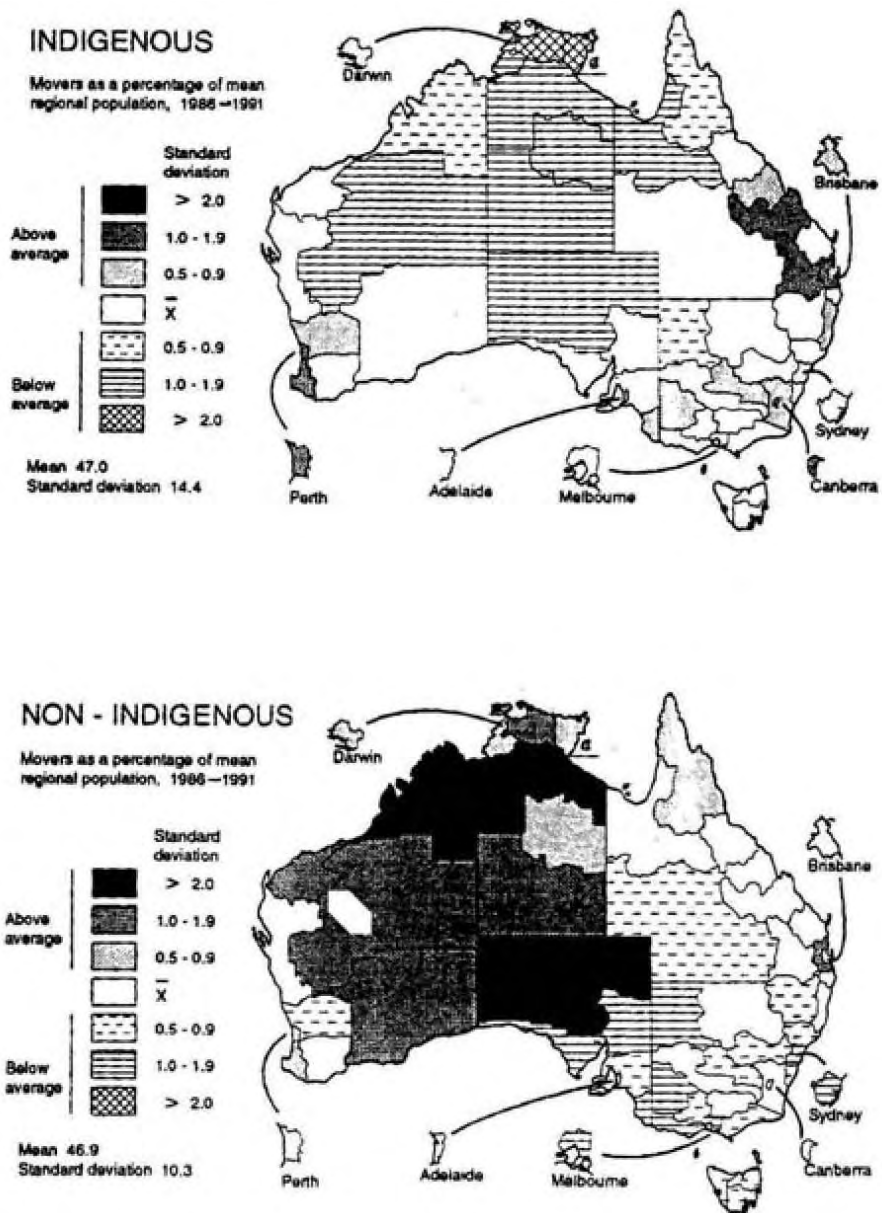


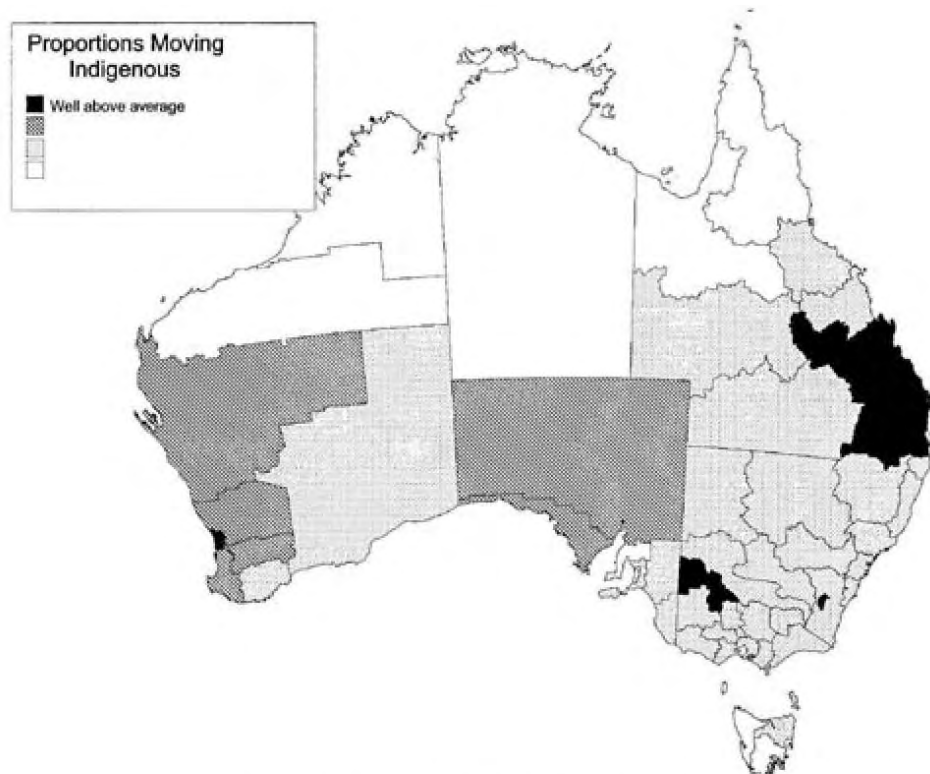
Figure 3: Regional mover rates: indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, 1986-1991

Source: Taylor and Bell 1996:398, reproduced from ABS 1991 Census (unpublished data).

Figure 3: Regional mover rates: indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, 1986-1991

The data from the 1996 Census concerning those who had moved (changed residential address) in the last five years, indicated “a massive rise in Indigenous mobility” in the period 1991-1996. However Taylor & Bell cautioned that the census data was possibly affected by an increase in the number of people who identified as Indigenous. Despite this they argued that the number of Indigenous people who changed their place of residence between 1991 and 1996 was substantially higher than previous census periods. Even with standardisation for a younger age profile, the rate of mobility amongst Indigenous people between 1991 and 1996 was substantially above the rate of the rest of the population. (Taylor & Bell 1999:2-3.)

Taylor & Bell (1999:4) found that across regions there was significant variation in the propensity to move. The extremes were (a) the Northern Territory Balance SD where 27% of the Indigenous population changed their usual place of residence between 1991 and 1996, and at the opposite extreme, (b) the Moreton SD where 75% of the Indigenous population did so. (See Figures 4 and 5.)

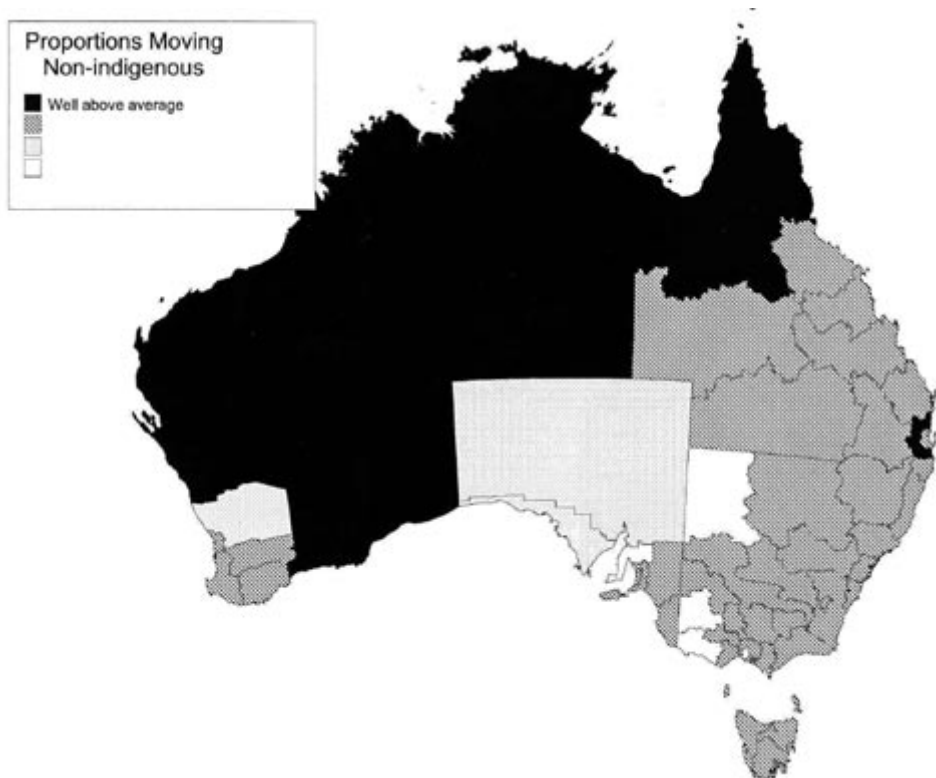


**Figure 4. Indigenous propensity to move by SD, 1991-96**

Source: Taylor and Bell 1999:5, reproduced from 1996 ABS Census of Population and Housing

**Figure 4: Indigenous propensity to move by SD, 1991-96**





**Figure 5: Non-Indigenous propensity to move by SD, 1991-96**

The 1996 Census indicated that the Indigenous population was 50% more likely to have changed their residential address over the previous year. Between 1995 and 1996, 29.2% of the Indigenous population moved whereas only 18.1% of the non-Indigenous population moved. This higher Indigenous/non-Indigenous propensity to move over the one-year period (29.2% compared to 18.1%) than for the five-year period (52.2% compared to 43%) indicates a greater propensity to repeat migration amongst the Indigenous population. The significantly higher rates of Indigenous repeat movement (measured by moves in the last year) occurred at the local level within SLAs. As the distance of migration increased, the gap between the rate of Indigenous and non-Indigenous migration diminished. (Taylor & Bell 1999:7,13.)

### **3.1 Intra-Regional Mobility**

The limited research suggests that Indigenous migration does not play as big a role as one might expect in remote and some rural areas. Indigenous demography is characterised by marked inter-and intra-community mobility with circular movements within an area or region.<sup>6</sup> Although such movements may cover great distances they can be described as 'localised' because they cover familiar social settings, economic centres and territory. In fact such movements are bounded by the extent of familiarity with socio-geographic properties. (Memmott & Moran 2001, Taylor & Bell 1996:403,1999:8.)

<sup>6</sup> "Circulation ....is universally recognised as an essential strategy fulfilling multiple objectives among Indigenous communities...." (Bell & Taylor 2004:265.)

Jeremy Beckett was the first to document the role of kinship in the definition and perception of a 'local' area of movement.

All Aboriginal people have "beats," areas which are defined by the situation of kin who will give them hospitality, within which they can travel as much or as little as they please, and where they are most likely to find spouses, Proximity is only a minor factor....( Beckett 1988:131.)

Following Beckett, Memmott argued that Indigenous people moved within contemporary cultural regions:

Most of the Indigenous population particularly in the rural and remote areas can be categorized into regional groupings, in many cases consisting of a number of discrete settlements separated by areas with very small or negligible Indigenous populations. A number of Indigenous settlements in a sizeable region may be thus analysable as a type of contemporary cultural unit. Within such regions there is evident a pattern of regional travel generated by kinship networks. The distribution of an individual's kin generates for an individual a 'beat' - a set of places which he or she can visit and expect to obtain hospitality and economic support if necessary, and in which a person will most likely find their spouse (after Beckett 1965, Vallance 1970, Memmott 1991). Young (1990) introduced the terminology of 'mobility regions' for the purpose of mapping and defining contemporary cultural regions.

A boundary to a contemporary cultural region may have a number of co-incident properties where a mixture of social, economic, travel, and geographical boundaries tend to coincide. Phenomena that tend to create boundaries for a population in a region are (a) a large surrounding area with no Indigenous inhabitants (possibly due to dispersals, removals, and the impact of diseases); (b) isolation between adjacent areas due to poor transport systems; (c) lack of interaction between neighbouring Indigenous groups due to cultural dissimilarities; and (d) lack of accessible economic opportunities.

Further phenomena that tend to reinforce the sense of region are:- (a) the presence of a highly resourced regional centre catalysing the regular visitation of Indigenous people; (b) the establishment of a set of social and residential spaces in such a regional centre, containing individuals with kinship links back to the smaller towns or settlements; and (c) similarities or continuities in the socio-economic environments of the towns in the region, so that there exist preferred dietary items, a capacity to arrange social benefit payments or credit, and freedom to maintain particular behavioural styles (e.g. camping, fighting, drinking, mourning). This does not mean that all of the towns or settlements in the region have a similar character in all regards; they may be quite diverse in some respects.

In some cases, cultural-geographic regions, if they exist, may overlap with one another forming more continuous networks or chains of interacting population centres, particularly on the east coast of Australia (Memmott 1991).<sup>7</sup>

Familiarity and social relatedness are significant boundaries to such regions. Young & Doohan (1989: 8) observed that requests to join journeys depended on how familiar people were with the destination. They provide good examples of groups of women experiencing boundaries of familiarity, that is, boundaries to their mobility region:

At Papunya the women were less certain of themselves. Although some had relations here it was not as familiar a setting as the Pitjantjatjara communities through which we had already travelled. At the store, women were reluctant to alight from the vehicle and waited until Papunya people came to talk to them. However, once relationships had been established, gifts had been exchanged and people had talked about the reasons for the journey, the women relaxed. (Young & Doohan 1989:9.)

And an example of women from Mt Allen travelling 150km to Willowra for the first time to visit women of the same social class (or sub-section):

On arrival, although they were greeted very warmly by the Willowra Nungarrayis, and clearly enjoyed talking to them as 'sisters', [the women from Mt Allen] depended heavily on the researcher to arrange their camping place, and organise their cooking arrangements. Other Willowra people were also curious about their presence and asked questions such as... 'Why have these people come here?' After only one day the Mt Allen women indicated that they had been there long enough and would like to go home. These women had in effect stepped beyond their normal social networks and felt themselves to be in a very awkward position. (Young & Doohan 1989:109.)

(See Figures 6, 7, and 8.)

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<sup>7</sup> See Young & Doohan's (1989: 109) complimentary description of social networks. Young & Doohan (1989:110) also observed that people found their spouse within their mobility region. Taylor & Bell (1996:403) refer to mobility regions as "functional regional networks".

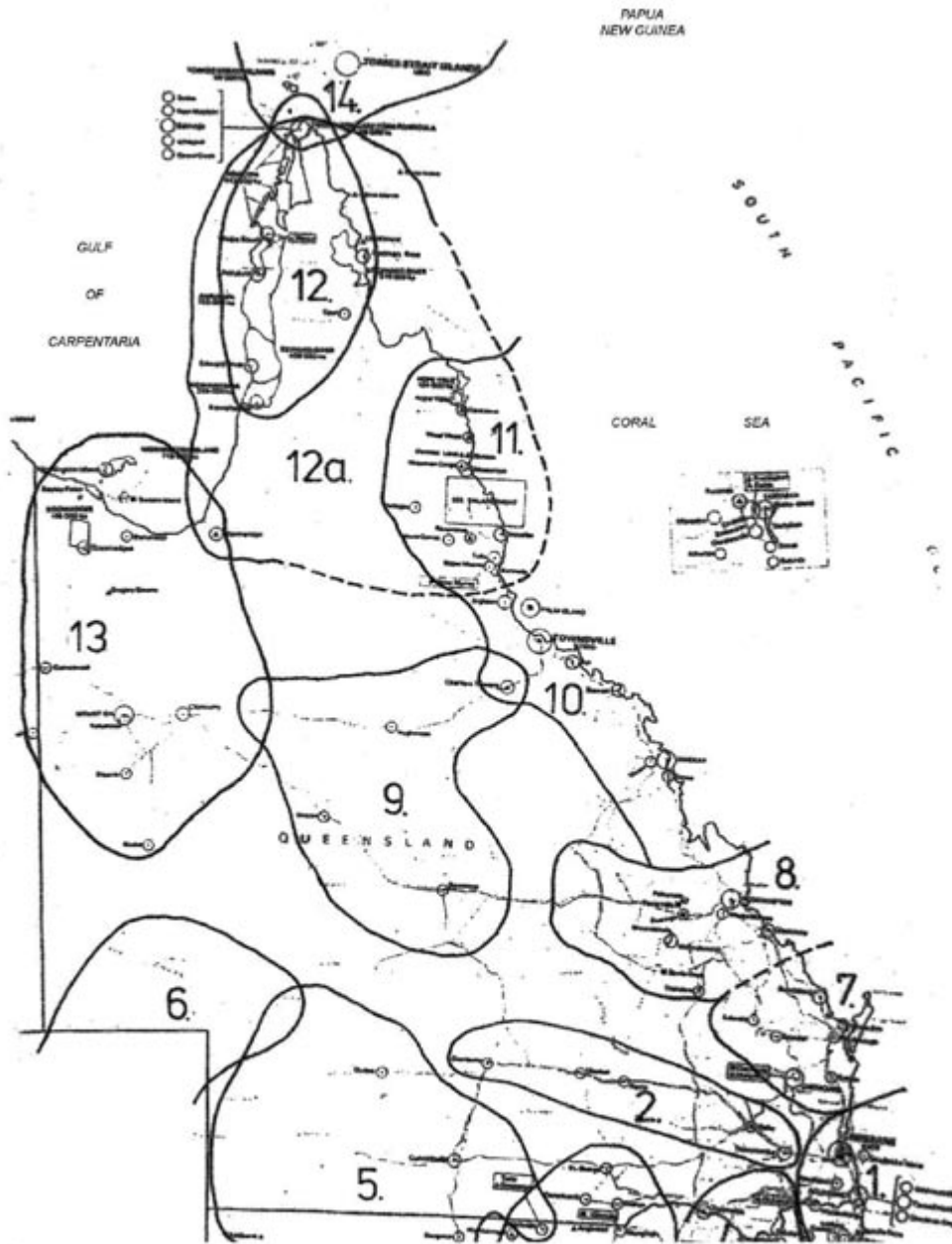


Figure 6: Contemporary Cultural Regions of Queensland.  
 Source: reproduced from Memmott 1991B

**Figure 6: Contemporary Cultural Regions of Queensland**



Figure 7: The Travel Experience of Lardil Man Fred Jaurth.  
 Source: Reproduced from Memmott 1979:515

**Figure 7: The Travel Experience of Lardil Man Fred Jaurth**

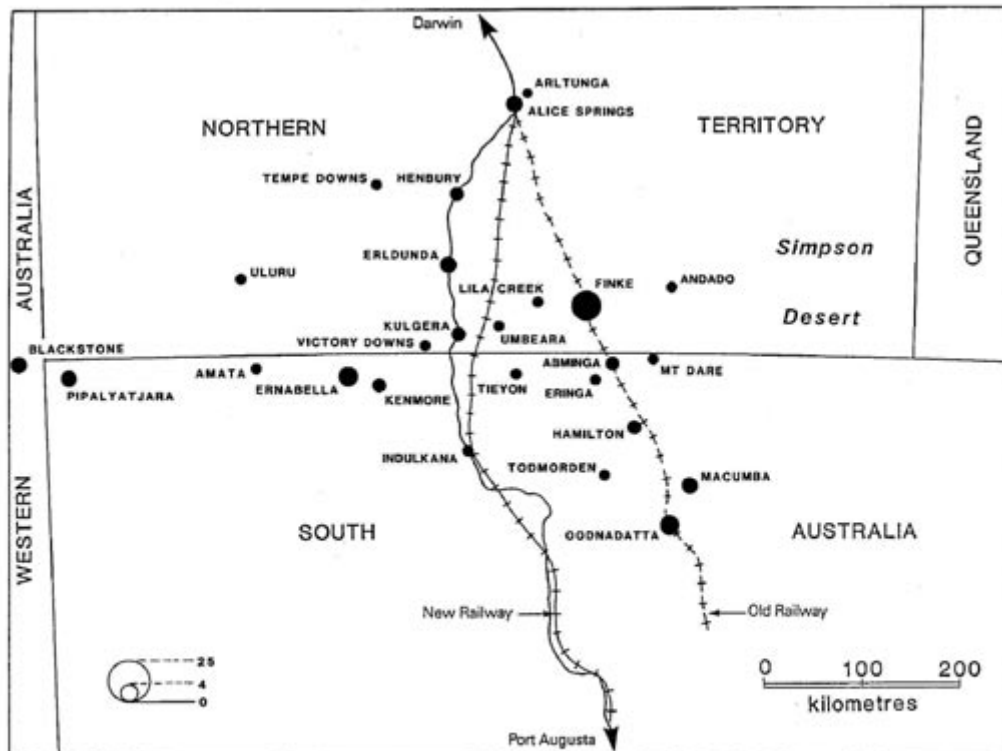


Figure 8: Birthplaces of Finke residents, 1985.  
Source: Young and Doohan 1989:117.

**Figure 8: Birthplaces of Finke Residents, 1985**

### 3.2 Decentralization

Smith argues that many in academia and policy incorrectly perceive decentralization simply as a “return to country”, a one-way movement (or exodus) from regional centres to homelands. Smith argues that such perceptions mask the ongoing patterns of movement, and the critical relationships that exist, between outstations and regional centres such as Coen. Such misperceptions can lead to policy decisions that “undermine Aboriginal aspirations or set people up for “failure”. Smith provides the example of an outstation that was funded on the expectation that this would encourage people to leave regional centres and other settlements to live there. This demographic shift did not occur to the scale expected and Smith argues that the motives behind the original funding have now endangered future support for this outstation and others. This example illustrates the need for policy to accurately respond to the particular mobility patterns of a region, and for a greater emphasis to be placed on investigating Aboriginal aspirations for future patterns of mobility. (Smith 2002:13-14; 2004: 253-254.)

### 3.3 Bush Trips & Perennial Camps

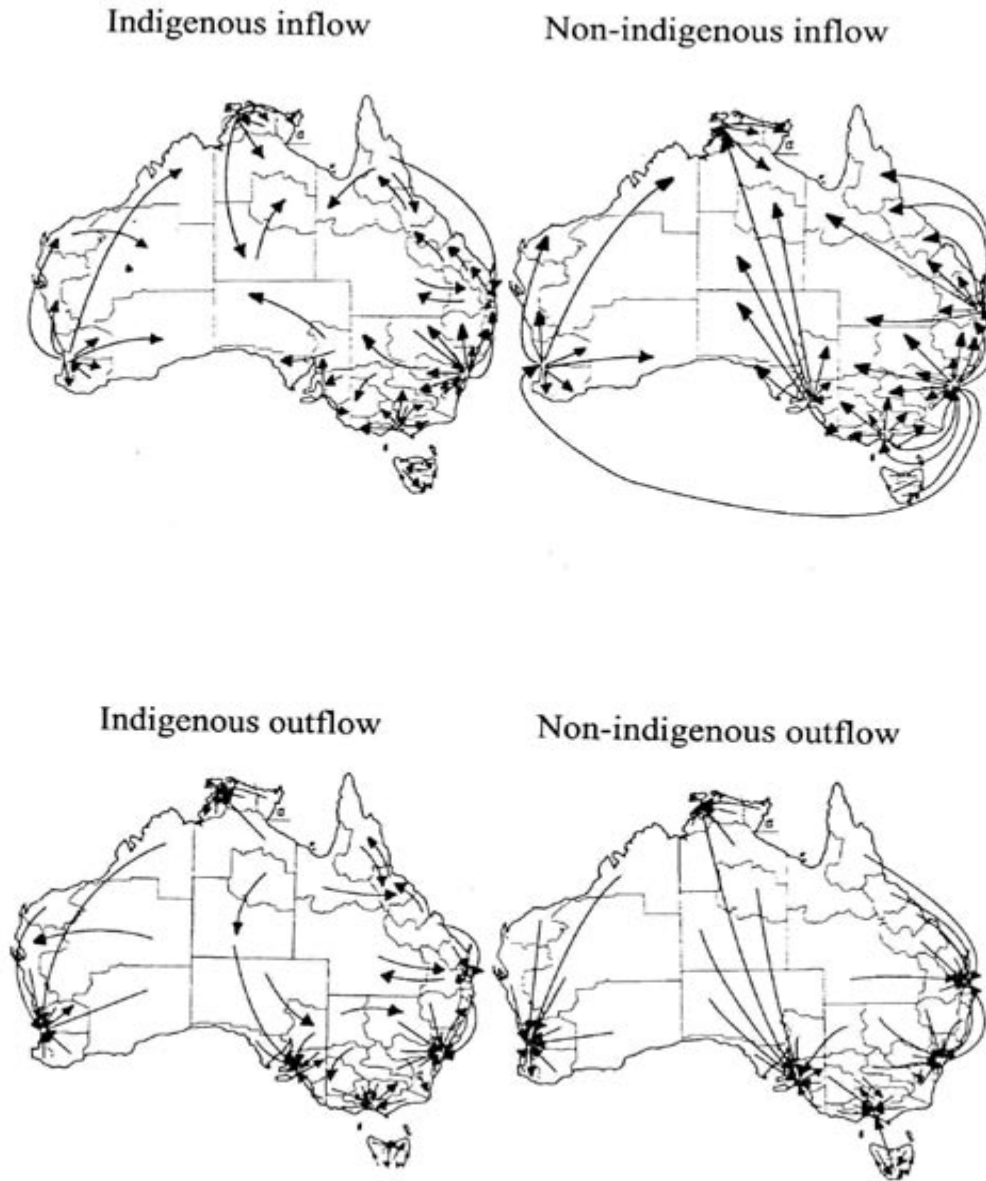
A pattern of movement that is notable by its omission from the mobility literature is the range of bush trips that remote Indigenous populations regularly make over various distances and periods. Bush trips include visits to a range of places that are occupied for various periods of time including repertoires of (perennial) camping places that may be thought of as ‘un-official settlements’. Taylor and Bell warn,

“...the impression conveyed of relative immobility among indigenous people in remote areas can be misleading. Numerous case studies highlight the importance of frequent mobility in the daily, periodic and seasonal round of activities associated with indigenous social and economic life in remote Australia” (Taylor & Bell 1996:397).

### **3.4 Inter-region Migrations**

According to Taylor and Bell (1996:407), the 1991 Census revealed a pattern of a primary population flow involving networks of Indigenous movement between regions; whereas there was not a pattern of capital city to capital city as a primary flow. At a secondary level of population flow, two patterns emerged: (1) “localised circuits of movement”, in places such as North Queensland, the Top End, Central Australia and the Pilbara, and (2) “a series of lines of movement”- these include links between central Australia, the north of South Australia and Adelaide, and between the Queensland coast, the Queensland north coast through to the Barkly region of NT. Many of the remote northern regions had high in and out migration rates amongst the non-Indigenous population. The relationship of in rates and out rates for the Indigenous population was much weaker...(Taylor & Bell 1999:25.) (See Figures 9 and 10.)

The degree to which these structures are manifest varies between the two populations and differs also between primary and secondary level flows.

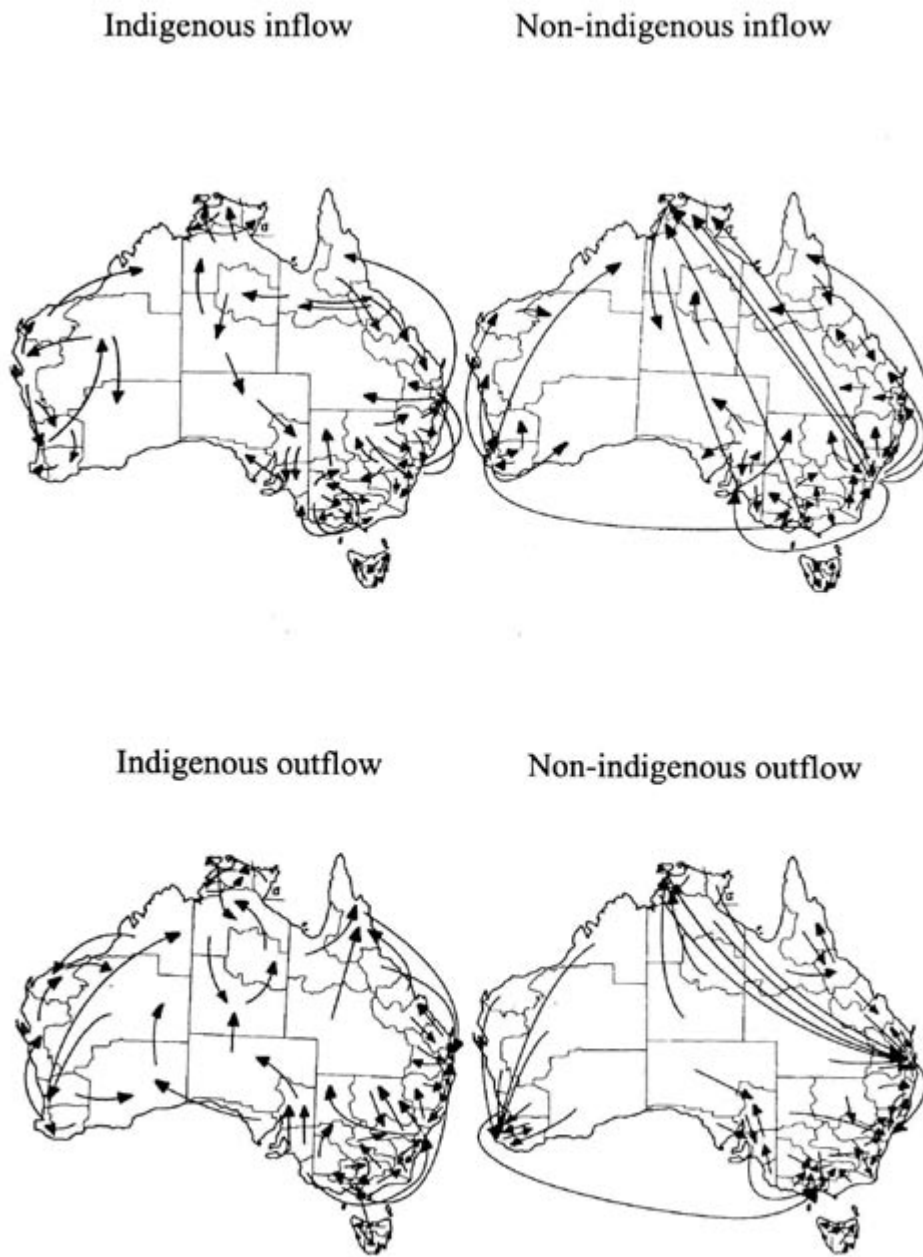


**Figure 9: Primary regional inflows and outflows: indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, 1986–1991**

Source: ABS 1991 Census (unpublished data).

**Figure 9: Primary regional inflows and outflows: indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, 1986-1991**





**Figure 10: Secondary regional inflows and outflows: indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, 1986-1991**  
 Source: ABS 1991 Census (unpublished data).

**Figure 10: Secondary regional inflows and outflows: indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, 1986-1991**

### **3.5 Migration to Urban Areas**

The 1991 and 1996 census data revealed a general pattern of Indigenous migration to large cities and a pattern of non-Indigenous decentralization. In 1991 two-thirds of the Indigenous population lived in urban areas by 1996 this had risen to three-quarters. Whereas Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide, Hobart and Canberra gained Indigenous population from hinterlands, in contrast Sydney, Melbourne and Darwin were steadily losing Indigenous population to hinterlands. The 1996 census appeared to reveal a significant extension to the long-standing movement pattern of the Indigenous population towards major urban areas in the south and east of Australia. Early research connected the increase in the urban Indigenous population with migration. However it is now thought that migration may have contributed less than was initially thought and that in fact the increase may have reflected "increased enumeration of city based residents." (Taylor & Bell 1996:401, 1999:2,19,36.)

### **3.6 Interstate Migrations**

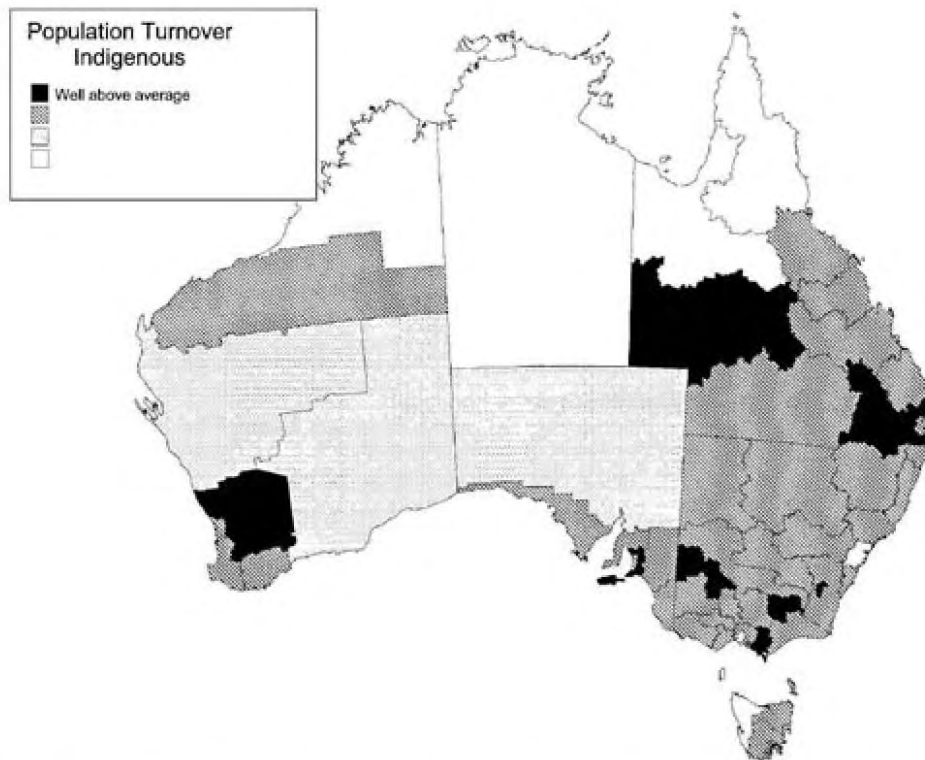
The 1996 census revealed that interstate moves were the least prevalent amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations and both populations had similar propensities for this type of movement (Taylor & Bell 1999:8-9). Nonetheless there are significant implications for border crossings amongst Indigenous populations that live close to State and Territory borders or are dispersed in settlements either side of State and Territory borders; in particular interstate migrations can lead to complicated dealings with different administrative/ service structures.

### **3.7 Intra-Settlement Mobility**

Memmott has argued that "kinship was an all-pervasive medium in Aboriginal camps, generating both links and distancing between particular domiciliary groups". Kinship is also an all-pervasive medium in contemporary Aboriginal settlements generating daily movement patterns between domiciliary environments and transformations in the socio-spatial pattern of the settlement as family groups attempt to either cluster close to one another or distance themselves. (Young & Doohan 1989:118-121, Memmott 2002:72, Long Forthcoming.) Patterns of movement within Indigenous settlements (intra-settlement mobility) are generally absent from the literature concerned with Indigenous mobility. Yet broader patterns of mobility are not always separate from these "micro-movements" which occur on a daily basis, and in some cases are likely to be triggered by them or are interrelated with them (Peterson 2004:224). The development of services and infrastructure in response to broader mobility patterns can in turn have an impact on the mobility patterns within a settlement.

### **3.8 Population Turnover**

Much of remote and northern Australia is characterised by very low Indigenous population turnover. Regions with very high Indigenous population turnover are located near major growth cities such as Brisbane and Perth. The non-Indigenous population displays almost the inverse of the Indigenous population with very high turnover in the remote northern regions and relative stability elsewhere. (Taylor & Bell 1999:26,28.) (See Figure 11.)



**Figure 11. Indigenous regional population turnover rates, 1991-96**

Source: Taylor and Bell 1999:27, reproduced from 1996 ABS Census of Population and Housing

**Figure 11: Indigenous regional population turnover rates, 1991-96**

### 3.9 Net Migration

Whereas the non-Indigenous population has displayed a net migration shift from the south of Australia to the north, the Indigenous population (according to the Census) displays a counter trend of movement towards the south and east of Australia. However Taylor and Bell have reiterated the question of whether this trend amongst the Indigenous population was the result of net migration or an increase of individuals who identified as Indigenous. (Taylor & Bell 1999:28.)

### 3.10 Mental Journeys & Narratives

The role of mental journeys amongst Indigenous Australians could easily be overlooked and swamped by statistical analysis of patterns of migration. However mental journeys are significant in the maintenance of place for people who are distant (in many instances displaced) from their homelands. The significance of mental journeys amongst a population that has been subject to dispersals and displacement are not to be underestimated. Where do people go or return to in such journeys? For example where do people travel in the rendition of songlines? Peterson provides the example of people from desert groups who were removed from country in adulthood- "they claimed to keep contact with it by making night-time journeys to their home territories in dream-spirit form, flying through the air astride skeins of hair-string or on sacred boards (Tonkinson 1970)." (Peterson 2004:224, see also Veth 2003.)

## 4 FINDINGS ON TEMPORAL PATTERNS OF MOVEMENT

Some patterns of mobility are associated with a calendar of annual Indigenous social/ religious and ceremonial events. For example annual Torres Strait Island events include: Torres Strait Cultural Festival, Torres Strait Music Festival, Island of Origin Rugby League Football Carnival, Torres Strait Cup Football Competition, 'The Coming of the Light' commemorating when the Gospel was first introduced to the Torres Strait Islands, Catholic Church Fete, Church Day celebrations, NAIDOC Week, and Mabo Day. Christmas and New Year is a busy time of travel when people usually hold important Tombstone Opening Festivals. (Torres Shire Council 2002, Beckett 1994:1092.)

Similarly in Central Australia there occur annual sporting events which have significant impacts on population movements. The role of a calendar of events in Aboriginal mobility patterns is illustrated in the following observation:

Football has, for the Pitjantjatjara, become 'Aboriginal business', and, as one woman commented 'In the hot weather everyone travels for 'Law' and in the cool weather everyone travels for football'. (Young & Doohan 1989:193.)

Of particular note was the conduct of the 2001 census in Central Australia in the weeks preceding the actual census date coincided with the Yuendumu Sports Festival which triggered high population movements (Young & Doohan 192-197, Taylor 2002:7, Sanders 2002:78).

Mobility patterns are also influenced by seasonal events. For example in Cape York, Smith (2004:250) observed, "... a clear seasonal shift in mobility patterns, with outstation mobility increasing in frequency in the dry season, and a more sedentary Coen-based lifestyle becoming evident in the wet season..." Mobility patterns may also be influenced by the timing of work and school holidays. For example cattle station Christmas Breaks influenced patterns of movement to large-scale gatherings on the Georgina River from the late 1800s through to the late 1960s (Long Forthcoming).

## **5 MOTIVATORS FOR MOBILITY AND IMMOBILITY- REASONS FOR MOVING AND NOT MOVING**

(Read in conjunction with Table 3.)

...a tension is evident between the strength afforded to government and developmental agency in directing or enabling migration flows...and the primacy and continuity of Indigenous culture in giving expression to mobility outcomes, on the other. (Taylor & Bell 2004:7.)

The literature concerned with Indigenous mobility illustrates a range of factors promote or inhibit mobility (and some factors can simultaneously both promote and inhibit mobility eg employment). They include those factors which are transformed or continued elements of Indigenous traditions such as relationships to country, social interactions, the fulfilment of social roles and responsibilities and kinship, as well as acculturated factors such as accessing mainstream education, employment and health services. (Memmott & Moran 2001, Smith 2004:250.)

Taylor & Bell argue that the Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP) dampens migration because it provides employment in home communities. They note that a higher proportion of males than females derive their employment from CDEP and that this may contribute to an earlier peak in female migration compared to male migration. If Taylor & Bell's hypothesis concerning the dampening effect of CDEP was correct we would also expect some difference in migration patterns amongst communities with different CDEP histories. For example CDEP has operated in some communities since 1976 whereas in others (eg western Queensland) it has only operated for a few years. Thus, if CDEP does dampen migration it may have done so in some communities for nearly 30 years.) (Taylor & Bell 1996:400, 1999:9.)

Social security or welfare payments have been found to have a strong structuring effect on Indigenous patterns of movement (Altman 1987, Memmott & Moran 2001, Smith 2004:252). At the same time the regular or high mobility of some Indigenous people can render difficulty for people in interacting with institutions; such mobility for example contributing to breaches of social security provisions. Taylor & Bell have argued that it is unclear whether social security breaches and other difficulties in dealing with institutions are caused by mobility or whether such situations cause mobility. (Taylor & Bell 1999:35.)

Taylor and Bell (1999:16) found the highest migration rates are amongst the \$15,200 to \$31,200 per annum income earners. Those in the highest income bracket displayed the lowest migration propensity. However, they note that while this pattern applied to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Indigenous mobility was much higher across all income brackets. The Indigenous population also displayed relatively high mobility amongst those who were unemployed or not in the labour force. Taylor and Bell (1999:17) argued that the comparatively high migration rates amongst Indigenous high-income earners were a result of "the nature of employment combined with the very different spatial distributions of the two populations." They argued that mobility amongst high-income earners was normally tied to employment in organizations such as ATSIC or government departments that had a national or regional structure and where promotions were

achieved by moving within the organization spatially. As incomes rise there is a greater propensity to move over longer distances rather than locally. This was particularly so amongst the Indigenous population. (Taylor & Bell 1999:16-18.)

A factor that has been largely overlooked in the mobility literature but which has a strong bearing on Indigenous mobility patterns, is the high rate of incarceration of Indigenous people and the high rate of Indigenous involvement in corrections generally. 1.488% of the Indigenous population was incarcerated in 2002 whilst only 0.121% of the non-Indigenous population was incarcerated in the same period. Thus 1 in 67 of the Indigenous population were forcibly 'removed' to jail; this was twelve times the rate of non-Indigenous incarceration (1 in 826). In 2002, 78% of Indigenous prisoners had previously been in prison. 2.733% of the Indigenous population were involved in community corrections in 2002. These rates raise a number of questions: Why are so many Indigenous people going to jail? Does the incarceration of a person have a follow-on effect on the mobility or migration patterns of others eg family travelling to visit someone in jail? Do high rates of incarceration hinder attempts to understand Indigenous mobility through analysis of ABS census data? (AIC 2004.) (Also see Figures 12 and 13.)

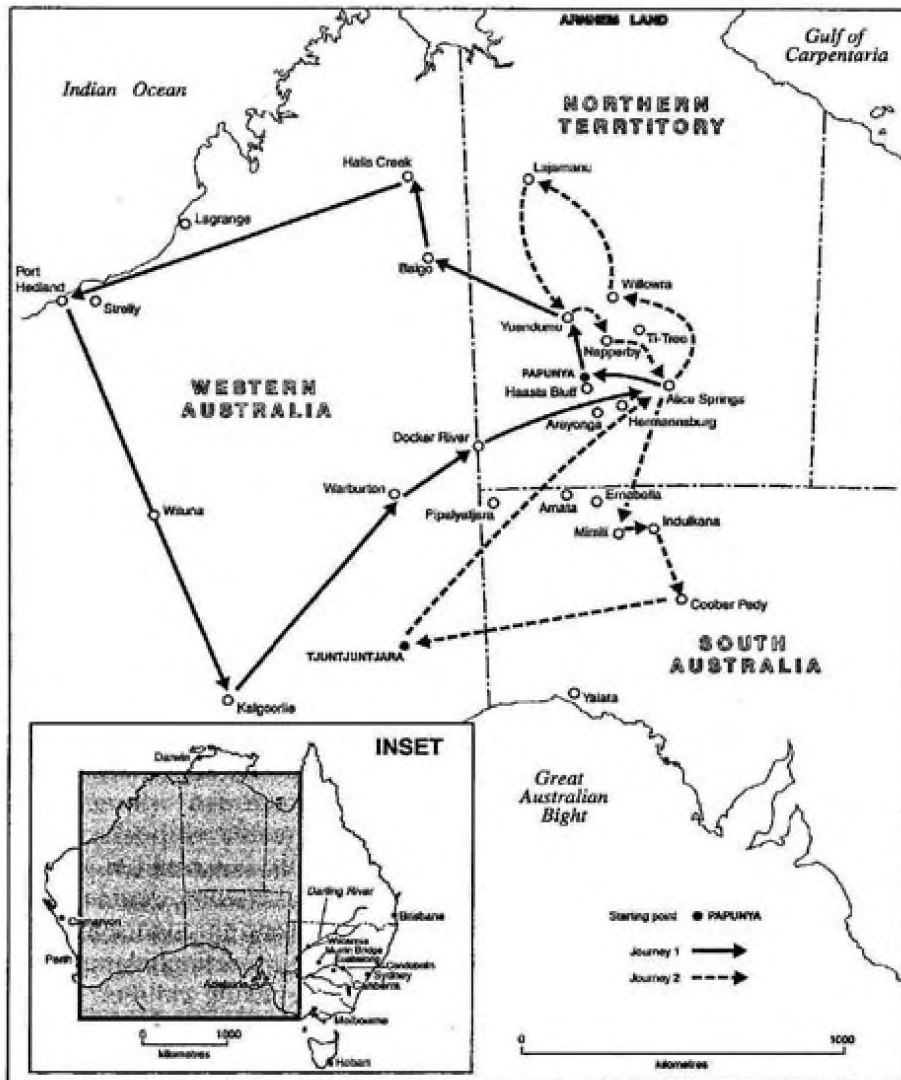


Figure 12: Jilkaja journeys in central Australia.

Source: Peterson 2004:227

Figure 12: Jilkaja journeys in central Australia

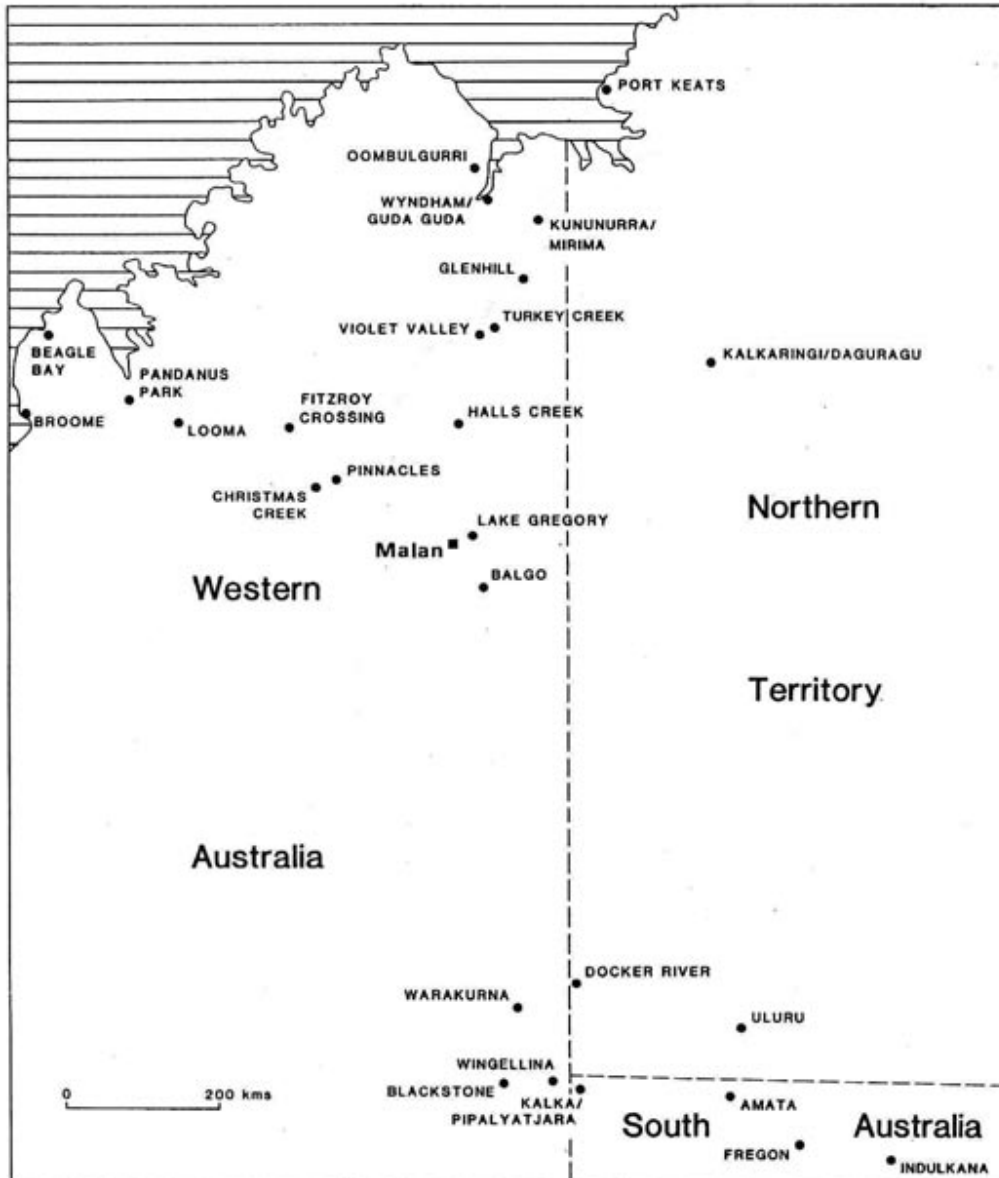


Figure 13: Source communities for women attending the Malan meeting.  
 Source: Young and Doohan 1989:98.

Figure 13: Source Communities for women attending the Malan meeting



**Table 3: Preliminary List Of Motivators Of Indigenous Mobility** (compiled from the literature as well as the authors' experiences)

<b>REASON</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>
<b>Country and ceremony</b>	
Visiting country.	Smith 2004:243.
Looking after country and customary responsibilities.	Young & Doohan 1989:20; Smith 2004:243.
Sharing, teaching and learning place knowledge.	
Visiting outstations.	Peterson 2004:230; Smith 2004.
Succession to country.	Veth 2003:3
Returning to Home community/ settlement.	Peterson 2004:234
Access to country for Native Title, Land Rights and Cultural Heritage.	Smith 2004:246-247
Avoidance of places/ moving around places/ places of non- visitation.	Veth 2003: 2-5; Long Forthcoming
Planning and attending ceremony.	Peterson 2004; Memmott & Moran 2001; Altman 1987; Veth 2003:2; Smith 2004:243; Young & Doohan 1989:92-105.
<b>Kinship and Social Interaction</b>	
Kinship networks and the maintenance of relatedness and autonomy; the movement (including dispersal) of kin; reuniting with family.	Memmott & Moran 2001; Peterson 2004:224-230; Smith 2004:243, 250-252; Taylor & Bell 1999:10; Young & Doohan 1989:108-120.
Married Up Now'- marriage, responsibility to in-laws.	Smith 2004:243
Interdependence and independence from family and extended family households.	Taylor & Bell 1996:400,408.
Maintenance of social networks.	Young & Doohan 1989:108-120; Memmott & Moran 2001; Peterson 2004:224,299; Smith 2004:248; Taylor & Bell 1999:16.
Birthdays and other celebrations.	Long Forthcoming; Maddigan & Finnila 2004:1,4.
Funerals and Sorry Business.	Peterson 2004; Smith 2004:248
Tombstone Opening.	Torres Shire Council 2002; Howie-Willis, 1994:1082-1083.
Payback and square up, social responsibilities.	Memmott & Moran 2001; Altman 1987; Smith 2004:252
Searching for a spouse.	

<b>REASON</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>
Social tensions, conflict, violence and shame.	Memcott & Moran 2001; Peterson 2004:224; Smith 2004:250-253
Exchange and carrying of goods and resources.	National Native Title Tribunal 1999; Beckett 1994:1092; Howie-Willis 1994:963; Madigan & Finnilla 2004:1; Smith 2004:252
<b>Climate</b>	
Seasonal stimuli- wet season/dry season.	Altman 1987; Memcott & Moran 2001; Smith 2004:241-243,253.
Extreme weather events: Floods, Cyclones, Droughts.	Veth 2003:2,3.
<b>Hunting &amp; Bush Resources</b>	
Water resources, hunting game, (salt-water, fresh-water, terrestrial), gathering plant resources, rocks, ochres etc.	Smith 2004:250; Young & Doohan 1989:131-143; Bradley 1991.
Attending Meetings of Indigenous Organisations	Smith 2004:246-247,252; Young & Doohan 1989:187-192.
ATSIC meetings.	
Aboriginal Council meetings.	
Meetings of Land Councils and Native Title Rep Bodies.	
Other community Organisations and Consultative groups meetings.	
<b>Travel for Recreation, Entertainment, Sport etc</b>	
Partying.	Young & Doohan 1989:192-197; Memcott 1979; Long Forthcoming.
Alcohol, pubs and clubs.	Memcott & Moran 2001.
Bingo, cards and pokies.	
Indigenous sports carnivals, local/regional sport	Peterson 2004:231-233; Smith 2004:248.
Rodeos, race meetings, exhibitions, shows.	
Cultural Festivals.	
Religious rallies and meetings.	
<b>Obtaining Health and Welfare Services</b>	Young & Doohan 1989:170-177.
Attending local health clinic.	Smith 2004:252.
Emergency medical treatment- flying doctor.	

REASON	REFERENCES
Attending regional or distant hospital.	
Specialist treatment, pregnancy, birthing, mental health, drug and alcohol services.	
Nursing homes & aged care.	
Visiting/accompanying family who are utilising health services.	
Women's services-shelters/refuge	Memmott & Moran 2001.
<b>Education</b>	
Preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education.	Taylor & Bell 1996:400, 1999:9, Smith 2004:252; Young & Doohan 1989:159-170.
School holidays and regional schools events.	Long Forthcoming.
<b>Employment, Training, Social security, Income</b>	Young & Doohan 1989:145-155.
Employment participation and employment prospects.	Taylor & Bell 1996:400,404; Taylor & Bell 1999:13,14, 33; Beckett 1994:1092; Memmott & Moran 2001; Smith 2004:252.
Employment that promotes mobility (with major infrastructure projects, seasonal work).	Taylor & Bell 1999:10,14,16.
CDEP (but also inhibits travel for many).	Taylor & Bell 1996:400; Taylor & Bell 1999:9,13-14.
Obtaining Social Security/ Centrelink payments.	Altman 1987; Memmott & Moran 2001; Smith 2004:252; Taylor & Bell 1999:35.
Seeking reduced cost of living.	Gray 2004:209.
Workplace skills training.	
Employment in the arts (dance or theatre groups, bands, art exhibitions etc).	
<b>Shopping and Business</b>	Young & Doohan 1989:177-185; Smith 2004:252.
For groceries, clothing, vehicles, tools, household items.	
For wholesale shopping to regional centres to obtain community goods.	
For use of telecommunications and postal services.	

REASON	REFERENCES
Visiting banks, tax agents.	
Lack of loans and mortgages facilities ease of travel	Taylor & Bell 1999:10,13.
Indigenous sports carnivals, local/regional sport	Peterson 2004:231-233; Smith 2004:248.
Rodeos, race meetings, exhibitions, shows.	
Cultural Festivals.	
Religious rallies and meetings.	
<b>Policing, and Correctional Justice Factors</b>	
Policing (perceived heavy policing, evading police); evading fines & warrants.	
Seeking Legal Aid Services.	
Protection Orders (Child Protection Orders, Domestic Violence Protection Orders).	Qld Dept. of Justice and Attorney General 2003; Qld Dept Communities 2004.
Attending Circuit Court, Regional Courts, Federal Court.	
Police Lock-ups, youth detention.	
Jail- (1 in 67 of the Indigenous population was in jail in 2002).	AIC 2004.
Visiting jailed relatives.	
<b>Accommodation and Settlement</b>	
Seeking housing or temporary accommodation (single men's, single women, young people and families).	Taylor & Bell 1999:8,36; Taylor & Bell 2004: 7; Gray 2004.
Formation of new settlement e.g. outstation.	
Leaving poor living conditions at home community (poor housing, services, noise.)	Smith 2004:250.

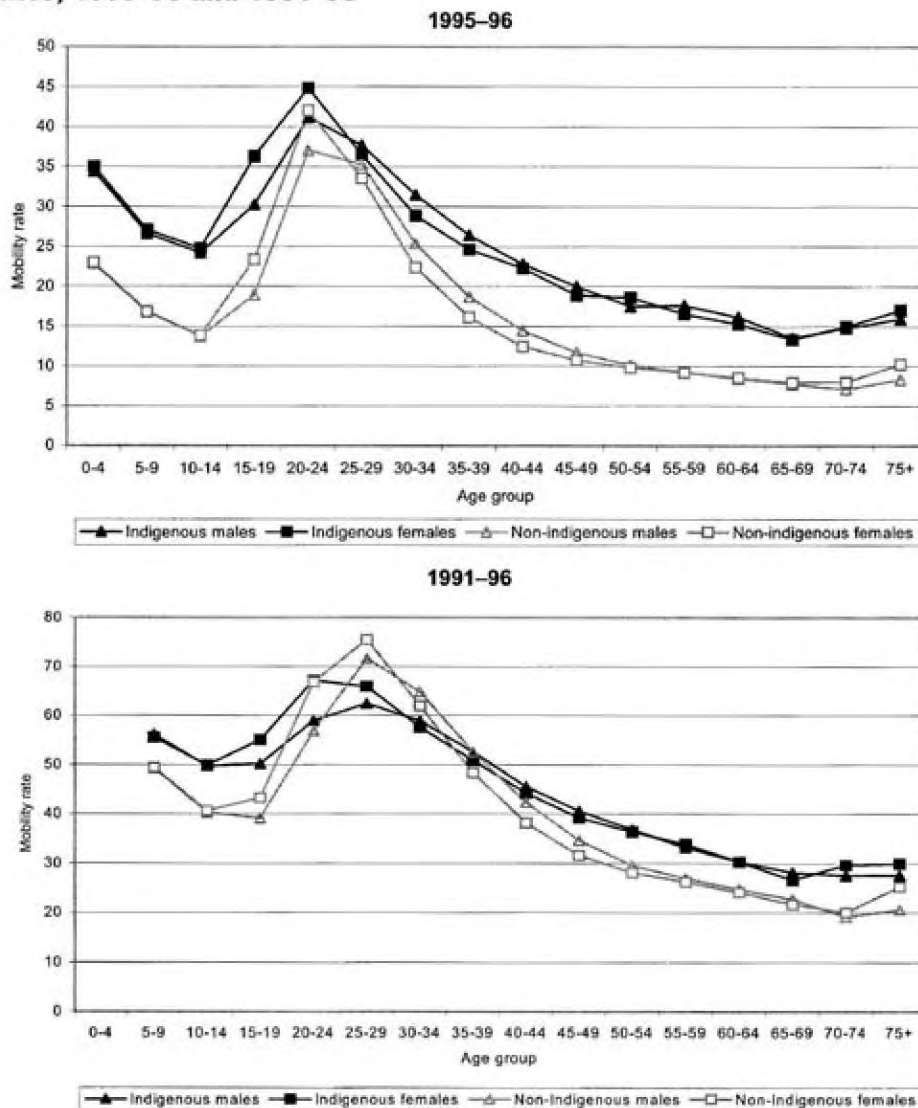
## 5.1 The People who Move

In the 1991 and 1996 Census, it was found that Indigenous males and females between 5 and 19yrs old were more mobile than non-Indigenous people of the same age groups. In both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations there was a peak in the propensity to move in the 20 to 34 year old age range. Most repeat migration was within the 15 to 29 age group with a peak in the early 20s.<sup>8</sup> While Indigenous people were more likely than non-Indigenous people to engage in repeated movements at all ages, this was particularly marked in the compulsory school-age range and beyond 30yrs of age. Martin & Taylor (1996:26) noted the high mobility of children between households in a remote Queensland community, in particular the high rate of children residing with their paternal or more commonly their maternal grandmothers (see also Young & Doohan 1989:114). Indigenous males and females from 35yrs of age and beyond were slightly more mobile than their non-Indigenous counterparts. In both populations there was a slight rise in mobility in the 65 yr and over age group. (Taylor & Bell 1996:399, 1999:9,11.) (See Figure 14.)

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<sup>8</sup> This peak is also present in the age profile of the residential mobility of Canadian Aboriginal populations (Clatworthy & Norris 2003).

**Figure 14. Age and sex profile of Indigenous and non-Indigenous mobility rates, 1995-96 and 1991-96**



Source: Taylor and Bell 1999:10

**Figure 14: Age and sex profile of indigenous and non-indigenous mobility rates, 1995-96 and 1991-96**

A common feature of Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations was that female mobility rates tended to be higher than males until the age of 30 years, beyond which male mobility rates exceeded those of females. Such peaks in female mobility were normally attributed to an earlier age of marriage than males and the formation of new households. Whilst this may also have occurred amongst the Indigenous population, there existed other factors that may have been at work including: more Indigenous females than males progressing to year 12 of secondary education, a higher participation of females in higher education, a higher rate of retention of females in labour training programs, and a higher proportion of males derive their employment from CDEP which may dampen their migration because employment was available in their home communities. (Taylor & Bell 1996:400, 1999:9.)

## 6 ANALYSIS OF 2001 ABS CENSUS DATA

The purpose of this section of the analysis was to investigate whether any national patterns in Indigenous mobility were evident in data from the 2001 Australian Census. The focus of the investigation was on destination zones and so only considered in-migration rates to each area. Although this approach only considers one aspect of migration (inflow rather than outflow), it does identify key destinations for the Indigenous population and can lead to hypotheses regarding spatial focussing and connectivity between areas.

### 6.1 Indigenous location units and mobility

The scale of the current analysis is at Indigenous Location (IL) level.<sup>9</sup> In 2001 there were 977 ILs across Australia which varied greatly in both population size and areal extent. Indigenous population counts ranged from 0 usual residents in locations such as Lord Howe Island and Laura, to over 4500 in Townsville. In addition the areal size of locations ranged from small remote settlements to locations in excess of 1000km<sup>2</sup>. Frequently these two issues were related as many of the larger (in area) locations contained the smallest populations and vice versa.

To overcome the issues of location and population size, centroids, the centre point of a polygon, were used in the researchers' maps. In choropleth mapping, larger areas draw more attention and dominate the map purely through their size. Using a point to represent the Indigenous Location removed this effect. In the following analysis location centroids are mapped according to two criteria: firstly, the size of the point is dependent upon the size of the Indigenous population in the location. Secondly, the colour of the point corresponds to the in-migration rates. Thus a small and light-coloured centroid indicates a small population and low in-migration rates. In contrast a large, dark-coloured centroid indicates a large population with high in-migration rates. Each of the categories of population size and in-migration rates are calculated as quintiles, that is to say five categories containing approximately equal numbers of locations.

### 6.2 Use of Accessibility/Remoteness Index

Interpretation of in-migration rates is also facilitated by reference to the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) regions (Figure 1). These regions are built up from point location data, which can be coded, to one of seven ARIA classifications (see Table 1). Initially considering overnight visitors (or temporary migrants), that is, those individuals temporarily away from home on Census night, it is evident that in-migration rates are lowest for the very remote inland areas but are highest for the remote and outer regional zones (Figure 15, Table 4). In comparison, permanent in-migration rates are highest for the inner regional areas, for both the one-year and five-year questions, although capital cities and outer regional areas also display high in-migration rates (Figures 16 & 17). Similar to temporary migration, permanent in-migration rates are lowest in the very remote areas. It should be noted that the difference in the in-migration rates over the three migration categories is due to the time period of analysis. Temporary visitation or migration rates only record movements on census night, whilst the more permanent migration rates record transitions over one-year or five-years preceding the Census, resulting in a greater numbers of migrants.

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<sup>9</sup> An Indigenous Location (IL) is "an area designed to allow the production of summary census statistics, in particular those relating to Indigenous people while maintaining the confidentiality of individuals." Generally, an IL includes "at least 50 Indigenous people and can comprise one or more [Census Collector Districts]." For the 2001 Census, 977 ILs were defined in Australia.

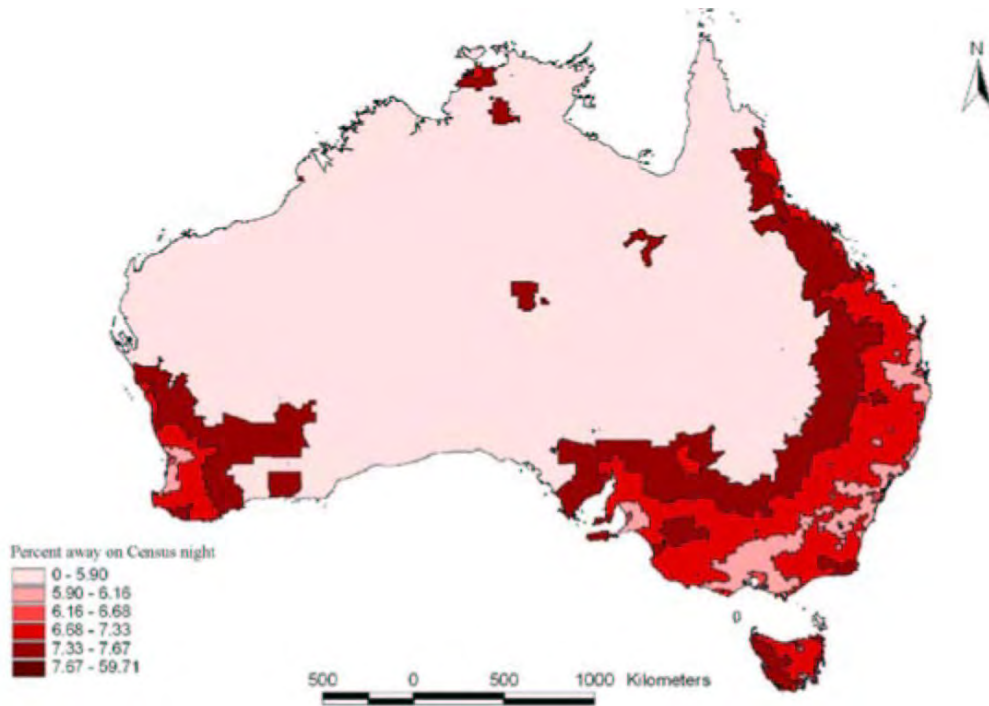


Figure 15: Classification of Indigenous persons away from their usual address in Indigenous (statistical) locations on 2001 Census night according to ARIA categories.

**Figure 15: Classification of Indigenous persons away from their usual address in Indigenous (statistical) locations on 2001 Census night according to ARIA categories**

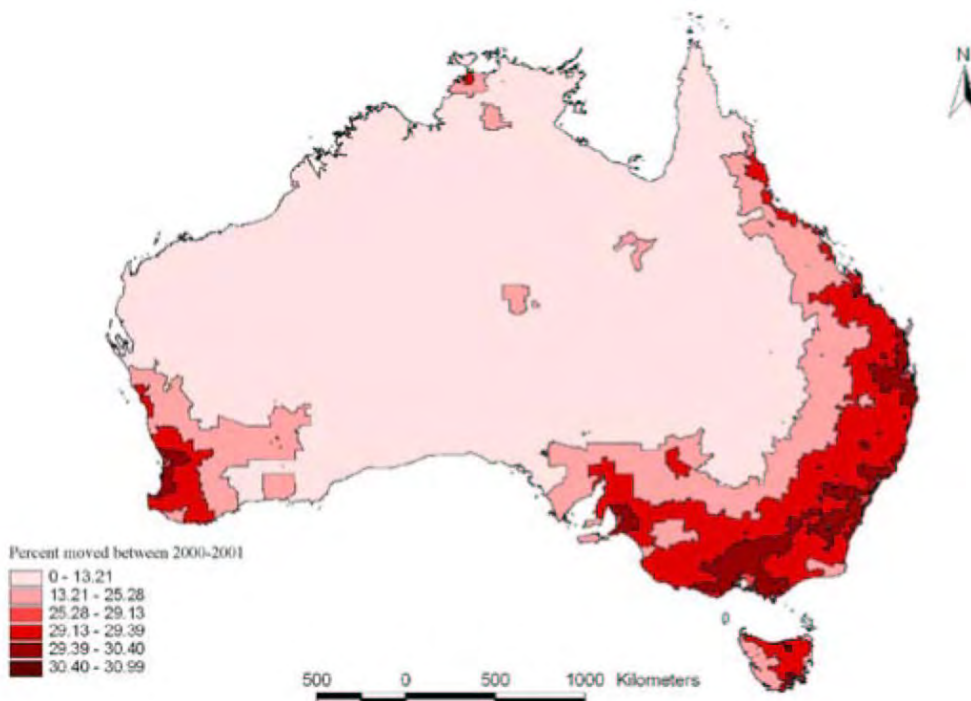


Figure 16: Classification of Indigenous persons who have moved usual address between 2000 and 2001 according to ARIA categories.

**Figure 16: Classification of Indigenous persons who have moved usual address between 2000 and 2001 according to ARIA categories**



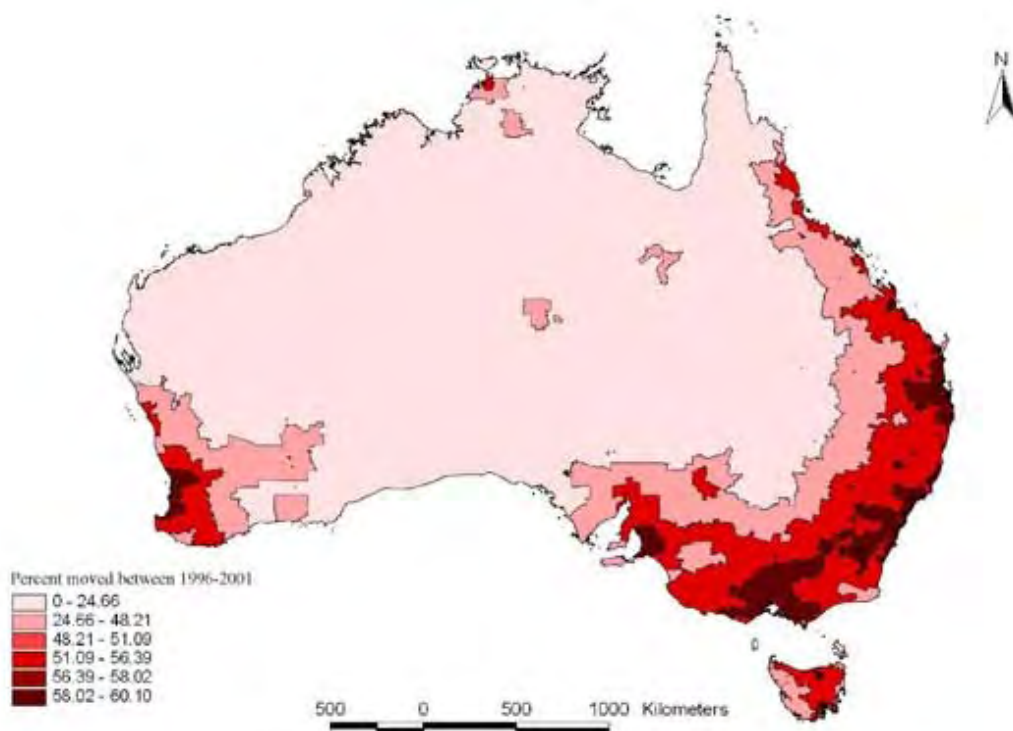


Figure 17: Classification of Indigenous persons who have moved usual address between 1996 and 2001 according to ARIA categories.

**Figure 17: Classification of Indigenous persons who have moved usual address between 1996 and 2001 according to ARIA categories**

ARIA Classification*	In-migration Rates (migrants as % of enumerated population)		
	Temporary visitation	Semi-permanent migration (1 year)	Permanent migration (5 years)
Major Cities	6.68	29.13	58.02
Inner Regional	6.16	30.40	60.10
Outer Regional	7.33	29.39	56.39
Remote	7.67	25.28	48.21
Very Remote	5.90	13.21	24.66

Migratory and Offshore classifications are not included due to small numbers of locations in these categories.

**Table 4: Indigenous Immigration on 2001 Census night according to ARIA Classifications for Australia**

These findings are further analysed in Figures 18, 19, 20.

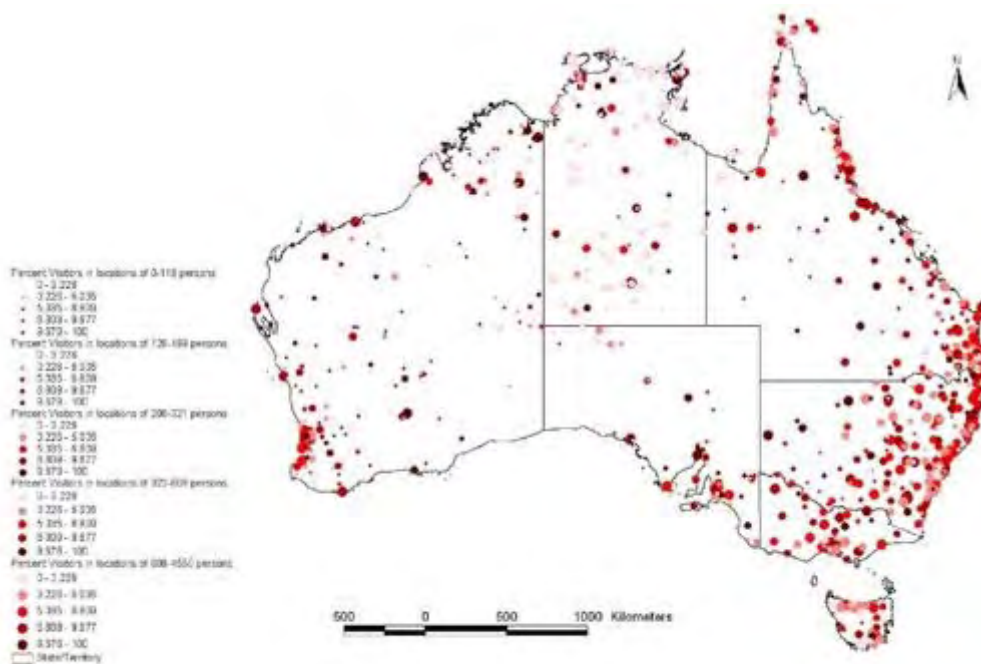


Figure 18: In-migration rates for temporary visitors to Aboriginal locations, 2001 Census night.

**Figure 18: In-migration rates for temporary visitors to Aboriginal locations. 2001 Census night**

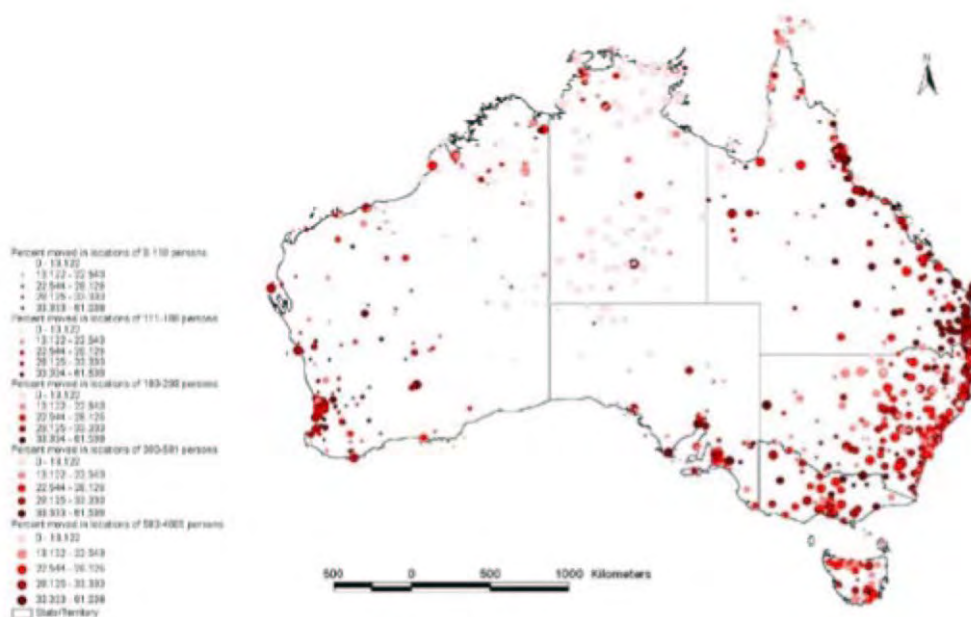


Figure 19: In-migration rates for 'semi-permanent migrants' (1 year question) to Aboriginal locations, 2001 Census night.

**Figure 19: In-migration rates for “semi-permanent migrants” (1 year question) to Aboriginal locations. 2001 Census night.**

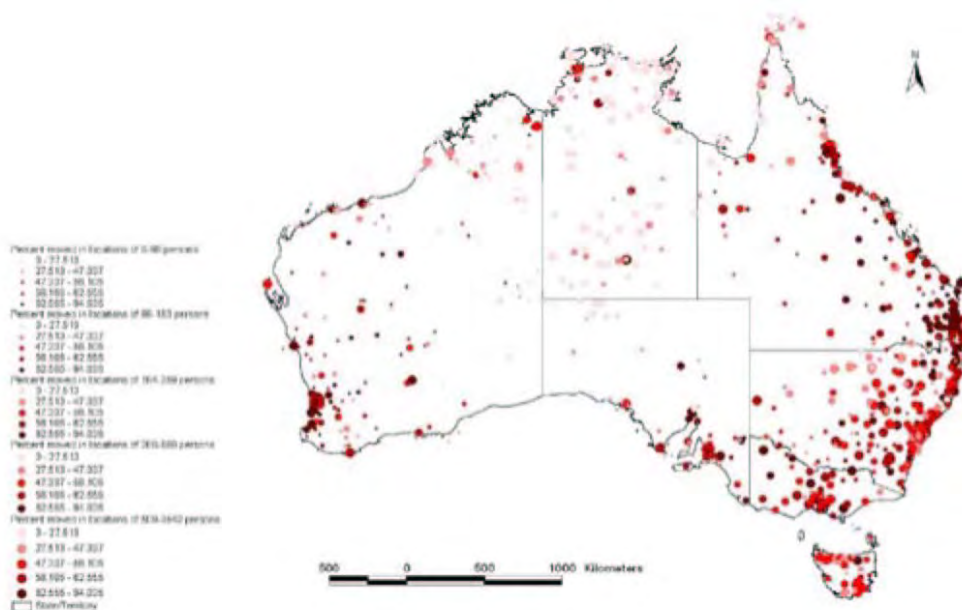


Figure 20: In-migration rates for permanent migrants (5 year question) to Aboriginal locations, 2001 Census night.

**Figure 20: In-migration rates for permanent residents (5 year question) to Aboriginal locations, 2001 Census night.**

### 6.3 Preliminary findings

These results show interesting Indigenous patterns that do not always follow the national patterns for the non-Indigenous population. Typical migration patterns for the Australian population as a whole recorded permanent migration gains in coastal areas and in major cities and migration losses in remote inland areas. This was also evidenced in the Indigenous mobility rates described above: lower in-migration rates in the inland and greater in-migration rates in the inner regional areas and major cities. Temporary visitation or migration among the Australian population was in contrast to its respective permanent migration flows: the rate of temporary migration gains in the inland and loses in the major cities and inner regional areas. However, Indigenous temporary mobility, similar to permanent migration, also showed low in-migration rates in the remote inland areas. This is clearly a deviation from the patterns displayed by the Australian population as a whole.

Of course, the current figures only show one side of the migration flows – movements into an area. They do not tell us about any corresponding out-mobility rates and thus net flows of Indigenous populations. However, despite this lack of data, the results are in broad agreement with existing research in this field. Taylor and Bell (1996)<sup>10</sup> found that, for the Indigenous population, permanent net migration gains mainly occurred in coastal areas, and the hinterland of metropolitan centres. These were areas with the highest in-migration rates in our analysis. Very remote inland areas were also found to be in a state of net migration balance –in-migration rates equalled out-migration rates, with the main exceptions being Western Queensland and the Pilbara, which recorded net losses. These areas have been shown to have the lowest in-migration rates in our research. Analysis of the

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, J. and Bell, M. (1996) 'Mobility among Indigenous Australians', pp. 392-411 in P.W. Newton and M. Bell (eds) *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia*. AGPS, Canberra.

temporary mobility of Indigenous populations using Census data is a relatively un-researched field of study and as such results are limited. Given the results presented here, though, this area of research merits further investigation.

## **7 POLICY, PROGRAMMES & MOBILITY: A MATTER OF CONTROL**

Issues of control over mobility are central to government policy consideration. Should people have freedom of movement and access to country and urban centres? If so, how can policy facilitate such freedom? Or should policy influence where people move and constrain mobility in other directions? In this regard, government programs that attach a timeframe to their implementation can restrain mobility (Taylor & Bell 1999:36). The following issues have been flagged from the literature and provide a brief overview of the policy relevance of Indigenous mobility research.

### **7.1 Low Rate of Indigenous Migration in Remote Areas**

The low movement in the usual place of residence of Indigenous people in remote areas (and the contrastingly high movement of non-Indigenous people in the same areas) and the low rate of Indigenous migration in remote areas (compared to average-to-high rates of Indigenous migration elsewhere), are both significant issues for policy consideration. (Taylor & Bell 1996:408.)

### **7.2 Circular Movement**

The apparent localised and circular mobility patterns of Indigenous populations in remote Australia, "... adds strength to the logic of regionalising Indigenous affairs policy." However methods are required for assessing such mobility in order to plan appropriate service delivery. (Taylor & Bell 1996:408.)

### **7.3 Targeting Policy to Regions that Attract Indigenous migration**

Taylor & Bell have argued that policy could be targeted at regions which appear "attractive" to Indigenous migration as well as at those which appear least attractive; that is, target policy at regions of significant gains and/or losses of Indigenous population. However, an important question here is whether these extremes in migration reflect Indigenous aspirations and desired mobility patterns? (Taylor & Bell 1999:37.)

### **7.4 Housing**

In 1992, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Commonwealth, State and Territory Housing Ministers supported this commitment in 1996 and 1997, which included improving program administration and data collection to ensure future funds were targeted to areas of greatest housing need. The Ministers established a Working Group on Indigenous housing which later became the Standing Committee for Indigenous Housing (SCIH). In May 2001 the Commonwealth, State and Territory housing Ministers adopted a new policy *Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010*. Findings from the current research into how housing need is affected by residential mobility should assist in:

1. examining relationships between housing and mobility (see Gray 2004:220, Taylor & Bell 1999:35);
2. identifying and addressing unmet housing needs of Indigenous people;
3. improving the capacity of Indigenous community housing organizations to respond to changing need brought about by significant residential shifts; and
4. coordinating associated programme administration in relation to such residential movement.<sup>11</sup>

## **7.5 Education and Training**

Taylor and Bell argue that as approximately one-third of the Indigenous population are changing their usual place of residence each year then there are significant implications for participation in education, training and employment (Taylor & Bell 1999:35). In addition to mainstream education consideration must be given to the use of mobility as a culturally distinct educational technique in its own right, as children are taught about country and kin during their travels.

Knowledge of the spatial mobility of Indigenous people also has policy and planning implications for the provision of training services and programs for Indigenous people (Taylor & Bell 1996:392).

## **7.6 Employment**

Two significant questions concerning mobility and employment are: (i) whether migration is employment-led? and, (ii) whether the Indigenous population responds to the labour market in the same way as the non-Indigenous population? (Taylor & Bell 1999:32). Taylor & Bell (1999:35) argue that regular and high mobility may constrain employment opportunities. They also note (1996:408) the impact of CDEP, which is prevalent in remote areas in response to a lack of mainstream labour markets, arguing that CDEP suppresses the rate of migration because people are required to participate in situ. In comparison, Indigenous people in more urban areas gain employment and training via mainstream labour market programs which may induce people to migrate.

The literature to date has neglected engagement in traditional subsistence economies as a type of 'employment'; and how impacts on these economies by outside forces may affect mobility patterns. The literature has also failed to recognise the significant contribution of Aboriginal volunteers to their regional and national organizations which results in regular travel to attend meetings, conferences and workshops.

## **7.7 Social Security**

Mobility or the "residential instability" of Indigenous people effects their interaction with the social security system that is based on fortnightly cycles of payment, assessment and placements. Taylor & Bell note the high rate of mobility amongst the unemployed Indigenous population (unemployed status does not necessarily mean that people are not fulfilling critical full-time roles in their community). (Taylor & Bell 1999:36.)

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<sup>11</sup> Adapted from AHURI T.O.R.

## **7.8 Health**

Knowledge of the spatial mobility of Indigenous people also has policy and planning implications for the provision of health services and programs for Indigenous people (Taylor & Bell 1996:392).

## **7.9 Decentralization**

Smith argues that many in academia and policy see decentralization as “return to country” which he says masks the ongoing relationship with regional centres like Coen. Smith argues that such a misunderstanding of the phenomenon of decentralization can lead to policy decisions that “undermine Aboriginal aspirations or set people up for “failure”. Smith provides a number of examples where a misunderstanding of the Indigenous mobility in the Coen region lead to inappropriate policy, programs and funding. (Smith 2004:253-254.)

## **7.10 Improving Capacity for Mobility**

The Cape York Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson aspires to improving the capacity for mobility amongst young people in Cape York so that they can launch into ‘orbits’ that range outside of their home community in order to develop and utilise their talents in mainstream economies whilst simultaneously maintaining strong ties with their home community. He promotes a circular pattern of migration, with movement towards opportunities and journeys back home where community identity, social relationships and relationships to place are maintained and developed. (Pearson 2003.)

## **7.11 Problems of planning programs where high changes in population may occur**

Taylor and Bell argue that in regions where there are significant changes in the propensity to identify as Indigenous, it is difficult to plan responses to the population because by the time policy is implemented the population is likely to have structurally changed. In response to this situation Taylor and Bell suggest those groups most responsible for population movement need to be identified and the reasons for changes in identification examined. (Taylor & Bell 1999:36.)

## **7.12 Access to transport**

Mobility is inhibited and facilitated by the type of access that people have to transport. For example arguments have been made for cheaper inter-island air travel in the Torres Straits (ABC 2004A). Road maintenance is critical to the mobility of inland groups and is a key local government issue. At the same time Indigenous people have disproportionately high representation in the statistics on road deaths, which carries road safety and alcohol management policy implications.<sup>12</sup>

## **7.13 Younger Age Profile of the Indigenous Population**

The rate of mobility of Indigenous people between 1981 and 1996 was higher than that of all Australians. However, Taylor and Bell (1999:2) argued this difference was due to the younger age profile of the Indigenous population and therefore

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<sup>12</sup> See ‘The Australian’ 30/9/04, “No stopping black road deaths.”

standardised the rates accordingly. This standardisation seems to mask a significant policy area, that is, high rates of mobility amongst an Indigenous population that has a significantly younger age profile.

### **7.14 Telecommunications and journeys in Cyber Space**

Young & Doohan (1989:57,128.) found that access to telecommunications had a significant impact on Aboriginal mobility in Central Australia. People could be contacted to inform them of events that required journeys to be made, people could find out whether journeys were necessary, and people could maintain contact with kin whilst residing in isolated or distant settlements. Access to the Internet, email and video conferencing may also impact on mobility.

### **7.15 Policy Issues not well covered in the literature**

Some of the significant policy issues that do seem to not appear in the literature are as follows:

1. Slow and impeded determinations of Native Title with associated rights of access to land impact on mobility patterns; the legal requirement of maintaining regular connection to country in proving Native Title is another related issue.<sup>13</sup>
2. The role of improved settlement infrastructure in stabilizing communities.
3. Inter-Settlement Infrastructure- road maintenance, telecommunications etc.
4. The extent of public or semi-public transport servicing Indigenous communities and its role in regional economies.
5. The impact of limited accommodation options in communities on mobility. Housing need and funding is generally determined in units of the three-bedroom houses that are based on the Anglo-Australian notion of the nuclear family household. However a wider range of accommodation options is required in some communities including accommodation for single men and women and young families.
6. The overall economy of Indigenous mobility; its contribution to the national economy.

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<sup>13</sup> But see Veth (2003) in this regard.



## **8 ONGOING METHODS**

### **8.1 Case Study Location Selection and associated methodological problem**

In order to more accurately measure Indigenous population mobility, it is not possible to consider all Indigenous Locations within Australia. The confidentiality requirements of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, cost of data and not least the complexity of dealing with a computerised matrix with dimensions of 977 x 977 cells that will include many small numbers, preclude adopting a national framework. Thus, it is necessary to focus on a select number of case study locations. Our imposed requirements for case study locations were a minimum population of 50 residents (enumerated in the census) and the areas had to be considered remote according to the ARIA classification. Although 50 persons is an arbitrary number it is attractive for two reasons. Firstly, using smaller populations than this threshold is likely to produce unstable rates due to the small numbers involved, resulting in doubts over the subsequent results. Secondly, a total population of 50 is desirable as it is still small enough to include the remote settlements that form an integral part of migration focussing and connectivity. Three potential remote Case Study regions were identified that all contained an aggregate of Indigenous locations which demonstrated high (or reasonably high) mobility for all three census measures, i.e. temporary, semi-permanent and permanent. In addition, expert judgment and prior knowledge regarding migration networks were used to select these final three regions for consideration in the next stage of the analysis: Mount Isa and its surrounding locations, West Cape York and Greater Darwin (Figure 21). One of these regions will be selected for field work.

A logical second step in the quantitative research of Indigenous population mobility was to gain a greater understanding of migration flows both into and out of these selected locations. Unfortunately this has not proven possible. We cannot calculate outflows from ILs because to do so we need to identify people who were resident in the IL five years ago and are now living elsewhere – but their residence five years ago is only coded to SLA, not IL. Currently we know nothing regarding the number of people leaving these locations nor the origins of people choosing these areas as their destinations.

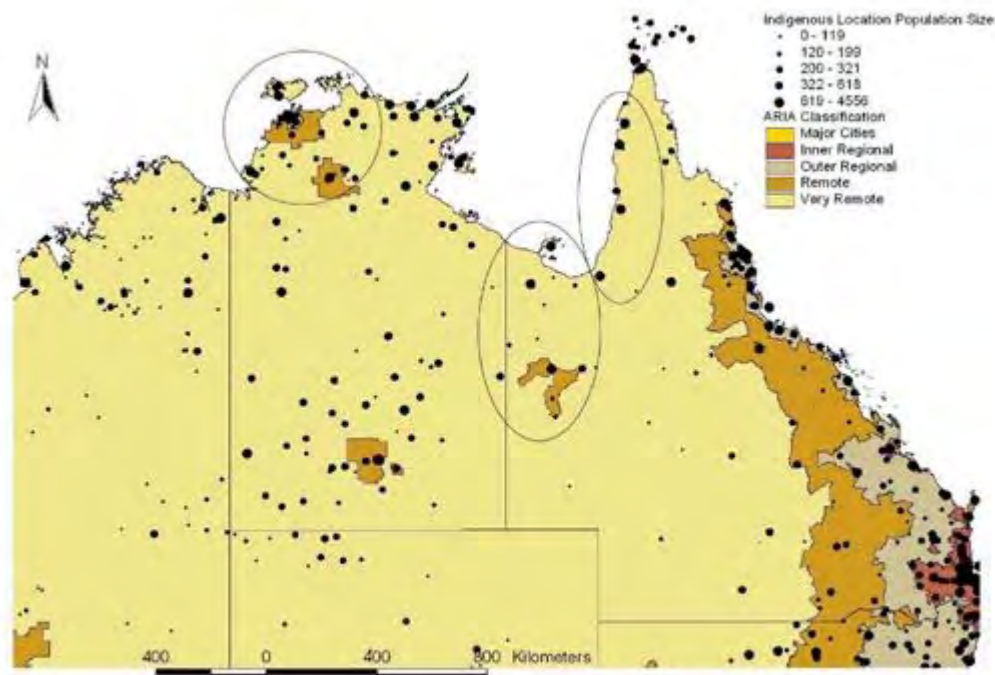


Figure 21: Population size of Indigenous locations in remote and very remote ARIA categories, with possible selected case study regions located.

**Figure 21: Population size of Indigenous locations in remote and very remote ARIA categories, with possible selected case study regions located**

## 8.2 The next steps in the analysis

The inability for us to rely on a quantifiable demographic sampling methodology necessitates a conversion to a more exploratory approach. Following the advice of Young and Doohan (1989:217) we intend to direct the fieldwork towards the study of an Aboriginal cultural region rather than a set of population centres selected on some statistical basis or on ABS aerial units. We shall select one study region based on hypotheses in the anthropological literature on the whereabouts of such cultural regions and part of the fieldwork will be to verify its extent, nature and integrity as a mobility region. Fieldwork will be directed at several centres within the region but at least one will be in the heartland of the region and one will lie on the periphery of the region (following Young and Doohan, *ibid*). Use of the regional centre will be charted as well as short and long-term travel to other regional or metropolitan centres outside of the region.

Of particular interest to the researchers is the North-west Queensland region. The western part of this region extends into the Northern Territory where two relatively established settlements are Alpurrurulum (population 334 in 2001) and Urlampe (a small outstation). Whilst our observations over the life of these settlements indicate that there is regular travel to other centres on the Queensland side of the border and to the regional centre of Mt Isa, there is also a 'pull' to other regional centres in the N.T., Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, where Territory government services are located. Migration away from this region may be to places such as Townsville and Alice Springs for specialized medical services, tertiary

education or employment prospects. It is our intention to carry out a pilot study in this region with a view to ongoing in-depth work there.

In addition we shall examine demographic characteristics from the 2001 Census to profile the various types of movers within the settlements of this Aboriginal region (eg by age, sex, income, employment status, household structure). This analysis will, by its nature, be exploratory and will provide a broad understanding and background of trends in Indigenous mobility. It will address the objectives of AHURI Indigenous Research Brief 2 by considering population shifts using the 2001 census. While similar data could have also been considered using earlier censuses, methodological problems including shifts in spatial boundaries between census periods and changes in the level of Indigenous 'self-identification' mean that the statistical validity of using such data is seriously compromised.

### **8.3 Field Studies**

Field research will collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data will comprise interview findings on reasons for mobility, duration of residence, numbers of moves, household structure, transformation and stability, intention (or not) to stay. The quantitative data will be used for comparison to the census findings and will comprise size of settlement population, constituent number of households, and numbers of households that have moved in and out in a recent period. We will examine the potential to collect data on short and long-term residential histories.

Using the findings from the statistical analysis, and constrained by the limitations of the budget, a number of discrete Indigenous settlements which have experienced particular types of changes in population attributable to residential mobility will be identified within the study region. From these a selection of two to four remote fieldwork settlements will be chosen, partly based on experience with and accessibility of the project team to the communities, and upon the willingness of community 'gate keepers' to support the project. In the discrete remote settlements we shall review community population lists (constructed for example from CDEP schedules, Centrelink, Council records), identify key informants who have moved or recently returned, and interview them using a semi-structured interview format. For a sample of those who have left, we shall visit the nearest town or regional centre or metropolitan centre to track these people down or call them by telephone if possible, and interview them. We will also interview those who have stayed, that is, people or families who retain a relatively stable presence in these settlements. Examples of such combinations of centres might be Alpururulum/Urandangie/Mt Isa or Camooweal/Mt Isa/Townsville. We thereby hope to prepare a qualitative understanding of flows and shifts between such remote settlements and a number of urban centres.

### **8.4 Analysis of combined findings from quantitative and qualitative data**

Following the data collection and analysis from the fieldwork stage, analytic outcomes are expected to comprise:

- A model of Indigenous mobility within a region in remote Australia;
- Profiles of mobile individuals and households in study locations;

- Categorization of the primary reasons why Indigenous people in the study locations are moving. Discussion on the nature and extent of intra-regional mobility versus migration to metropolitan centres, including ease of identification of mobility regions;
- Findings on frequency, duration and pattern of mobility in study locations;
- Spatial patterns of population growth and shrinkage, and the space-time dynamics of such movements;
- Impact of mobility on household characteristics and stability; and
- Implications for government policy.

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